

Use of children as tourist bait: A crime against Humanity

A leading human rights agency in southern Sri Lanka said today that the "use of children as tourist bait is a crime against humanity".

Commenting on information published by United Nations Children's Agency (UNICEF) claiming that up to 50 000 children under the age of 15 are working as child prostitutes along the southern and western coastlines of Sri Lanka, Mr. Fernando of Anti-Child Labor Society of Sri Lanka said that he has every suspicion that the boom in child prostitution was government aided.

Sri Lanka once referred to as the pearl of the Indian Ocean has gradually been sidelined by international tourists due to security threats. Today, sending servants to the Middle East has overtaken tourism as Sri Lanka's main foreign exchange earner.

Mr. Fernando said that Sri Lanka's economy was unsustainable and that corruption and civil war has driven much of the country into eternal poverty.

"I will be little surprised if the government was purposely promoting child prostitution in order to attract tourists who prey on children" he said.

Mr. Fernando also expressed regret over the fact that Sri Lanka has now attained undesirable title of "pedophiles' paradise".

"Sri Lanka's aim is to gain a chunk of the world's sex tourism. Hence is why the government has taken no tangible steps towards the abolishment of this hideous crime on our island."

"The government which spends millions on investigating 17 year olds joining the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) seems to be little concerned about children as young as five being sexually exploited at its door step."

"It is time that every government minister involved in this scheme sits back and takes note of the fact that the use of children as tourist bait is a crime against humanity," Mr. Fernando concluded

