

Sex Trafficking: Groups Expose Houston's Dark Secret

Houston tops an ugly list. According to the U.S. Justice Department, the Texas metropolis is one of the country's largest hubs of human trafficking.

The problem is simply too big for police to tackle alone so Christian organizations are helping to expose the travesty and give shelter to its victims.

A night drive on the streets of Houston shines a bright light on the issue.

"The ship channel area is a hot spot," Adam Chaney, mobilization director of Elijah Rising, told CBN News. "The galleria area south of the actual galleria is probably the epicenter for human trafficking in Houston."

Elijah Rising has rescued at least a dozen human-trafficking victims and also directs bus tours to show Houston residents the hot spots for sex trafficking. It has identified around 300 suspected locations.

"The I-10 corridor has been labeled as the No. 1 human-trafficking corridor in the nation," Homeland Security agent Mike Booker said.

Some hot spots look like spas, but they're actually brothels selling enslaved girls for sex.

Ohad Shaul worked as a human-trafficking bodyguard.

"I wouldn't say the living conditions of a dog because your dog you take out once or twice a day," Shaul told CBN News. "They [these girls] get sold 10 times a day on a good day [and] on a bad day they'd get sold 20 or 30 times a day."

Victims include women smuggled from Southeast Asia, South America and Mexico.

But that's not all.

There are an estimated 6,000 children on the streets of Houston on any given night, all runaways. That number has helped the city earn the unwelcome distinction as one of the most intense areas in the country for child sex trafficking.

CBN News talked to Kellie Armstrong with about the issue.

"It's an alarming problem," Armstrong said. "I think for me as a social worker who has been dealing with this for years and years and years, I was totally unaware that our city was a hub of trafficking."

The organization established Freedom Place, a safe house in the country for girls rescued from the human trafficking trade.

Volunteers from Houston-area churches joined forces to refurbish and furnish every inch of Freedom Place.

"I mean it is just ask—ask and it will be given and given abundantly," Armstrong said. "I mean that is what we have experienced. I mean everything in this home has been really donated."

Armstrong calls this farm—and its services—a place for girls to hide, heal and find hope for the future.

In 10 years, the U.S. Attorney's Office says 500 human trafficking victims have been rescued in Houston. The average age of girls entering the industry is 13, and their life expectancy as sex slaves is seven years.