

הקואליציה למאבק בזנות

אופק נשי – אישה לאישה חיפה – בשבילך – הופכות את היצירות – המטה למאבק בסחר במשום ובזנות – מיתוס – לזים שאחרי הזנות – מכון ירושלים לצדק – מכון חדעה – מרפאה נידת חיפה – מרפאת לוינסקי – עלם – סלעית

The Coalition Against Prostitution

Statement Regarding the Closing of the Brothel at Yitzhak Sadeh 36, Tel Aviv

On Monday, May 30th a verdict was finally given regarding the brothel on 36 Yitzhak Sadeh Street, Tel Aviv. His Honor Judge Hermelin's ruling is an excellent example of the anomaly that exists in Israel's current prostitution laws.

In a feat of legal gymnastics, the judge arrived at the only possible conclusion of the proceedings, a 90-day shut-down of the brothel (the maximum amount of time allowed by law).

We welcome the closure of any brothel. This is especially true regarding the closing of the Yitzhak Sadeh brothel, one of the largest and well-known commercial sex operations in Tel Aviv.

We are of course aware that the brothel will likely resume its activities after the 90-day period and its customers will be directed to another brothel in the meantime, as was the case with the closure of the 98 Hayarkon brothel following the suicide of one of the prostituted women there. Shortly after the closure, the clients were referred to another brothel on Levinski Street. That said, we hope that this will provide a window of opportunity, even if for just one woman, to leave the cycle of prostitution.

The message of the verdict is clear: the voices of women in prostitution are important and our current laws do not offer them real solutions for coping with the trap of prostitution. Yes, for many women prostitution is a trap. The law addresses only offenses *associated* with prostitution that have significance to the "public order," but do not address two key aspects of the issue - the customers who fuel the "sex industry" and the women desperately in need of help to escape it.

This legal lacuna creates a complicated judicial reality that is exploited by pimps, and allows for the *de facto* legalization of prostitution. It is the women in prostitution, who suffer from emotional, physical, domestic and social abuse, who pay the price for this situation.

According to Judge Hermelin's ruling, if a number of women decide tomorrow morning to collectively establish a "sex cooperative," they should not be prosecuted. As professionals deeply familiar with this legal process and having worked for years to provide psychosocial, medical and legal aid to women in prostitution, we know that this ruling ignores the facts of the reality. In reality, there is no free will in prostitution; and there is no prostitution without subjugation to another person. In reality, the road to prostitution is fraught with perpetual violence – be it physical, sexual, emotional and economic – against its victims.

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A verdict that precludes the closure of brothels run by women and exempts law enforcement agencies from thoroughly investigating their avenues of exploitation is a significant step in the direction of the legalization of prostitution in Israel.

In order to prevent the institutionalization of prostitution, we must act immediately. The time has come for the Knesset and government to support the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services and to provide for the rehabilitation of prostitution victims as well as the prevention of prostitution through education on human dignity and gender equality. We commend Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan, who expressed his support for such legislation.