What is human trafficking all about?

Trafficking in human beings is a crime and a violation of human rights, a crime Switzerland has not been spared from.

Human trafficking consists in recruiting people, exacting their services, transferring them or organising their transfer by intermediaries, and accommodating them with a view to exploiting them using illegal means such as making false promises, abusing their vulnerability, threatening them or using force. Human trafficking is punishable under article 182 of the Swiss Criminal Code.

Criminals take unfair advantage of migrants’ destitution, the precarious conditions they live in, and the distress ensuing from these circumstances. To recruit them, criminals play on these people’s hope for a brighter future in Switzerland, promising, for example, marriage, the opportunity to study or work in Switzerland. Once in Switzerland, these people find themselves in virtual bondage to the criminals, who exploit them in various ways.

Forms of human trafficking:

Under article 182 of the Swiss Criminal Code, a case of human trafficking is present if one of the following applies:

- sexual exploitation, that is, forced prostitution
- exploitation of labour, that is, forced labour
- forced removal of organs

How to identify victims of human trafficking

A person may be a human trafficking victim if they

- have been lured to Switzerland with false promises (such as the promise of marriage, study opportunities, or work) but end up finding themselves exploited;
- are forced into prostitution or to perform any other kind of forced labour;
- have been subject to physical, psychological, sexual, or economic violence;
- have been deprived of their identity documents or residence permits, or of their rights or liberty;
- are under pressure, for instance, because they need to pay back a debt or pay back the person who arranged for travel and placement, or because their family in the home country is subject to threats.
- are not familiar with the place where they live or do not speak the language spoken there.

Victims of human trafficking need help and protection.

The last page of leaflet contains a list of addresses of institutions that offer victim assistance.