

The Cambodian Government's Anti Trafficking Law is supposed to protect people from the harmful outcomes of human trafficking. It intends to 'rescue' female sex workers from trafficking and 'rehabilitate' them. However, this law is being used to crack down on sex workers, criminalising them and their only source of income. WNU's documentation reveals that the police use it to exploit and harass sex workers.

Is this what a rescue mission looks like?



The Womens Network For Unity is grassroots representative collective of Phnom Penh based Sex Workers.

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Arrest

Sex workers are arrested under the Anti Trafficking Law while soliciting clients. In some situations, police have been known to dress in plainclothes and pose as clients in order to raid and arrest sex workers. Arrested sex workers are taken into detention.



Extortion

During an arrest and in detention, sex workers often have to bribe police officers to be released, or have their money or cellphones (sometimes both) taken from them by the police in exchange for decent treatment. A sex worker makes 5US\$ on a good day and her daily expenditure is 8US\$. Every day in detention is a day away from work and mounting debt.



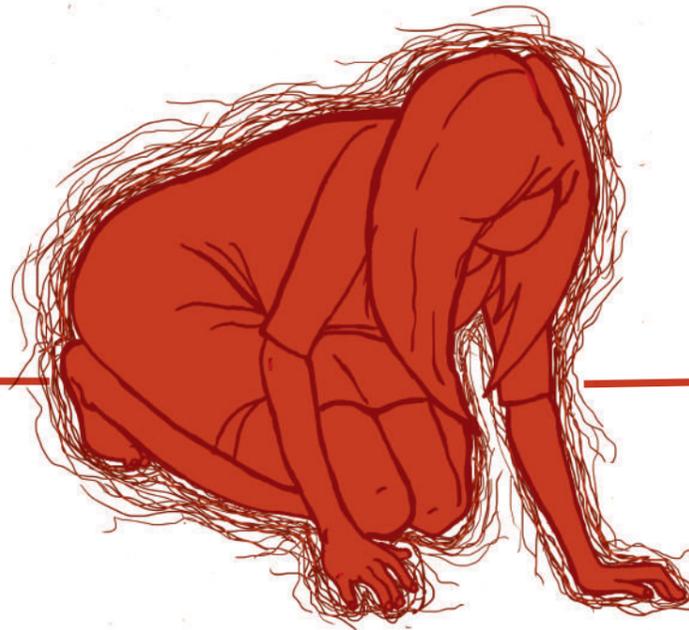
Abuse

Sex workers experience sexual, physical and verbal abuse during arrest and detention leaving them miserable, scared and hurt. Sex workers in detention are also subjected to humiliating treatment like having their hair forcibly shorn, or being chained.



Rape

A sex worker may be raped and/or gangraped up to three times during one period of detention.



Detention

A sex worker is in detention for anywhere from 12 hours to 3 days. A sex worker is detained 7-8 times a year. On average, a sex worker makes US\$5 a day, so the financial losses incurred from arrest and detention can go up to US\$120.



Starvation

During detention in police custody sex workers are not given any food or water. This is particularly dangerous for HIV positive sex workers who need proper nutrition and access to medicines every day.



Paper work

Sex Workers are sent from police custody to rehabilitation centres managed by the Department of Social Affairs, Veteran & Youth Rehabilitation. From here, they can be released if an NGO can vouch for them. Some sex workers are 'rehabilitated' into the garment industry; they are guaranteed release from detention in exchange for leaving sex work to work in sweat shops.



Release

After being released from the Department of Social Affairs, Veteran & Youth Rehabilitation, sex workers are free to leave but live in the fear of being arrested.