

International Day against Violence against Sex Workers

17th of December 2013

ICRSE – SWAN – TAMPEP joint statement

This year once more, on the 17th of December, International Day to end violence against sex workers, we, the sex workers and allies from Europe and Central Asia, members of ICRSE, SWAN and TAMPEP¹ will hold public events and demonstrations to demand an end to all forms of violence against sex workers.

Some members, partners of the European project INDOORS, are taking this opportunity to launch the campaign 'Different Jobs. Equal Rights' to demand the recognition of labour rights as a way to combat stigma and violence against sex workers.²

By violence, we mean murders and attacks which continue to afflict us every day. In many countries in our region and around the world, sex workers continue to experience high levels of physical assault. Murders of sex workers, and especially migrants, street-based and transgender sex workers are commonplace. This year alone, many sex workers in our region were murdered, and no effective actions were taken to prevent the cases.³

By violence, we mean stigma and discrimination. Society with the support of mainstream media, continues to see us as unreliable, immoral, diseased and outcasts whose worth as human beings should be denied. Our rights are trampled. Our lives and work stereotyped and maligned. Seen as either criminals or victims, the State and its actors, including the Police and State Social Workers⁴, harass us and our families, take our children away, expose us to forced medical testing and foster the widespread stigma on us, our partners and families.

By violence, we mean state sponsored violence including raids of our workplaces. This month, in London, 200 riot police with dogs kick doors of brothels, threw woman out on the streets while journalists were taking pictures. Many women got arrested and many are facing deportations.⁵

Treating us as criminals, some countries deny our basic right for association and union. In May 2013, Russian national sex worker group, Silver Rose, was denied official registration as civil society organisation by Russian Ministry of Justice. Beside denial of registration, the Ministry also accused Silver Rose for violating Article 29 of national constitution. Article 29 prohibits "campaigning and propaganda inciting social, racial, national and or religious hatred and enmity".⁶

By violence we mean, editing the laws, criminalizing our work and forcing us to work in dangerous conditions. In Kyrgyzstan, despite the fact that many sex workers and woman rights groups for the

¹ www.sexworkereurope.org, www.swannet.org, <http://tampep.eu/>

² INDOORS project carries out analysis of the working and living conditions of female sex workers in nine European cities. It is implemented by nine partner organizations in nine European countries: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and The Netherlands: <http://www.indoors-project.eu/>, <https://www.facebook.com/IndoorsIICampaign>

³ 36 countries on 5 continents demonstrate against violence of sex workers, and recent murders of Dora from Turkey and Jasmine from Sweden. <http://jasmineanddora.wordpress.com/>

⁴ http://www.sexworkeropenuniversity.com/uploads/3/6/9/3/3693334/swou_ec_swedish_abolitionism.pdf

⁵ <http://prostitutecollective.net/2013/12/05/police-raids-against-sex-workers-in-soho-central-london/>

⁶ <http://www.silver-rose.org/?p=news>

second year oppose the introduction of the law which will penalize sex workers, and expose them to police harassment⁷, the Ministry of Interior established new “morality” police department, which fosters the introduction of the new harmful law⁸.

By violence, we mean also failure of state to secure safe working condition for sex workers in the countries where sex work is legalized profession. Majority of Hungarian municipalities have not defined legal working areas as the law requires, pushing sex workers underground and exposing them to various health and safety risks. Even in the few cases when working areas are defined, those are usually remote, dark and isolated areas away from commercial activity, which makes sex workers vulnerable to violence, rape, robberies, and murders.⁹

Criminalising our clients is the latest form of structural violence which leaves us without income, with less ability to negotiate, and increased stigmatisation. This year, in France, despite the opposition of more than 100 sex workers', human rights', LGBT and women's organisation, a Bill to criminalise clients based on unfounded statistics is passed through National Assembly.¹⁰

By violence, we mean our constant silencing and exclusion from policy-making platforms as well women's and workers' rights conferences¹¹. Though our voices are getting stronger, our organisations more sustainable and our allies more vocal, we are still being denied agency to speak out about effective strategies to diminish violence against us.

Being so, on this day, we, sex workers and allies from across Europe and Central Asia invite you to join us, listen to our stories, and stand up BY OUR SIDE to demand an end to ALL forms of violence against sex workers!

To find out more about the events organised by our members:

visit our web pages: www.sexworkeurope.org , www.swannet.org, <http://tampep.eu/>
or visit our face book page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/254706031353030/>

To contact us: info@sexworkeurope.org, marijat@swannet.org, tampep@xs4all.nl

⁷http://www.vb.kg/doc/252680_salamat_adylov:_oboroty_seks_indystrii_v_bishkeke_dohodiat_do_10 mln.h tml

⁸http://www.vb.kg/doc/252680_salamat_adylov:_oboroty_seks_indystrii_v_bishkeke_dohodiat_do_10 mln.h tml

⁹http://www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/SZEXE_ForTheSession_CEDAW54.pdf

¹⁰<http://site.strass-syndicat.org/2013/09/manifeste-contre-la-penalisation-des-prostituees-et-de-leurs-clients/>

¹¹ Scotland: sex workers excluded from holding public event at trade union council to debate law proposal
<http://glasgowswou.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/very-latest-press-release-see-the-press-kit-for-more/>