

## COURT STORY

## Seven persons face trial for forcing European women into prostitution

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The High Criminal Court has begun hearing the case of seven persons, including four European women and a Bahraini man as well as an Asian man, all of whom are accused of forcing European women into prostitution.

Only four of the defendants, namely two European women and the Bahraini man, have appeared in the dock at the High Criminal, as the other two European women as well as the Asian man are at large.

The defendants are said to have faked many job offers which were packaged to the European women who were carefully chosen after understanding that they were in dire need of money.

When the victims arrived from their countries, they were locked up in several apartments by the defendants and compelled to have paid sex with strangers.

According to court files, the defendants were threatened and physically attacked to meet their inhumane demands. They also revealed that the Bahraini defendant was the mastermind of the gang, while the other defendants' roles were to manage the girls and monitor the apartments.

Astonishingly, the defendants managed to run their activities from 2017 until 2022.

"I received a job offer, and I came to Bahrain. I was immediately locked up in an apartment and was forced to have sex with men. I was threatened and physically assaulted to accept doing that," one of the victims told prosecutors.

The women were kept at the Protection Centre of the Labour Market Regulatory Authority. The defendants' trial will resume on September 4, 2022, during which the prosecution witnesses will deliver their testimonies.

## 16 distressed Filipinos repatriated

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Sixteen distressed Filipinos, including four children and one adult with a medical condition, have been repatriated as part of the Philippine Embassy's Repatriation Program.

They left Manama for Manila on 25 August 2022 via Gulf Air.

The Embassy facilitated the repatriation and shouldered the airfare of all the repatriates through the Assistance-to-Nationals (ATN) Fund of the De-

partment of Foreign Affairs in Manila.

A total of 109 Filipinos have so far benefitted from the program for this year.

The repatriates expressed their gratitude to the Philippine Embassy for the timely assistance.

The Office of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) at the Embassy and the Main Office in Manila also provided assistance to the repatriates, particularly upon their arrival at the international airport in Manila.

## Iran 'offering' advanced arms to Mideast proxies

'Joint efforts needed to defeat destabilising activities of Iran in the region'

Staff Reporter

TDT | Manama

Tehran regime is offering advanced weapons to its proxies in the region, threatening the overall security of the Middle East, said US Air Forces Central (AFCENT) Commander Lieutenant General Alexis G Grynkeiwich.

This came as Lt Gen Grynkeiwich held an on-the-record press briefing attended by journalists from Bahrain on Sunday. "Iran with a network of partners does threaten regional stability. But the provision of those partners and proxies with advanced conventional weapons, and then Iran's ability to control those partners and proxies either for their own ends or their inability to control them has led to the creation of armed groups that have advanced weapons they can use in destabilising ways that no one really has control of."

"It's something that is clearly a concern here. So Iranian behaviour in the region, primarily driven by its designs for regional hegemony, are another issue that has - that is certainly challenging here for us," he pointed out.

Lt Gen Grynkeiwich highlighted the significance of the 90-day assessment carried out by US Central Command Commander Erik Kurilla, adding that it lay emphasis on violent extremist organisations in the region. "They exist all over the world, of course, but some here have been sort of the ones that



Lt Gen Grynkeiwich being briefed on theatre-level air defence system by Italian Air Force members at IAF Base Camp on Ali Al Salem Base Camp in Kuwait. (Photo credit: US Air Force)

have been more aggressive in attacking our shared values and our shared systems of government, starting all the way back before September 11th with Al Qaeda. And certainly we saw the scourge of ISIS as they grew and expanded across Iraq and Syria and Levant.

"And those are something that all of us collectively, whether we live here in the region, whether we work here or whether we come from afar, have an interest in countering and keeping under wraps."

Gen Kurilla came up with a strategy for addressing the longer-term challenges that we collectively face, he said. "And I use the word 'collectively' intentionally in that his main approach is all about regional partnership and it's about partnerships over posture and thinking about how we strengthen our relationships in military-to-military space with those in the

region that share our views of what regional stability ought to look like and how we can collectively work against common threats."

Lt Gen Grynkeiwich said he has lined up his priorities as the serving Commander of US Air Forces Central. "The first one is about valuing the contributions of our coalition partners, valuing the contributions of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines, base force numbers that are in the air component, that assist us on a daily basis with getting our mission done."

"We value the contributions of everyone on the team, which includes a whole host of coalition officers from the region and from outside the region here at my headquarters. Then we'll be able to innovate, capture all the ideas that they have, come up with some new ways of solving problems, and that then allows

us to partner, and that's the third point.

"So we value, we innovate, and then we partner for strength with other nations in the region. Again, our - the air forces in the region, the air defense forces of the region, and drive the partnership both bilaterally and multilaterally together to better defend ourselves - again, largely based on shared understanding and sharing information and intelligence.

"And then, lastly, we want to prevail. We want to prevail in our fight against ISIS that many of us have been involved in, certainly since 2014, and we want to prevail, again, in becoming that partner of choice here for everyone that we have longstanding historic relationships with."

On targeting threats from the part of IS and other insurgents, he said CENTCOM certainly has and AFCENT certainly has adequate forces in the region to continue the fight against ISIS.

"We have adequate forces in the region to defend ourselves as required. There's been an intentional vision to maintain that sufficient level of forces here, and that's because we know again that, if you go back to my opening comments, the threats from violent extremism, the destabilising activity that we see from Iran, and the need to continue to work with our partners in the region doesn't go away just because there's something else going on, something very important going on in another area."

## BTEA vows to boost tourism and economy



Al Sairafi chairs the BTEA meeting

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The Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA) is committed to intensifying efforts to meet the challenging objectives of Bahrain's tourism strategy 2022-2026, boost the sector's GDP contribution, diversify the Kingdom's economic foundations, and generate employment opportunities for citizens.

This was emphasised by Tourism Minister Fatima bint Jaffer Al Sairafi as she chaired the BTEA Board of Directors' first periodic meeting of Q2.

In her remarks, Al Sairafi emphasised the need to work as efficiently as possible to max-

imise the benefits from the gradual recovery of tourism in Bahrain and the surrounding area, provide better creative tourism and recreational activities that attract Gulf tourists, as well as, advertise the Kingdom of Bahrain as a prime tourist destination in the region.

BTEA Chief Executive Officer Dr Nasser Ali Qaedi pointed out to that the 82% recovery rate of the tourism sector from the pre-pandemic period portends a more prosperous present and future for the industry and increases the responsibility of the ministry and the BTEA to develop the tourism sector in Bahrain in collaboration with the establishments of the pri-

ivate tourism sector.

Dr Qaedi highlighted the overall performance indicators of the tourism sector over the past year, the sector's marketing and promotion plans, the services offered to the authority's various clients, as well as the status of the organisation's infrastructure projects for the sector such as the Bahrain Exhibition World.

He also spoke about the most effective ways to utilise the authority's vast network of connections, including more than 75 tourism agreements throughout the world, in order to promote various events held by private tourism sector facilities in Bahrain.

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