Abstract:

Western Demand and Eastern Supply for Illegally Trafficked Organs

There are many popular faces of trafficking: sex workers in Thailand, exploited factory laborers in China, or child soldiers in Somalia. Popular discourse often highlights human or sex trafficking, overlooking the illicit trade of organs which garners between 600 million and 1.2 billion dollars annually, according to the 2013 Global Financial Integrity Report. On average, about 10,000 illegal organ transplants occur annually around the world, according to the World Health Organization. Statistics aside, organ trafficking is a thriving black market trade, which is often overlooked in the general discourse about trafficking. Despite popular belief, this lucrative trade is rampant in traditionally affluent Western Europe. Demand for organs often comes from Western European purchasers, and supply from poorer or underdeveloped nations in the East. A review of demand in Western nations like the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and review of supply structures in Eastern locales like the Balkans and China, reveals the necessity of a more standardized international set of criminal laws in regards to organ trafficking. This black market is often overlooked due to a lack of public awareness about organ trafficking, plus imbalanced or poorly-executed international laws and income inequality leave gaps that allow such trafficking to flourish.