

Search for Rupa

A YOUNG Nepali citizen arriving in Kuwait to work as a maid, has ended up a victim of an organised human trafficking ring based in Riggae. She was carried unconscious into the place used as a brothel and later made a desperate appeal to be rescued so that she could go home.

Unfortunately a visit to the premises revealed that the gang have now moved Rupa to another apartment. It was through the Arab Times that her message was sent. Since then we have been trying to locate her, so that we can send her home.



Rupa is not alone. According to one person in authority that I interviewed, there are several ways in which girls get exploited by the flesh trade. One is that they are duped into coming on bogus company visas. Second they are runaway maids who have absconded from abusive employers and ended up in the clutches of a gang or thirdly they are bought in on private sponsorship and either willingly or unwillingly end up in a brothel.

Human trafficking is a global problem, but there is always a local solution. One of the local solutions proposed by Kuwait Parliament is to abolish the private sponsorship system and establish a mechanism by which maids and other domestic workers have their working conditions and salaries monitored and administered by a government appointed agency. This is an excellent idea. The thorough application and enforcement of such a mechanism could possibly reduce as much as 70 percent of the misery experienced by some of the most vulnerable workers in Kuwait.

In the wake of yet another critical report on human rights issues the whole issue of the 'kafeel' system (private sponsorship) deserves to be examined again. While it is true only a minority of employers abuse their workers, the present system allows no protection or enforcement of law. The result is the continuing ugly spectre of maid suicide, unjust imprisonment of absconding workers and general human misery.

This week the season of Lent draws to an end. The global Christian Church enters Easter Holy Week, a time when we recall the Passion of Christ. In the midst of this story of suffering and injustice, hope and divine purpose triumphs. To Rupa! Wherever you are. In the midst of your suffering I pray that you will find hope. May you find your way home soon!

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