## Traffickers blitz borders

## Illegal movement of humans second only to drugs as world's most profitable criminal enterprise



## Analysis

THE immigration division of Home Affairs, over the past decade in particular, has found itself on the frontline of the complex war against human trafficking and people smuggling in South Africa.

The rise of this phenomenon in our country implies the existence of powerful organised criminal syndicates that are assisted by a mix of foreign and local agents and facilitators, many of whom conduct legitimate business and lend a veneer of respectability to this illicit endeavour.

While there may at times be a distinction between people smuggling and human trafficking, which turns on the issue of consent of the person who is the subject of the illegal relocation, often the distinction is spurious. Smuggling may at times begin as covert migration but mutate into trafficking when the smuggler turns over the vulnerable migrant to trafficking syndicates. The new Act recognises this in its broad treatment of the offence in chanter 2.

In South Africa people smuggling is closely. linked to the asylum system, which is often used as a means of regularising the stay of persons who arrive on our shores illegally.

Having inter alia implemented an accelerated process of determining newly arrived asylum seeker applications within six months, this incentive for using (or abusing) this process has been introduced, leading to a dramatic decline in the number of new asylum applications last year.

New and altered modes of operations are constantly devised by trafficking syndicates and the state is in a perpetual drive to improve its detection and regulating capabilities – all of which require enormous resources which are more readily available in developed countries.

Border control and tighter enforcement of immigration and permitting processes by the Department of Home Affairs have become a major site of struggle between syndicates and the state. Ironically, the first line of attack by syndicates is to accuse the department of human rights violations in what is essentially a reputation war.

This is not unique to South Africa. On a daily basis attempts are made to breach border security at ports of entry utilising legitimate means of challenge alongside a carefully orchestrated propaganda war. Enmeshed

## Key points

- The immigration division of Home Affairs, over the last decade in particular, has found itself on the frontline of the complex war against human trafficking and people smuggling in South Africa.
- In South Africa people smuggling is closely linked to the asylum system, which is often used as a means of regularising the stay of persons who arrive on our shores illegally.

with these challenges is the use of fraudulent

documents, collusion with corrupt officials

and the acquisition of documents through

department.

misrepresentation by interlocutors with the

In this month of August as South Africa

pays particular attention to the issues con-

between the illicit sex industry and people

the onslaught in the name of human rights

of prostitution as if this is a benign practice

which holds all promise for the attainment of

takes the form of calls for the legalisation

smuggling and human trafficking. Here again

fronting women, it is apt to draw the link

- The internet has opened new avenues for traffickers who operate both internationally and domestically.
- Trafficking is the fastest growing industry in the world.
- Combating, investigation and prosecution of persons and organisations involved in human trafficking in South Africa is in its infancy.

the total emancipation of women. Nothing in these debates record the indignity, degradation and disgrace suffered by women and children who are trafficked in the so-called "trade".

The internet has opened new avenues for traffickers who operate both internationally and domestically.

On an outreach campaign recently in Bredasdorp the Film and Publications Board encountered a courageous Afrikaner woman who through social media on the internet was lured into a situation where she was kidnapped and trafficked into sexual slavery for months until a police investigation resulted in her rescue. This case reminds us that with new advances come new dangers, especially for women and children.

Trafficking is the fastest growing industry in the world.

It is second only to drug trafficking as the most profitable illegal industry in the world

In 2005 it was estimated that trafficking attracted a global annual profit of \$31.6bn (R327bn).

In 2008 the UN estimated nearly 2.5 million people from 127 different countries were being trafficked into 137 countries around the world

Combating, investigation and prosecution of persons and organisations involved in human trafficking in South Africa is in its infancy.

These are very difficult cases to prove in court and perpetrators are highly resourced and match the efforts of the state in terms of specialist skills and systems to prevent detection and prosecution.

Comprehensive record-keeping of reported violations and of investigations is only now beginning to be kept.

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