

GLOBAL DECLARATION
CALLING ON AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TO UPHOLD HUMAN RIGHTS

WHEREAS:

During their International Council Meeting in Dublin from 7-11 August 2015, Amnesty International delegates debated and passed the "[Decision on State Obligations to Respect, Protect, and Fulfil the Human Rights of Sex Workers](#)" that calls on governments to fully decriminalize what they call "sex work," including pimps, brothel owners and buyers;

Amnesty International is one of the world's most prominent human rights organizations whose mission is to uphold the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) that establishes the indivisibility, inalienability and universality of human rights, including the right of every human being to live a life free of violence and with dignity;

Amnesty International's call to decriminalize prostitution, including pimps, brothel owners and buyers, is in direct violation with its mission and with international conventions, principles of women's rights and human rights, and all efforts to achieve gender equality;

We, the undersigned, include members of national, international, regional and grassroots organizations that provide frontline services to women who suffer violence and discrimination, from prostitution to domestic violence to rape and torture by State and non-State actors, and that advocate for strong laws and policies that promote the rights of women. Collectively, we have responded to and provided social, medical, housing and legal services and advocacy to hundreds of thousands of women worldwide trapped in cycles of male violence against them, including in prostitution;

We are women's rights activists, feminists, survivors of prostitution and other forms of sexualized violence, Indigenous, "Scheduled Caste," First Nations, Métis, Europeans and of European descent, Africans and of the African Diaspora; Latin Americans and from the Caribbean; Asians and Pacific Islanders from across six continents;

We agree with Amnesty International that persons sold in prostitution must not be criminalized in any jurisdiction. Their lives are shattered by severe social stigma and high rates of human rights violations inherent to prostitution, including violence, sexual harassment, rape, dehumanization, degradation, torture or even death, at the hands of their buyers, pimps, traffickers, law enforcement and other state and non-state actors;

We believe that harm reduction is a necessary interim tool that provides protection and addresses the needs of prostituted individuals, but that harm elimination through legislation, paradigm shifts and social change is key to combat the root causes of prostitution and commercial sexualized exploitation.

THEREFORE, WE UNEQUIVOCALLY:

REJECT Amnesty International's decision to decriminalize a system of commercial sexualized exploitation, which is steeped in histories of patriarchal oppression, racism, colonialism, slavery, genocide and cultural acceptance of violence and discrimination primarily against women, who are overwhelmingly of color, in poverty, with absence of choice and who have suffered sexualized and economic violence, incest, repetitive rapes, torture, homelessness and socio-cultural marginalization;

REJECT Amnesty International's use of the term "sex work," a term created by the sex industry and which is incompatible with international law. Prostitution is neither "sex" nor "work" but gender-based

violence and discrimination perpetuated by the multi-billion dollar commercial sex trade and fueled by buyers (the demand). Furthermore, some governments that have decriminalized prostitution define the term “sex worker” as anyone who provides commercial sexualized services, which includes pimps and brothel owners, and therefore is not limited to persons engaged in selling sex;

REJECT Amnesty International's claims that its decision to decriminalize prostitution is an educated one when it fails to cite research or studies on the major legal frameworks that govern prostitution as well as their documented consequences. Amnesty International also declined to examine the failures of decriminalization of prostitution in countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, certain states of Australia, New Zealand and other jurisdictions;

REJECT Amnesty International’s comparison of its position on the death penalty to decriminalization of prostitution. Voting on a resolution calling on states not to condemn their citizens to death in accordance with human rights tenets is a far cry from urging governments to allow commercial sexualized exploitation through decriminalization of pimps, brothel owners and buyers.

WE CALL UPON:

Amnesty International to stand in solidarity with prostituted persons, regardless of gender and sexual identity, and to call on governments to decriminalize such persons in every jurisdiction. As it stands now and as a result of a contentious debate among delegates in Dublin, Amnesty’s framework would allow certain governments to criminalize the sale of sex, while exonerating buyers and pimps;

Amnesty International to consult with us as experts in women’s rights and gender equality. Many of the undersigned are survivors of prostitution and/or lesbian/bisexual/transgender individuals or members of organizations that serve such populations. Amnesty International has no legitimacy to speak on our behalf or in our name in its justification to endorse prostitution and systems of exploitation;

Amnesty International to consult with medical professionals and researchers beyond the HIV/AIDS prevention sector and to gather data on the pervasive physical, psychological and traumatic harm, including death that buyers and pimps inflict on human beings, especially women;

Amnesty International to uphold its mission by calling on governments to enforce and implement the [Palermo Protocol](#), the [1949 Convention](#), [CEDAW](#) and other international legal instruments that recognize exploitation of prostitution;

Amnesty International members to challenge their organization’s leadership and exhort them to adopt a resolution that calls on states to invest in achieving gender equality, combat gender-based violence and pass laws that decriminalize *solely* persons who sell sex and penalize those who purchase sex, also known as the Nordic or Equality Model.

Should Amnesty International adopt a policy that calls on states to decriminalize pimps, brothel owners and buyers, we urge governments and civil society to reject it without reservation. As an international community, we must share a vision of equality and strive for a world where even the most vulnerable individuals are protected from human rights violations.

#NoAmnesty4Pimps

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