

Religious Coercion as Means of Trafficking in Women and Faith Communities' Role in Ending Such Religious Exploitation

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Abstract : With the increase of massive migration, economic polarization, as well as increasing awareness and respects for religious freedom in the world, women have become unprecedentedly vulnerable to trafficking involving religious coercion. Such cases can also bring enormous challenges for prosecution in which the prosecutor bears the burden of proving that the victim acted, or not acted in a certain way due to the exploitation of her belief system: (1) Jurors who are nonbelievers tend not to be convinced that something of intangible nature can act as the force to get victim into women trafficking situation; (2) Court more often than not rules in favor of victims in women trafficking cases involving religious exploitation only when there is physical coercion in addition to religious coercion; (3) Female victims are often reluctant to testify at court due to their godly fear and loyalty to trafficker. Using case study methodology, this paper examines the unique characteristics of religious coercion as means of trafficking in women from a legal perspective and proposes multiple ways based on communal beliefs that faith communities, as victims for such crime themselves, can act in order to help to end religious exploitation. The purpose of this paper is threefold: to improve acknowledgment for the role of religious coercion as a sole force for women trafficking situation; to discuss legal hurdles in prosecuting women trafficking cases involving religious coercion; and to propose collaboration across borders among faith communities to end such exploitation.

Keywords : women trafficking, sex violence, religious exploitation, faith community, prosecution, law

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