

## Safrica : Alleged human traffickers arrested in Mozambique

Text of report by South African newspaper City Press on 28 March

[Report by Jacques Pauw: "More Sex Ring Members Bust"]

Another five alleged human traffickers have been arrested in the Mozambican capital of Maputo, bringing to eight the number of suspects taken into custody following a City Press investigation into trafficking and sexual slavery.

Last week we exposed an international trafficking syndicate that operated out of Maputo. The syndicate had offered to sell us several Mozambican and Chinese women kept in safe houses in Maputo.

The syndicate has trafficked hundreds of women and girls - some apparently as young as 16 - across the Mozambican border into South Africa since 1994. Most of the women were recruited to work as waitresses in Johannesburg or Durban but were forced into prostitution. They were often beaten and sometimes raped.

Acting on information supplied to it by City Press, a Mozambican police task team pounced on three syndicate members while they were trying to sell us an 18-year-old Mozambican woman.

Over the past three weeks City Press visited Maputo twice to infiltrate the syndicate. On our first visit the syndicate paraded six Chinese women (four had already been sold) and three Mozambican women for sale for between R5,000 and R10,000.

When we returned last week only one Mozambican woman was still for sale. The others had already been brought to South Africa.

The syndicate members said they could find more Mozambicans in a few days and that two Chinese women were arriving in the country that Saturday.

We provided this information, with more details, to the police during a meeting with a top Home Affairs official.

Three Chinese men and a Chinese woman were arrested at the airport on Saturday morning as they entered the country. A second woman was collected by a local man and they managed to evade the police. The four arrested are all allegedly linked to the trafficking syndicate.

This week another Mozambican, a bank official, was also arrested for alleged links to the syndicate. All eight suspects are in custody and are being questioned.

Mozambique adopted extensive anti-trafficking legislation in 2008, though nobody has yet been convicted. Other southern African countries, among them Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania also have trafficking legislation but have failed to convict as yet.

The Human Rights Council of the UN recently said human trafficking was one of the most profitable criminal enterprises in the world. An estimated 2.5million people are trafficked at any given time and 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders every year.

Source: City Press, Johannesburg, in English 28 Mar 10 p 5