



Photo by: AP

Elem warns of rise in teen prostitution

Ruth Eglash
05/02/2013

Non-profit child welfare organization launches intensive ten-day Internet campaign aimed at rescuing teens from entering the sex trade.

Warning of a significant increase in teenagers turning to prostitution to make quick cash, non-profit child welfare organization Elem launched an intensive ten-day Internet campaign Tuesday aimed at rescuing teens from entering the sex trade. Under its on-line banner, "Awake all night - We won't judge you," Elem's Awake All Night project offers teens a sympathetic ear and, eventually, intensive rehabilitation services to keep them out of a life of prostitution. "The number of children and teens involved in sex for money is growing every day," said Awake All Night project director Dorit Friedman. "We're constantly seeing ads seeking younger and younger children for underage sex. "Our goal is to reach out to young people who are involved in any kind of prostitution and make it clear that there are some people out there who care about their welfare and will not judge them in any way." However, Friedman warned that while it used to be easy to detect teens involved in the sex trade by inspecting night clubs, today much of the activities have moved to the Internet and on-line chat rooms, making the already secretive industry much harder to detect. "That's one of the reasons we decided to focus our campaign on the Internet," she said, adding that Tel Aviv advertising agency Inbar, Merhav, Shaked has donated its expertise and resources to coordinate the campaign, while Internet operations Nana 10, lin4u, MSN, MAKO and Walla are providing the NGO with free banners. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Services' teen department, the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality and the National Insurance Institute's Fund for Children and Youth at Risk are also sponsoring the campaign. "Having sex for money?" says one of the messages on the on-line banners. "If you want to talk about it, whenever you want to talk about it, we're always here for you." The ads are to be accompanied by an urgent plea to call Elem's 24-hour hotline (054-977-3666) and a single click brings viewers directly to the website at www.elem.org.il. Elem's Awake All Night project is the only operation of its kind in Israel and its services include rehabilitation treatments for children and teens who find their lives spiraling out of control. Statistics released late last year by the Prime Minister's Office indicate that most of those working in prostitution start their careers at the age of 13 or 14. A report published exactly one year ago by the Task Force on Human Trafficking (TFHT) showed that out of the estimated 10,000 prostitutes in Israel, more than 1,000 are minors.
