

“Daily Agenda” with host Keren Neubach, Originally aired on KAN B Radio 6/23/2020

[TRANSCRIPT]

KEREN NEUBACH: Let's welcome Reut Guy, Head of the Extreme Risk and Female Teens field at ELEM. Hey, Reut.

REUT GUY: Hey Keren, thank you for having me.

KN: From your perspective, what needs to happen next?

RG: Well, first of all, I really do want to thank you, because this platform, now that July 10th is right around the corner, we're all under tremendous stress, and trying to find solutions moving forward, not just what's been done up until now. I think that any discussion and any platform are important. I've listened to Luba, and Gal (who spoke earlier in the program – ELEM USA) and I find much wisdom in their words, and I'd like to say, that when it come to prostitution, because this issue is so complex, and so ingrained within our society, there's no way a solution won't be complex as well, and from my perspective, and my work at ELEM, I run many establishments that deal with teens and young people who are part of the world of prostitution, on the prostitution spectrum, be it that they're about to enter that world and we managed to prevent it or narrow it, or that they're already taking part in commercial prostitution in the big cities. We really do see a very wide range, and speaking of what those people themselves want,

KN: Yes?

RG: So I can tell you. I didn't just hear one opinion, I heard hundreds, tens, certainly more than one, and the opinions are split there as well, because some people who are in prostitution today, and they say – maybe this law actually will protect us, give us some sort of an advantage, public defense. Yes, they believe it, which is usually uncommon within these demographics because they are after all, people who pretty much lost faith in the establishment, and in us as a society, and this is something that we need to remember, and there are people who think otherwise, who say ‘fine, there will be a law. There are other laws, too.’ I think there's a law against drug use. Okay, so do people not use drugs in Israel? It's gonna go under the radar. People find ways to get what they'd like to consume,

KN: You know, I really don't like it when people use this comparison.

“Daily Agenda” with host Keren Neubach, Originally aired on KAN B Radio 6/23/2020

RG: Alright, we don't have to like it, but at the end of the day, this is our reality. We know what happens with laws around here. If I were to count on...

KN: Yeah, but no harm is done to a drug when it's being consumed.

RG: Absolutely, totally. I'm with you on that. From where I stand, my personal opinion, which today is pretty much ELEM's opinion... I'm always being asked what's ELEM's stand, and I say – ELEM isn't a person, it has no personality, no stand. It's compiled of many women who have years of experience in the field, and different opinions, and by the way, amongst ourselves we're also not entirely on the same page, I have to point that out as well. But at the end of the day, I think that the responsible thing to do is to recognize this fight that we've seen here for a decade now. In 2016, as Gal mentioned, a few organizations for women in prostitution were established in Israel for the first time ever. I think that diverse opinions are a wonderful thing, and that there are real women who are part of that world and are also a part of the discussion. I agree with Gal that their voices weren't always heard loudly enough, and didn't always represent the opinions, on the other hand I say, this law was passed, whether or not it's up to us, you know, some things are out of our control. In 2010 when the law to ban prostitution advertisement went into effect, online as well, which was sponsored by then MK (member of the Knesset – ELEM USA) Orit Zuaretz, the day after all these domains were transferred to other countries, and the Israeli legislation doesn't have a legal standing on these servers. So there's this forward thinking in this industry, which we need to understand, and we need to take responsibility for the consequences of the legislation. By the way, you asked earlier about the source of some data that was presented, so the national report says, actually, in the official national poll of the state of Israel, which came out in 2014, and it's long overdue for an update because the date is now old.

KN: Yeah, it's been six years.

RG: But it flat out states that 60% of the women in prostitution in Israel, which is approx. 12,000 women, are mothers to young children, and they really do operate in their homes and discreet apartments, meaning this isn't...

KN: Well discreet apartments aren't homes.

“Daily Agenda” with host Keren Neubach, Originally aired on KAN B Radio 6/23/2020

RG: It doesn't matter. These are homes that are being rented with this specific use in mind, which means it's under the radar. But what I'm trying to say is...

KN: No, but... okay.

RG: If we follow Luba's logic, she said there are bids here, and this will stall the bids. I'm saying, these aren't bids of existing programs that are just waiting for a few millions of shekels to be released and that's that. There are entire services that simply do not currently exist.

KN: That don't exist.

RG: Right. And a person who's ever launched a service or two in their lives, would know that it's not a matter of a year or two. These things take time.

KN: So give me the bottom line.

RG: The bottom line... I think... I don't want to speak in terms of whether or not to postpone, because that's out of our control. I want to speak in terms of taking responsibility, to have oversight for this thing. I will say that this morning we got an invitation from Orly Levy Abekasis, the Minister for Social Progress, to attend a discussion on Sunday at 3 P.M., with all the organizations, those who object to the law, and women members of the coalition, and the organizations of women in prostitution. I think this is an example of how to take responsibility, to say – there's a law here, it's going into effect, let's ask questions about it, let's see if it fits, meaning, do the punishment, enforcement, and implementation fit the infrastructure we have today, and that answer is a resounding no. By the way, we all agree on this, you won't see us argue on that, which is why you have to see with clarity how to implement a law that doesn't force one woman right now, nor two, nor ten, not a single woman, needs to pay the price for the lack of infrastructure that is the current reality in the state of Israel. And it is our job, I think, and so do the activists and everyone, whomever wants to be a part of this urgent fight, to sound the alarm, and make sure the services and infrastructure are ready. And we know that's not the current state of things. See, you have Inbal Chermoni, Chairman of the Social Workers Union, marching on the Knesset. Listen to what she has to say. Social workers hardly manage the existing workload. So now we'll put even more strain on the services and say 'it'll be okay?' I'm against it.

“Daily Agenda” with host Keren Neubach, Originally aired on KAN B Radio 6/23/2020

KN: That’s absolutely understandable. Thank you, the both of you.

RG: Thank you.

KN: I’m sure we’ll keep track of this issue. And it’s my understanding there’s another discussion at the moment with the Ministry of Justice, and it might not be a sure thing that this will actually move forward. Gal, thank you. Gal Emet, a prostitution survivor, an activist, and spokesperson for Argaman, an organization for women in prostitution. And Reut Guy, Head of the Extreme Risk and Women Teens Field at ELEM. Thank you both.