



Sex Workers Rights Advocacy Network in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia

SWAN News, Issue 2, Year 1, June 2006

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

UNGASS And Sex-Workers' Rights

25 years after AIDS was first diagnosed, countries from all around the world gathered together between May 31 and June 2 for a three-day-long meeting devoted to AIDS. The United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) - High Level Review Meeting on HIV/AIDS - was held in New York, at the UN headquarters. For the first time in the UN's history, civil society hearings went on parallelly to government discussions, giving a much stronger opportunity for civil society representatives to have their voice heard. Eszter Csernus from HCLU – SWAN was one of the participants at the civil society hearings. Although civil society members touched all the hot issues in their speeches and comments, the UNGASS meeting failed to become a real review meeting, and the final version of the Political Declaration that was adopted on June 2 does not contain clear targets and deadlines, real commitment to universal access to treatment, does not name or support substitution treatment, and does not name the vulnerable groups that should be protected and empowered. [More](#)

UNGASS in SHARP Focus

UNGASS in SHARP Focus was an initiative of the OSI/SHARP (Sexual Health and Rights Project). The purpose of this electronic bulletin was to provide information about key sexual health and rights issues and activities arising in the process of the UNGASS review. It was directed both toward those who were attending the special session and those who were not. There were 6 issues released. The first two prior to the review, in order to provide background information about the status of negotiations and planned activities during the UNGASS. Three issues were released during the UNGASS (May 31 – June 2), at the end of each day, and a wrap-up report was issued following the end of the session. [More](#)

IN THE FOCUS:

AOSI Wins the Case Against USAID: Victory For Advocates of Sex Workers' Rights

In a victory for free speech and sound public health policy, a US federal judge ruled in May 2006 that a sweeping restriction on the activities of groups participating in the federal U.S. government's international HIV/AIDS program violates the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

At issue in the case is a requirement that public health groups receiving U.S. funds pledge their "opposition to prostitution" in order to continue their life-saving HIV prevention work. Congress passed the pledge requirement law in 2003, as part of the Global AIDS Act. Under this policy, recipients of U.S. aid are restricted in how they use even their private funds, impeding their ability to deliver effective prevention services to sex workers. [More](#)

NEWS FROM THE SWAN NETWORK

Cross-Border Collaboration

In May 2006, Slovakian NGO Odysseus began low threshold and free of charge HIV/AIDS, Syphilis, Hepatitis C and B testing. This anonymous service is provided to street sex workers and drug users. The testing, analysis and comparison of the results and types of viruses are the main activities in the project ERATO, in which Odysseus partnered with civil society organizations from Greece and Ukraine.

Odysseus has recently submitted funding proposals for another two cross-border projects: one to Slovak and Czech Women's Fund, the other to the All Different-All Equal Campaign supported by the EU.

Contact person: Lubica Tornoczyova, Odysseus Slovakia

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[About Odysseus](#)

Web site: www.ozodyseus.sk (Under reconstruction, expected re-launch in end June 2006)

New Project for Sex Workers in Altay

Siberian Initiative from Barnaul in Russia started a new HIV/AIDS prevention project in the Altay Republic. Its main objectives are provision of access to professional health services and testing, distribution of information about and promotion of lower-risk behaviour, and establishment of a self-support group of HIV-positive sex workers. This is the first time ever for such activities to be organized in the Altay region. Sex industry is particular for the republic due to its well-developed tourism. If successful, the project might be a model for similar initiatives in smaller towns and villages in Russia. So far, similar work has been done only in bigger regions and cities in this country.

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[About Siberian Initiative](#)

Website: <http://www.sibin.ru>

International Candle Light Memorial Day in Serbia and Montenegro

A month-long campaign (May 5 –June 5, 2006) was organized by a coalition of ten NGOs and IGOs in Serbia and Montenegro- Center E8, JAZAS, Red Line, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, National AIDS Office in Serbia, HPVPI Network, UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, UNDP, UNICEF, and UNODC. The

campaign, which took place in 17 towns, drew public attention to the problems of the people living with HIV/AIDS, fought against stigma and discrimination against them and advocated for their human rights. Two PSAs and jingles were aired on major TV and radio stations, volunteers distributed printed material from the street boots, including the booklet entitled "Policy on HIV/AIDS at the Workplace", organized were journalist training sessions and film premiers (such as Transit, produced by Staying Alive, MTV). On May 20, the International AIDS Candle Light Memorial Day, memorial events were organized on the main square in Belgrade and in 15 other cities in Serbia and Montenegro. The campaign drew unprecedented media coverage. One of the PSAs promoted voluntary counseling and testing, made in the mobile medical units that provides health services to sex workers.

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[About JAZAS](#)

Website: www.candlelightmemorial.org

Campaign on HIV/AIDS And Human Rights in St. Petersburg

An educational information campaign "HIV/AIDS and Human Rights" took place in St. Petersburg between May 10 – 12, 2006. In the framework of the campaign, organized by the Smolni Institute of Liberal Arts and Science and the Charitable Foundation Humanitarian Action, Shati Avirgan, a New York researcher, writer and film producer, presented a report on the role of mass media in the struggle with HIV/AIDS. The Rodina cinema hosted a premiere of her film The Chronicle of World Movement against AIDS, followed by a public discussion. A seminar Principles of HIV/AIDS Prevention and training on HIV/AIDS and human rights were delivered at the Smolni Institute to students and NGO representatives. The seminar and the training focused on the nuances of advocacy for human rights of people with HIV, intravenous drug users and sex workers.

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[About Humanitarian Action](#)

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PUBLICATIONS

Beyond Decriminalization: A Roadmap for Legislative Changes

Pivot Legal Society (www.pivotlegal.org), a Canadian NGO devoted to "advancing the interests and improving the lives of marginalized persons through the law reform, legal education and strategic legal action", in June 2006 issued the study "Beyond Decriminalization: Sex Work, Human Rights and a New Framework for Law Reform". A result of team work of legal experts, sex workers from various areas of sex industry, and other contributors, the study gives a road map for the changes in the Canadian legal system, necessary to ensure sex workers' rights to expression, life, liberty, security of the person, and equality, as enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. [More](#)

IN THE NEWS

Note: For the copyrights reasons, we are unable to place the full text of the selected articles on the SWAN-HCLU website. Instead, we are providing a link to the news source, for which we do not know how long it will be active. We apologize in advance for possible inconveniences.

Miami Herald, USA:

Transgender prostitutes get political to end violence

GUATEMALA, Jun. 20, 2006 - A group of transgender prostitutes is working to put an end to the ruthless violence and disease that have recently beset sex workers.

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/14857257.htm>

Vancouver 24 Hours, Canada:

World looks to Vancouver

VANCOUVER, June 21, 2006 - Sex industry workers' health, safety and rights are among many conversations taking place at the World Urban Forum in Vancouver this week. <http://vancouver.24hrs.ca/News/2006/06/21/1644355-sun.html>

Political Gateway, USA:

Report slams police abuse against France's prostitutes

PARIS, June 22, 2006 (AFP) - A French law cracking down on prostitution has led to a surge in police harassment, driving Paris sex workers underground without proving effective against trafficking, a report by rights groups said on Thursday.

<http://www.politicalgateway.com/news/read/20718>

Xtra West, Canada:

Pivot unveils sex worker study SEX LAWS / Sullivan refuses to meet with researchers

VANCOUVER, June 22, 2006 - At the study's unveiling, John Lowman one of the lead researchers, angrily criticized Vancouver mayor Sam Sullivan for his apparent unwillingness to meet with spokespeople from Pivot and for failing to respond to the contents of the report...Advocates for sex trade workers are hopeful the new subcommittee will have time to report to Parliament before the next election and that they will recommend the Canadian Criminal Code sections that criminalize adult sex trade workers be repealed.

http://www.xtra.ca/public/viewstory.aspx?AFF_TYPE=4&STORY_ID=1803&PUB_TEMPLATE_ID=2

PRO AND CONTRA DECRIMINALIZATION

Fox News, USA:

'Safe' Prostitution by Father Jonathan Morris for FOX Fan Central

Jun 12, 2006 - The hypocrisy is appalling. Because it legalized prostitution in 2002, German officials now find themselves in a quandary. Until now they have been able to hide behind the talking points of sex industry advocates. Dressed in sharp ties and pretty pantsuits, they have learned to say with a straight face that its legalization is good for women as it defends their rights to: 1) the career of their choice, 2) legal recourse in the case of abuse, 3) social services including health benefits, unemployment, and retirement plans, and 4) safety from sexually transmitted diseases. But as the market adjusts to new demands (the price of sex is less than a

ticket to a soccer match), more people see the obvious — prostitutes, legal or illegal, are first and foremost a financial commodity in the hands of greedy men, “providers” and “consumers” alike.

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,199113,00.html>

CALL FOR PAPERS

OneWorld South Asia, June 21, 2006. Call for Papers: **War and Terror: Raced-Gendered Logics and Effects**. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* invites submissions for a special issue titled "**War and Terror: Raced-Gendered Logics and Effects**," slated for publication in Summer 2007. ‘..We welcome innovative analyses of women's involvement in war and terror (as combatants, military and political decision-makers, interrogators of military captives, providers of logistical support, medical personnel, sex workers, hostages, political prisoners, UN peacekeepers and peace builders, human rights workers, NGO activists, and activists in resistance to occupying forces); the impact of war on women (as direct casualties, as mothers, as war refugees, as victims of sexual violence by militants, combatants, and domestic partners, women's experiences of loss in relation to families, communities, nations)..’ <http://southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/134995/1>

CORRECTION

Some of the information contained in the article about the SWAN Member JAZAS, published in the SWAN News 1, related to JAZAS Youth, a different NGO. We apologize to both JAZAS and our readers. Below is the introduction to JAZAS and their valuable work.

Association Against AIDS - JAZAS, Serbia

Established in 1991 in Belgrade, JAZAS was the first NGO active in AIDS prevention in the former Yugoslavia.

JAZAS focuses its activities on prevention and education among general population, youth and vulnerable groups, advocacy and services provision for vulnerable groups. Since 2004, JAZAS included sex workers among its target groups. It runs Mobile Support Unit offering counselling, testing, and treatment to sex workers. An outreach team (the first ever organized at a country level in AIDS/STI prevention) gets out among sex workers twice a week delivering condoms, lubricants, and leaflets, and performing HIV/STI prevention surveillance. [More](#)

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About us

SWAN newsletter is the voice of the Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network, a network of civil society organizations engaged in advocating the Human Rights of the sex workers in Central and Eastern Europe, CIS and South-East Europe. [More](#)

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