

Infiltrating the world of modern slavery

Anas Arameyas Anas is used to living with death threats. That won't stop him from going undercover again to reveal the brutal reality of the trafficking industry.

By Ingrid Hvidsten

In January, Anas Arameyas Anas and the rest of the editorial staff of the newspaper *The Crusading Guide* in Ghana made an important decision. As part of his long-time commitment to expose traffickers and networks of prostitution, Anas decided to go undercover at a brothel to reveal the horrible reality on the inside, young girls aged 11 to 14 years being forced to sell sexual services in order to pay for their daily bread.

"We decided to go undercover because the Ghana Police Service had complained that they could not obtain hard core evidence of children being sexually molested at the brothel, which they needed to prosecute the owner", the journalist explains.

A month of documentation

A great effort was made to fit in at the brothel, so that nobody would understand what his real project was – to come up with evidence of the horrible things that was happening.

"I needed to be like them, feel like them and act like them. After having mastered the language and the behavioural pattern, I was convinced that I needed to get in there. I did all that was needed to be accepted without any problem. There was no suspicion from any quarter until the story broke", he says.

Anas got a job as a cleaning assistant, sweeping used condoms and cleaning rooms. He spent about 72 days working with the case in total, and was undercover for about a month. With stills and video, he was able to provide the evidence the police needed to prosecute the men behind.

He witnessed sexual abuse of young children

day after day – still, he is quite clear when asked if he was ever tempted to interfere and try to prevent the abuse.

"No, never. Any attempt at interfering would have exposed my thinking and that would have meant a big danger to my life", Anas says.

A dangerous job

Since the year 2000, the undercover reporter has been writing about how traffickers in Ghana exploit their victims, often minors, and force them into prostitution. At the GIJC, he will share some of the extraordinary stories with the audience. The essential keywords are trafficking and exploitation, particularly of young girls.

Because of his work, Anas has been threatened several times. His voice is not appreciated by everybody. He doesn't allow his picture to be published, for his own security, and he has to be cautious in his everyday life.

"Traffickers are not imaginary. They exist and execute their job with sophistication and brutal precision. Any investigative reporter who takes them for granted does that at his or her own risk. Most threats usually come from the traffickers and their bunch of conspirators. I must admit that though security lies in the hands of God almighty, my newspaper, *The Crusading Guide*, provides some level of security for me, especially in the evenings. Fear is minimized if there is enough security", Anas says.

Trafficking is slavery

Despite the restrictions he has to live with because of the threats, Anas does not intend to quit working to expose more of the horrible faces of trafficking and prostitution.

"I consider trafficking as a modern form of slavery. I see it as an affront to the victim's



fundamental human rights, and so have been dedicated to ensuring that I do my part for the vulnerable victims", he says.

The investigating journalist already has a new project. This time, if everything works out, he will broadcast his work on TV.

"I am working on a big television project with exclusively undercover journalism for Ghana Television. It would be the first of its kind in Africa and would focus on trafficking and other issues on human rights. I am currently sourcing for funding for my new *Crusading eye* project. By God's grace, the programme will kick off next month", he says.

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