

<http://www.france24.com/en/20120624-france-women-rights-minister-najat-vallaud-belkacem-ban-prostitution-sex-trade-trafficking>

LATEST UPDATE: 25/06/2012

French minister wants prostitution to 'disappear'

France's new Women's Rights Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem's stated mission is **to start the eradication of prostitution in France by pushing tough legislation against their clients.**

Some sex workers and police officers see things differently.

By [Tony Todd](#) (text)

French prostitutes' organisations on Sunday heaped scorn* **(to show disagreement) on the new minister for women's rights after she said she wanted to eradicate the sex trade in France.**

In [an interview with the weekly Journal de Dimanche](#), 34-year-old minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem (pictured) said: "My objective, like that of the [newly-elected] Socialist Party, is **to see prostitution disappear.**"

In December 2011, **a cross-party initiative in the French lower house of parliament came up with a proposed law that would criminalise paying for sex.**

Getting the proposal onto the statute books would be her immediate priority – but for Vallaud-Belkacem, who says **she has the support of Interior Minister** Manuel Valls, prosecuting* (to put them on trial, to sue them) clients is just the first step.

"This abolitionist stance* (position) is borne (to bear, bore, borne) of the fact that there are **insufficient means at our disposal ... to protect the vast majority of prostitutes**, who are victims of violence from organised crime networks and from their pimps* (bosses)," she said.

"The question is not whether we want to abolish prostitution – the answer is yes – but rather how we can have the means to do so."

According to Guy Goffroy, one of the authors of the proposed bill and a member of the former ruling conservative UMP party, 90 percent of prostitutes working in France are **victims of international traffickers.**

'Zero legitimacy'

But sex workers contacted by FRANCE 24 said the measure, if passed, would penalise what they insist is a perfectly legitimate way of making a living* (to earn enough money to live) and **endanger the already precarious lives of prostitutes**.

“What right does Vallaud-Belkacem or anyone else have to tell me what I can or can’t do with my body,” said Chloé Navarro, representative of **the STRASS prostitutes’ trade union**, at her stall* (at the place she was during Solidays’ exhibition) at the “Solidays” AIDS awareness music festival in Paris on Sunday.

“Will they check every bedroom in France to make sure there hasn’t been a financial transaction for sex?” . “We are **a trade union representing sex workers’ rights**, but she won’t even speak to us or hear our point of view,” she said. “She has zero legitimacy.” Her view was **echoed by France Arnould, head of the Amis du Bus des Femmes, an association** created by former sex workers that offers medical and social support to working prostitutes.

Arnould argued that Vallaud-Belkacem’s campaign was “misplaced” and that prostitutes working “out of choice” could not be considered victims in the same way as women trafficked into France from Eastern Europe and Africa **by violent and exploitative* gangs**.

Driving prostitution 'further underground'

“If we can win **the fight against the pimps* and traffickers and their criminal networks**, what possible problem could there be with prostitution?” she asked. “These women – and men – mostly don’t have pimps [pimping is illegal in France]. **They are a part of civil life. They pay their taxes. They are citizens.**”

“Toughening* (more severe) laws against the sex trade will only **drive prostitution further underground**. It will be **bad for the prostitutes and it will be bad for society at large.**”

In a companion piece to the Journal de Dimanche interview, an unnamed senior policeman said **penalising clients would be difficult to enforce*** (to make it work), and **wanting to abolish prostitution completely was “pious wishful thinking”**.

“The only difference penalising clients would make is that what currently happens on the streets **would just take place in clubs, hotels and massage parlours,**” he said

Asked about the possibility of totally eradicating prostitution, he said: "Do we really need to punish these poor women more?"

"We couldn't ask policemen to enforce a ban, and I can't see any judge sentencing* (to condemn) a woman for selling her body. Trying to abolish prostitution would be a disaster."

<http://www.france24.com/en/20110414-prostitutes-clients-sex-trade-jailed-fined-under-proposed-law-france-busquet%20-geoffrey>

LATEST UPDATE: 14/04/2011

Sex clients could be fined, jailed under proposed law

Soliciting sex could soon be criminalised, with jail sentences and hefty fines for offenders, if French lawmakers pass legislation that has been recommended by a parliamentary report published on Wednesday.

By [Tony Todd](#) (text)

An association of French prostitutes has slammed a parliamentary report recommending that paying for sex should be criminalised.

Published on Wednesday, the report recommends a €3,000 fine and up to six months in jail for those who solicit sex. Prostitution is not illegal in France, but procuring or soliciting other people for sex is.

Penned by lawmakers Danielle Bousquet (Socialist Party) and Guy Geoffrey (ruling UMP), the report argues that, "Punishing clients would make them understand that they are engaged in a form of exploitation."

The new proposals would help demystify the trade, say the authors. "It would reaffirm the principle of non-commercialisation of the human body and bury the myth that prostitution is simply the 'oldest trade in the world' once and for all."

'Pimps would be the only winners'

But Mistress Gilda, a spokesperson for the French prostitutes' union STRASS, said the law would push the sex trade further underground and would have a profoundly negative impact on thousands of women – and men – who work in the sex trade in France.

"It would send prostitution even further to the fringes and put some of the most vulnerable people on the streets, under complete control of exploitative pimps," she told FRANCE 24.

"Prostitution is not going to vanish. And these pimps would be the only winners."

Until 1946, Paris had a flourishing sex industry based around a number of established brothels, or maisons closes, which benefitted particularly from the patronage of the occupying German army during World War II.

A 1946 law closed the estimated 1,400 brothels across France, ending a system that had regulated prostitution in the country since 1804.

France became officially “abolitionist” in 1960, when it signed the 1949 UN Convention on the Suppression of Trafficking and the Exploitation of Prostitution.

In 2003, then interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy passed a law banning “passive solicitation”, a vague term aimed at curbing a manner of “dress and attitude” that advertises sexual services.

‘We want to pay our taxes’

If a law to criminalise sex clients is passed, France would join Norway, Iceland and Sweden, where clients face a fine of six months’ pay and six months in jail.

But in Germany, sex workers get the same state benefits as other taxpayers – a system that Mistress Gilda said would be welcomed by the prostitutes working in France.

“We want to pay our taxes and we want to contribute to the social security system,” she said. “There is no reason why we should not have the same status as an artisan, a taxi driver or a freelance journalist.”

<http://www.france24.com/en/20111207-france-moves-outlaw-prostitution-french-lawmakers-fines-jail-paying-sex-abolition>

LATEST UPDATE: 07/12/2011

France moves to outlaw prostitution

French lawmakers passed a resolution Tuesday in favour of making prostitution illegal. The move would **include fines** and **jail time** for those paying for sex. The non-binding resolution was approved by a show of hands in France's lower house.

By [News Wires](#) (text)

AFP - French lawmakers voted on Tuesday **in favour of outlawing prostitution** in the country, setting the stage for the introduction of a bill that would impose fines and jail time for paying for sex.

The move comes **despite France's long history of liberal attitudes toward sex** and with the country gripped by coverage of a **prostitution scandal involving former IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn**, who has been linked with a **pimping ring*** (network) **operating** out of luxury hotels in the northern city of Lille.

The non-binding resolution on the "abolition of prostitution", drafted by a cross-party commission, was approved in a **show of hands vote** in the lower house National Assembly.

Lawmakers from the commission were expected to introduce a bill later Tuesday or in the next few days **to criminalise paying for sex**.

The commission has **recommended imposing sentences*** (condemnations) **of up to six months in prison and a 3,000 euro (\$4,000) fine on clients of prostitutes**.

The resolution said France should **seek "a society without prostitution"** and that **sex work "should in no case be designated as a professional activity"**.

Guy Geoffroy of the ruling UMP party, a member of the commission, said earlier that passing the resolution would be "an important, symbolic and solemn step" in fighting prostitution.

"Nine prostitutes out of 10 are victims of human trafficking," he said.

Prostitution is not illegal in France though several linked activities are, including soliciting, procuring and operating a brothel, while paying for sex with someone under the age of 18 is banned.

Yves Charpenel, the head of the Fondation Scelles, **a group that fights human trafficking and is among those demanding criminalisation, said it was unclear whether the bill on criminalisation would eventually be adopted.**

"There is **no consensus yet on this subject**," Charpenel said. **"Will the deputies who vote for the abolitionist resolution then vote for its concrete application?"**

"More than ever, **it is necessary to clarify the French position**" on prostitution, he said.

Sex workers' groups have denounced the proposal as an attack on their rights and protested against the resolution near the National Assembly on Tuesday.

Several dozen prostitutes and supporters rallied carrying signs reading **"Sex Work is Work" and "Prostitution -- No Repression -- No Punishment -- Rights!"**

Punishing clients will **"deprive prostitutes of work** that provides them with a living, **give clients more power over them and push prostitutes to turn to intermediaries** to be able to work," said Sarah-Marie Maffesoli, a lawyer for sex workers' group Strass.

In a letter to lawmakers, the group called for the resolution to be voted down, saying it threatens sex workers' "health, security and livelihoods".

An estimated 20,000 people work as prostitutes in France.

Prostitution has been **thrown into the spotlight in France in recent weeks** as media devoted widespread coverage to the case of eight leading members of Lille society charged with operating a ring that provided sex workers to clients including, allegedly, Strauss-Kahn.

The one-time top contender for the French presidency resigned as International Monetary Fund chief in May after he was accused of attempting to rape a New York hotel maid, though the charges against him were later dropped. He denies any criminal wrongdoing.

US states call on Craigslist to remove 'Adult Services' ads

The popular online classified service came under renewed criticism this week for the site's 'Adult Services' section. Attorneys General from 17 states allege the ads promote prostitution as well as violence against women and children.

By [Eric Olander](#) (text)

In a new effort to crack down on prostitution, a group of senior law enforcement officials from across the United States have issued an open letter to Craigslist urging the website to shut down its popular 'Adult Services' ads. In their letter, 17 Attorneys General allege these kinds of ads on Craigslist promote violence against women and children. "The increasingly sharp public criticism of Craigslist's Adult Services section reflects a growing recognition that ads for prostitution – including ads trafficking children – are rampant on it," wrote the state AGs.

State Attorneys General in the US serve as the top legal officer in each state and play a prominent role in overseeing law enforcement.

[Craigslist CEO Jim Buckmaster responded to the letter with a blog post in which he said he agreed with their drive to combat sexual violence and exploitation.](#) However, Buckmaster contends that his site does, in fact, work hard to ensure that postings for illegal sexual services are filtered out:

"Before being posted each individual ad is reviewed by an attorney licensed to practice law in the US, trained to enforce Craigslist's posting guidelines, which are stricter than those typically used by yellow pages, newspapers, or any other company that we are aware of. More than 700,000 ads were rejected by those attorneys in the year following implementation of manual screening, for falling short of our guidelines."

The Craigslist CEO added that he was working with legal and human rights groups to devise new guidelines for adult ads.

The Attorneys General are not looking for compromise, though. They want Craigslist to remove the entire Adult Services section just as it did in May when the company eliminated the site's 'Erotic Services' listings.

If the company does, in fact, screen each ad for illegal sexual activity, it either appears to be ignoring or simply missing a majority of listings that advertise seemingly unlawful activity. [A cursory glance through Craigslist Los Angeles Adult Services](#) listings revealed hundreds of women advertising phone numbers and rates for presumed sexual services. Many of the ads feature pictures of young women, many of which, according to the Attorneys General, are minors. While the ads may be technically legal, depending on the specific verbiage and images, the Attorneys General reminded the company that they are determined to press ahead with the drive to close the online classified market for prostitution.