



The Exodus Road

EMPOWERING RESCUE

For Immediate Release

Collaboration Key to Freedom in Trafficking Case of Thai Woman in Kingdom of Bahrain

March 2, 2016. *Kingdom of Bahrain*. The governments of both the Kingdom of Bahrain and Thailand coordinated with nonprofit, The Exodus Road, in the location, freedom, and repatriation of a 22-year old Thai woman last week who had been trafficked to the Kingdom of Bahrain and was about to be sold into the sex industry there.

"Help me, I have been trafficked," was the text The Exodus Road office in Thailand received from partners in the NGO community directly from a victim who was being held against her will in an apartment complex in The Kingdom of Bahrain. According to the victim, she was recruited by a Thai woman on LINE (a messaging app) and was told she was taking a well-paying spa job. The recruiter paid for the expenses of the victim's travel, but upon arrival, the victim's passport was taken and she was placed with 12 other Thai women into an apartment. While there, the young women were heavily guarded by one Thai controller or female pimp. The victim was not allowed to leave the room where she and the other women were staying. Utilizing technology and constant communication with the victim, however, The Exodus Road worked to identify her location and coordinate with the Kingdom of Bahrain's and the Thai national authorities for a police mission.

"I could feel that Sunny was afraid and very confused and wanted to go home as soon as possible," Panyapat "Som" Piyathamsawat, The Exodus Road Operations Manager who ran point on this case described. "She did not want to be in that place even for a second. She kept telling me— 'I want to go home, please help me, when is help gonna come?'"

Within 24 hours, the Kingdom of Bahrain's National Committee for Combatting Trafficking in Persons Division was mobilizing for a rescue operation with their police force and the unit human trafficking SWAT team. Upon gathering the correct information regarding the victim's identification and travel documents, the Thai Embassy coordinated with the Kingdom of Bahrain's police force and a raid took place on March 4, 2016— just 48 hours after the original tip was received.

In total, 13 Thai women were taken from the apartment building that day. The women gave testimony to the authorities and 11 confessed to coming into the country with the intent of illegal prostitution. They will not be charged with a crime but are being deported back to Thailand. One woman was identified as the leader of the prostitution ring and is facing charges of human trafficking in her treatment of the victim, who qualified for victim services and immediate repatriation back to Thailand. Upon arrival in Thailand, the victim gave testimony to the Anti Trafficking in Persons Division of the Royal Thai Police and the Social Welfare Department. The Exodus Road is working closely with the NGO community and the Social Welfare Department to provide her with ongoing support. All of the women involved in this case were above 18 years of age.

"Many women take jobs that are grossly misrepresented, and it's challenging because the trafficking victims are hidden amongst the women that are choosing to be there to work in the sex industry," Kevin Campbell, The Exodus Road, VP of Global Ops said. "I was fortunate to meet with a counter human trafficking delegation from the Kingdom of Bahrain last year; a driven and passionate group of individuals committed to eradicating trafficking in their own country. Moving forward, we are grateful for the opportunity to build a meaningful partnership with the Kingdom of Bahrain's National Committee for Combatting Trafficking in Persons," Campbell went on to explain.

Collaborating with The Exodus Road in this case was the excellent work of the Kingdom of Bahrain's National Committee for Combatting Trafficking in Persons Division, the Kingdom of Bahrain's police force and Anti Trafficking In Persons SWAT team, and particularly the advocacy of Ms. Faeza Khan, as well as The Anti Trafficking in Persons Division of the Royal Thai Police (ATPD) including especially Police Lieutenant Colonel Jedsada Chomcherngpat, Thailand Department of Immigration, and The Royal Thai Embassy in The Kingdom of Bahrain. They are all to be highly commended for their rapid and effective response to this tip.

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