

ALI

FORCED INTOO DRUG DEALING

My name is Ali, I'm 18 and I was born in Oran into a relatively poor family. AT 16, I came to France hoping to find a better future. But what awaited me was very different.



As a teenager, there were no prospects for me in terms of studying or working. Everyone says that it's easy to find work in the Barbès district. So, I decided to head to Paris. With the little money I had, I paid people traffickers to get me across the Mediterranean. When it was time to embark, I was scared. The boat was small and we were crammed in, but we made it, safe and sound, to Almeria in Spain.

Once I got to Paris, I had no money left but I found some Algerians from Oran and I met Malik. He said that he could help me. And, in actual fact, he quickly found me a place in a one-room flat measuring 30 m² with four others and a job on the market.

I worked hard but didn't earn enough to pay my rent. I started to have problems with the landlord. To get more money, Malik suggested I could sell cigarettes. This worked pretty well, except when the police would get involved and confiscate the cigarettes. When that happened, I couldn't repay Malik and I started getting into debt.

One day, he told me that I owed him more than 1,000€. I would never be able to pay off this kind of amount. Malik told me that the best solution to settle my debt was to sell hashish and prescription drugs. It was more risky than selling cigarettes. Malik provided me with Rivotril so I wasn't so afraid. It became impossible for me to deal without pills or to sleep without Lyrica.

“Malik told me I had to sell hashish in order to pay off my debts”

My goal each day was to be able to pay for my pills. I couldn't work properly any more and Malik became aggressive because I wasn't bringing in enough money for him. One night, in a squat, he beat me up in front of everyone. He said that, the next time, his mate Aziz would take care of me, that he would rape me and sent the video back home. I would kill myself if that happened.

I want to find a way out but there's no hope. Sometimes I would find a place in a hostel, but I ran off each time to find pills and keep dealing because I still owed money to Malik.

Until the day when I met a support worker in the street. He told me that his association could protect me and I ended up by trusting him. I was then placed in a centre located far from Paris where I got support to get clean and rejoin society.



KEY POINTS

Being coerced into crime is a form of human trafficking. It consists of forcing an individual to commit crimes and offences in order to take the profits obtained. The crimes involved vary: pick-pocketing, stealing by snatching or at cash points, burglaries, sale of prescription drugs, cigarettes or stolen goods, charity scams...



WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?

Young people of different nationalities (11 detected in 2021) are coerced into committing crimes. While there is no one single profile for victims, they have characteristics in common. They are mainly foreign and male, underage or young adults, sleeping rough or without a permanent address, either because they are unaccompanied minors or because they live solely within their own families or communities. They endure physical, psychological and/or sexual violence, demonstrate numerous high-risk behaviours and are highly mobile, including cross-border.

However, many young French men and boys, working on behalf of drug dealers as look-outs,

are also victims of human trafficking. Many describe recruitment and control methods that are similar to what is observed in relation to young non-French nationals. The victim can be exploited by family members, which, in addition to facilitating recruitment, only increases the control exercised over them. He or she can also be exploited by organised crime groups which use violence and drugs to maintain control.



HOW CAN THEY BE IDENTIFIED?

The fact that these young people are unaware that they are victims but claim to be delinquents, their suspicion of institutions and the conflicts of loyalty they experience make this phenomenon difficult to grasp.

Going out into the street to meet with children and young people to create a relationship based on trust is the vital first stage in finding victims, understanding their difficulties and ways of life and accompanying them towards protection. The profiles of those young people being exploited are varied and each situation of trafficking is unique. A combination of factors makes it possible to raise the alert and identify a potential victim.

WHY DOES THIS SITUATION OCCUR ON THE SIDELINES OF MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS?

This form of exploitation is particularly lucrative for those doing the exploiting. It allows them to have the exploited victims bear all the risk of criminal charges, telling them that the fact that they are minors means there is less risk of prosecution.

During major sporting events, the large number of tourists makes an ideal target for criminal groups who exploit minors to commit crimes.

Criminal organisations will be tempted to recruit massive numbers of new victims from among vulnerable minors in order to seize this opportunity.

