

# Human trafficking in the media

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## OVERVIEW

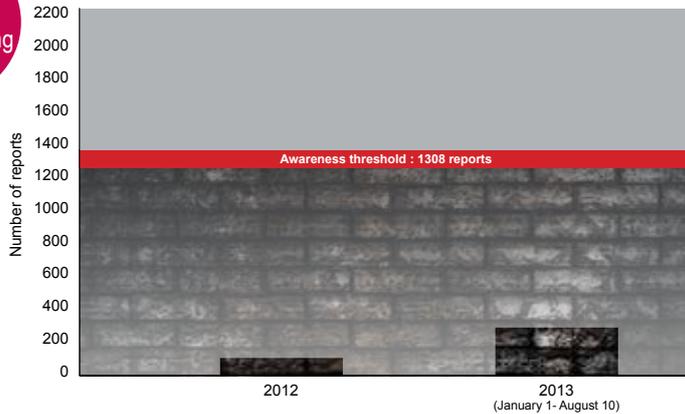
Human trafficking, essentially encompassing the different definitions of “modern-day slavery”, “forced servitude” and “sex trade”, is one of the biggest yet elusive problems in modern history. NGOs, governments and activist groups across the globe have formed with the sole purpose of combatting the practice, yet public awareness of the “business” remains abysmal. Lack of awareness makes it difficult for meaningful debate on the problems and efforts to create and implement solutions.

Many of the problems noted in dealing with such a large-scale problem include definitional issues, risk of putting victims in danger, ignorance of businesses in supply chains and legal roadblocks in an increasingly globalized world. However, the debate is barely visible on the biggest, most effective information platforms in the world: Global TV and print media. Analyzing how opinion-leading media report on human trafficking is key to determining the next steps in raising real awareness that promotes action.

## Human trafficking remains in media blind spot

January 1, 2012 - August 10, 2013  
Visibility of trafficking in opinion-leading media

Basis: 82 reports in 2012 and 305 reports Jan. 1-Aug. 10, 2013 on human trafficking on 37 international TV news programmes, 8 reports in 2012 and 9 reports Jan. 1-Aug. 10, 2013 in 3 business print media



Opinion-leading media, including prime-time TV news programs and business print media across the globe, remain the agenda-setters capable of raising public awareness of issues. Television, in particular, is the one medium that can break the attention barrier for issues of low salience, focusing public attention on issues that are little known outside of NGO and activist circles. However, the issue of trafficking is not reported on frequently enough to compete with reports on international conflicts, politics and other crimes. Research shows that an issue must be reported on two to three times a week in TV news and five to six times a week in daily papers to stand out in a sea of reports focused on international conflicts, scandals and politics. Although global media is showing an increased interest in human trafficking in 2013, reporting remains well below the awareness threshold for the mass public.

## INTERVIEW

**Harriet Mouchly-Weiss**

Managing partner of Strategy XXI and staunch advocate for engaging civil society in combatting human trafficking.



**Q:** It took a while for human trafficking to get on the media agenda. What made journalists realize the importance of the problem?

**Harriett Mouchly-Weiss:** The issue has been on the agenda of interest groups for a long time. But it was eventually advocacy and outreach to a few prominent people around the world, whose views are trusted and respected, and in turn their outreach to prominent media groups that made the difference.

**Q:** Where do NGOs need to improve to attract media interest?

**Harriett Mouchly-Weiss:** It is important for them to make the utmost use of all their communication, public and policy advocacy (dialogue with governments and decision makers) to highlight the emergency that trafficking is – particularly as part of ongoing protection campaigns of the abused.

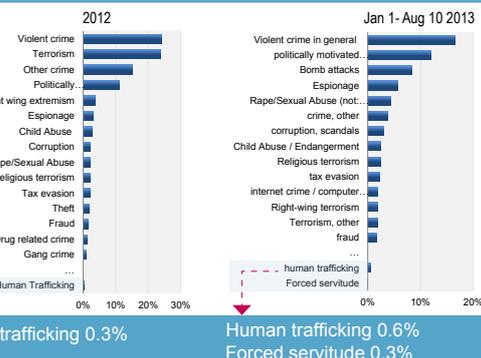
**Q:** What needs to be done to push the topic of human trafficking above the awareness threshold?

**Harriett Mouchly-Weiss:** Awareness is only the beginning – resources (human and financial) should be prioritized by governments and international organizations to effectively combat trafficking and put an end to it. The good work that is currently being done, protecting men, women and children, is simply not at the scale or consistency that is needed.

## No shortage of interest in crime, media sets agenda on biggest threats

January 1, 2012 - August 10, 2013  
Visibility of crimes on international TV

Basis: 34,063 reports in 2012 and 51,837 reports Jan. 1-Aug. 10, 2013 on 37 international TV news programs

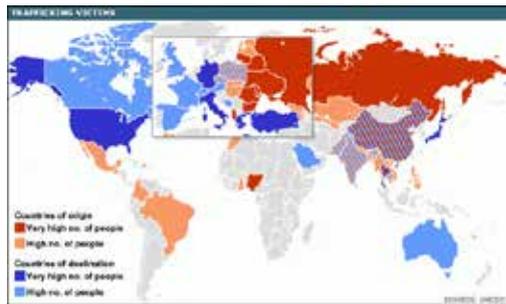
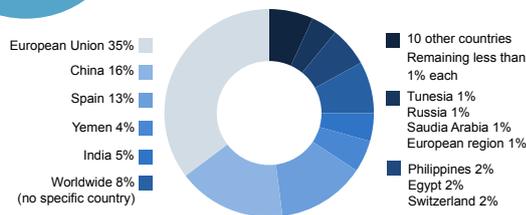


Crime and security issues are one of the most covered topics on international TV news, accounting for roughly 10% of all reports. When news programs are analyzed by specific types of crimes reported, human trafficking only accounted for 0.3% of reports in 2012. Violent crimes, such as murder and terrorism, clearly dominated the agenda, while the death of rape victims in South Africa and India caught international media interest in 2013 along with concerns over espionage with the Edward Snowden case. The crimes the media choose to report on reflect which issues opinion-leaders find most threatening, essentially shaping public perceptions of what is most important to focus resources on. However, media attention to human trafficking in the realm of crime reporting is rising, as TV reports increased by 0.6% in the first eight months of 2013.

January 1, 2012 - August 10, 2013

## Countries and regions associated with trafficking on international TV

Basis: 409 reports on human trafficking Jan. 1, 2012- August 10, 2013, on 37 international TV news programs

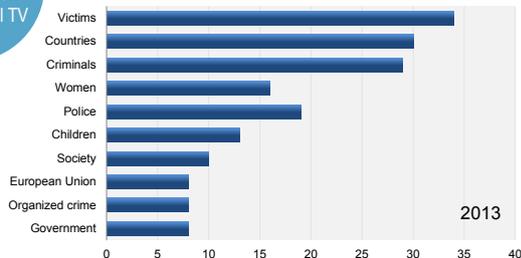


## Leading NGOs and individual voices absent

January 1 - August 10, 2013

## Top protagonists on human trafficking on international TV

Basis: 305 reports Jan. 1-Aug. 10, 2013 on 37 international TV news programs



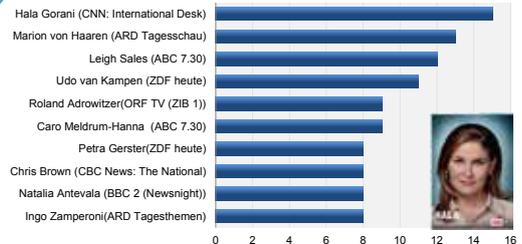
Individual efforts to combat terrorism are not visible on TV. Reports are mainly focused on victims, countries and government policies in dealing with the issues. Voices of leading NGOs are barely visible as well.

According to the Not For Sale Campaign, there are over 30 million slaves in the world today, more than at any other point in history. The UNODC specifically identifies parts of Europe and the United States as the main destinations of trafficked persons, while Asia and Russia account for the hot spots in trafficking origin. Global media, however, reflect a very different reality of the geographical expanse of the problem. The European Union garners the most attention for trafficking issues due to a push by the European Commission for anti-trafficking legislation, but individual European countries, such as Romania and Bulgaria, are hardly mentioned. Despite Russia and the Caucasus being identified as a hotbed for trafficking criminals, news on this region is nearly obsolete. Identifying the underlying issues of these countries in perpetuating human trafficking is key to sparking meaningful debate. Furthermore, "an estimated 14,000 to 17,000 humans are trafficked into the U.S. every year," notes Casey Chancellor, analyst at Media Tenor. "Yet the U.S. is never covered, nor do U.S. networks report on domestic activity."

January 1 - August 10, 2013

## Top TV journalists reporting on trafficking

Basis: 305 reports Jan. 1-Aug. 10, 2013 on 37 international TV news programs



International journalists face many difficulties in reporting on the business and crime of human trafficking, yet some stand out as leaders in maintaining reporting momentum and shaping the media debate.

CNN International was one of the top reporting news stations in the last year, with Hala Gorani highlighting investigative reports from their Freedom Project on trafficking around the world, while journalists from Germany and Australia also demonstrated strong initiative.

Overall, news anchors are the face of reporting, with little visibility for the investigative journalists on mainstream news programs. Knowing which journalists are focusing on trafficking and slave labor is essential to targeting messages.

## INTERVIEW



Joerg Eigendorf: Die Welt

Q: Why are you taking the risk covering human trafficking?

Joerg Eigendorf: We don't regard this as a risk but as a responsibility. Human trafficking is the root of modern slavery which has to be combatted by all means. Independent journalism has an important role to play in this battle.

Q: What are the key issues your team is facing?

Joerg Eigendorf: It is very difficult and dangerous research to bring light into this complex system. This is a very profitable and cynical "business" and the people behind it don't hesitate to use illegal means in order to keep risks away.

So the biggest challenge is to find victims willing to talk to us without bringing them into danger. It's even more challenging to talk to those who profit from human trafficking. But this is necessary to understand the business.

Q: How do you convince your Editor-in-Chief to keep the momentum going on the issue?

Joerg Eigendorf: Since we published our first profile story on trafficking in September 2010 we have received a lot of recognition, awards and support for our reporting on human trafficking. I get all the support necessary from my colleagues on the Editorial Board.

Eigendorf is chief editor of the investigative team of the Die Welt group in Germany, recognizing the importance of trafficking.