Date: April 04, 2023

Nisan 13, 5783

To: Mr. Tomoya Obokata, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences

Subject: **The State of Israel's submission to the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences' report on the use of technology in facilitating and preventing contemporary forms of slavery**

The State of Israel respectfully submits its contribution in relation to the above-mentioned questionnaire.

Development of the Child Online Protection Bureau – Unit 105

1. A national program for the prevention of violence and crime against children and teenagers online started its operations in February 2018 as part of Government Resolution No. 1006, from January 17, 2016 and Government Resolution No. 1972, from September 27, 2016. The program includes representatives of the Police and the Ministries of Public Security, Education, Justice, Welfare and Social Affairs and Health. The program includes the establishment of a dedicated police unit for crime against children on the internet, including pedophilia and prostitution; a national center for child protection, to receive and coordinate inquiries 24/7 on bullying and cyber-crimes; a prevention and advocacy division, to promote and work to raise public awareness; a toll-free hotline for calls from all over the country and from any phone.
2. The hotline was launched in a limited capacity in February 2018, and was launched to the public and transferred to a full working format (24/7), in November 2018. The hotline deals with all offense and abuse behaviors against children committed in the online realm, including sexual abuse and prostitution. The calls are received by Police officers who have received specific training, and is supported by an inter-ministerial desk with experts on online child abuse from the abovementioned Ministries, who are able to intervene and ensure that every call receives an appropriate and comprehensive response.
3. The Unit is faced with multiple challenges in their efforts to combat the solicitation of children. Firstly, establishing evidence of suspects' awareness that they were soliciting a child presents a significant challenge. Secondly, obtaining the Courts' recognition of the severity of the offense is difficult. Thirdly, it is challenging to persuade children who are allegedly involved in prostitution and their families to cooperate with the Police.
4. Although certain specialist units are highly skilled in conducting online investigations, a significant proportion of the police force do not have similar ‘literacy’ in online investigations, thus less suitable to work with online platforms and electronic evidence. This can pose a barrier to effective tech-enabled trafficking investigations and prosecutions.
5. In addition to the police work, the 105 Unit is in contact with NGOs in the field, for purposes of prevention, raising awareness, exchange of knowledge and research.
6. In 2021, the Unit treated a total of 11,771 events of online abuse against children, compared to around 10,000 events in 2020:
* 22% of the events were of a sexual abuse nature,
* 13% were categorized and dealt with as emergency events,
* 66% of the victims were girls and 34% boys.
* 72% of the offenders were children,
* The average age of the victims is between 12-14 years old.

The Cyber Department of the State Attorney's Office

1. In 2018, The Cyber Department of the State Attorney's Office (hereinafter: "The Cyber Department") began acting against sites that advertise prostitution in violation of Section 205C of the *Penal Law* 5737-1977, on two levels: voluntary and compulsory.
2. On the administrative level, the cyber department operates against websites that advertise prostitution, on the basis of a violation of the terms of use of the various internet companies alongside the violation of Israeli law - asking the platforms to remove the websites. On the criminal level, the Cyber Department operates in accordance with *the Authority to Prevent Offenses Through Websites Law* 5765-2017. The Law, which came into force at the end of 2017, allows the blocking of access to websites that carry out the offenses specified in the Law – including publication of paid sex services and publicity advertising an offer to engage in prostitution.
3. The enactment of the Law was driven by a growing perception that the designated offences were increasingly shifting online, and that existing methods of blocking content were too slow, easily outpaced by websites re-appearing on different servers.  Following the introduction of the Law, analysts note that a number of websites publish adverts for sex work on the surface web without any functionality to contact the individuals depicted, operating instead as ‘an online catalogue’. A linked encrypted sister site, on Telegram in some cases, provides the contact functionality.
4. Labour trafficking falls beyond the scope of *the Authority to Prevent Offenses Through Websites Law*, as labour trafficking is believed by authorities to involve limited online element, and occur predominantly offline in Israel.
5. In 2019, the Cyber Department operated against thirty-six (36) major websites that advertised prostitution in Israel, from which: the Court ordered to restrict the access to fifteen (15) websites and granted an amended order to restrict the access to fourteen (14) websites, in cases in which the activity of the sites were transferred to other addresses. The remaining websites were removed and therefore the Cyber Department retracted its requests for restrictions of the access to the sites. Among the sites restricted to access are some of the largest and highly trafficked prostitution sites in Israel, such as the "Sex Adir" site, the largest prostitution site in Israel, and the "Sex Adir Forum" site where Israeli Consumers of prostitution used to express opinions and "rank" women in prostitution.
6. In 2019, the Cyber Department, in cooperation with the Police, dedicated its resources to locating and closing new prostitution sites that violate court orders in their case and try to continue operating from new web addresses.
7. As a result of the Department's activity, there is a significant decrease in the number of users of sites against which we have acted and a shift of criminal activity to less central platforms (such as Telegram), thus reducing the exposure of the Israeli public to prostitution publications.
8. The Internet is today the largest and most important arena for the advertisement of prostitution, and the above activity causes harm to criminals who make a living by publishing prostitution. This significantly damages the advertising cell, which is a particularly important link in the exploitation chain of the prostitution world.
9. There remain a number of issues unresolved in the use of warrants for electronic evidence. For example, it is unclear whether authorities in possession of a warrant can use reasonable force to compel an individual to unlock his/her phone, either by sharing the code, or their fingerprint.
10. Government and third sector stakeholders specializing in human trafficking investigations note that voluntary collaboration with the private sector remains complex due to concerns of over-regulation and intervention in the public private sphere that might have negative effects on certain business areas such as tourism.