
#INTEL

AUGUST 16, 2017 / 6:16 PM / 2 DAYS AGO

India's bonded workers battle 'captivity mentality': after rescue

Anuradha Nagaraj



CHENNAI, India (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - After his rescue from abuse and overwork as a bonded labourer in a brick kiln in south India, Shanmugam Paneer has set up his own business making household items from bamboo.

But the lifeless monotone he uses to describe his five-year ordeal betrays an inner struggle to move on from one of India's most prevalent forms of human trafficking.

"For many, the process of coming out with the truth is far more painful than actually living those years in bondage," said Loretta Jhona, a counsellor with the U.S.-based charity International Justice Mission.

"Freedom becomes an alien concept and they constantly battle with their captivity mentality."

Though India banned bonded labour in 1976, it remains widespread, with millions working in fields, brick kilns, rice mills and brothels, or as domestic workers to pay off debts.

India announced an ambitious goal last year to rescue more than 18 million bonded labourers by 2030 and to increase fivefold the compensation that is paid to them, as part of a wider drive to tackle modern slavery.

“People are released physically but not really released from the burden of the debt, or the mental trauma they have undergone,” said Umi Daniel, a migration expert at the Aide et Action International charity.

Many former slaves instinctively curl up in their beds, used to spending a couple of hours sleeping in a cramped space, Jhona told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

While survivors of sex trafficking often receive help in shelter homes, rescued bonded labourers simply return to their villages and completely shut down.

“Very often there is no talk of the years spent in bondage,” said Jhona, adding that workers often find it hard to tell her of their hopes for the future.

“They ask us how they can have aspirations, when even to eat or sleep they needed permission from their owners,” she said.

“It is heartbreaking to see people with nil dreams and no aspirations, even for their children. They don’t think a better future can exist and most refuse to talk about any of it for months.”

NO FEAR

Some rescued bonded labourers are coming together to lobby for their rights and share their stories.

Rukamana Deep says he finally “felt free” when he gave a lecture at the Odisha National Law University in April, describing how his family of four were trapped in a brick kiln.

Deep was able to tell his tale in detail, recounting his anger, despair and helplessness as they worked round the clock to make up to 1,000 bricks a day for 100 Indian rupees (\$1.56).

“I just wanted to tell my story.”

Deep says his confidence comes from the fact that he knows he is not alone, after attending monthly meetings of a migrant bonded labour forum, Dadan Goti Shramik Surakshya Manch.

“We just talk about a lot of things, including the present challenges and the past problems,” he said. “We understand each other and also create teams that immediately reach out to recently rescued workers. It’s important for them to talk.”

Daniel - of Aide et Action International - believes such forums are critical.

“It’s a big step in their healing process,” he said.

Reporting by Anuradha Nagaraj, Editing by Katy Migiro and Lyndsay Griffiths. Please credit the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, women’s rights, trafficking and climate change. Visit news.trust.org

#WORLD NEWS

AUGUST 18, 2017 / 1:04 AM / 9 HOURS AGO

Islamic State claims responsibility for Barcelona van attack

People are evacuated after a van crashed into pedestrians near the Las Ramblas avenue in central Barcelona, Spain August 17, 2017. Ana Jimenez/La Vanguardia/via REUTERS

Reuters Staff



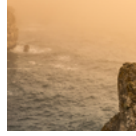
CAIRO (Reuters) - Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack in which a van plowed into crowds in the Spanish city of Barcelona on Thursday, the group's Amaq news agency said.

"The perpetrators of the Barcelona attack are soldiers of the Islamic State and carried out the operation in response to calls for targeting coalition states," the agency said, referring to a United States-led coalition against the Sunni militant group.

Reporting by Ali Abdelaty; Writing by Ahmed Aboulenein; Editing by Alison Williams

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#WORLD NEWS

AUGUST 17, 2017 / 7:51 PM / 7 HOURS AGO

Canada sees 'unsustainable' spike in asylum seekers at U.S. border

A group of asylum seekers wait to be processed after being escorted from their tent encampment to the Canada Border Services in Lacolle, Quebec, Canada August 11, 2017.

Christinne Muschi

Anna Mehler Paperny and Allison Lampert



TORONTO/MONTREAL (Reuters) - The number of asylum seekers who illegally crossed the U.S. border into Canada more than tripled last month, according to Canadian government data released on Thursday, as migrants worried about the U.S. administration's immigration crackdown head north.

More than 3,100 people walked across the border illegally in July to file refugee claims and were arrested, up from 884 in June, the federal government said.

Ninety-six percent of them went to Quebec, where an influx of asylum seekers, primarily Haitians, is sparking a backlash from opposition politicians and anti-immigrant groups in the primarily French-speaking province.

In the first 15 days of August, an additional 3,800 asylum seekers were arrested crossing the U.S. border into Quebec, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said. More than 1,000 people are living in tents and government facilities at a Lacolle, Quebec border crossing across from upstate New York.

"It's not a crisis. It's a situation that is extraordinary. But it's well-managed," Transport Minister Marc Garneau told reporters in Lacolle on Thursday.

The Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), which is responsible for hearing all asylum claims, has redeployed resources to deal with the Quebec arrivals.

“The IRB had to make adjustments to be in a position to respond to the current situation that is clearly unsustainable,” spokeswoman Anna Pape said in an email.

Canada has launched a campaign to counter misinformation about the country’s refugee policy, which is believed to be one reason for the influx of refugees.

FILE PHOTO: Women claiming to be from Burundi cross the US-Canada border into Quebec from Champlain, New York, August 3, 2017.

Christinne Muschi

reporters.

Conservative parliamentarian Michelle Rempel, her party's immigration critic, said the government steps are a "band aid" solution.

"This situation started with Prime Minister [Justin] Trudeau's irresponsible tweets and he has a responsibility to fix it," Rempel said in a statement, referring to January tweets Trudeau sent touting Canada's welcome of refugees after a U.S. travel ban was unveiled.

FILE PHOTO: A line of asylum seekers who identified themselves as from Haiti wait to enter into Canada from Roxham Road in Champlain, New York, U.S., August 7, 2017.

Christinne Muschi

seeking asylum and our government is sending a clear message.

Many of the most recent asylum seekers arriving in Quebec have been Haitians who face looming deportation from the United States when their temporary protected status expires in January 2018.

Canada ended its own ban on deportations to Haiti last summer. In the first quarter of this year, almost two-thirds of Haitian refugee claims were rejected, according to government figures.

The spike in asylum seekers has sparked protests by anti-migrant groups who say Canada is being soft on law-breakers.

The Montreal suburb of Boucherville has received dozens of messages on social media denouncing the asylum seekers, some of whom are being housed at a former seniors' home in the quiet suburb, according to local media reports. Montreal, Quebec's biggest city, opened its Olympic Stadium to house the arrivals.

Sylvain Brouillette, a spokesman for right-wing extremist group La Meute, which is organizing a Quebec City protest on Sunday, said his group is protesting the "policies of the Trudeau government toward illegal immigration."

Reporting by Anna Mehler Paperny and Allison Lampert; editing by Lisa Shumaker and Dan Grebler

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