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\$30,000 Pedophilia NGO scam: if allegations are true, who's watching the Watchers?

Written By: herbrunbridge - May•03•10



Concomitant to the meritorious work being done by international Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) in rooting out pedophilia, allegations are surfacing that innocent Western male travelers in Cambodia are being unfairly accused of having sex with minors, with uncomfortable and dangerous legal consequences. If the allegations are true, this may prove to be an elaborate extortion scheme that no victim is willing to expose. At the heart of the scam, it is claimed, is the manner in which NGOs gather evidence to begin the prosecution process against foreigners, namely the use of paid informants, including motorcycle taxi drivers. In other instances, it is alleged, teams of survey-takers, purporting to be from tourism organizations, collect data on individuals, including the names of their hotels, prompting later visits by police. One NGO openly states their investigators “go undercover as drivers, English teachers or even craftsmen.”

While the investigative methods of NGOs remain somewhat of an in-house secret, it is alleged that informants are paid commissions for each “lead,” and are encouraged to report each day to an NGO contact, who will log the data for subsequent payments of commissions. Informants would therefore accrue the most profit by providing increasing numbers of names, relatively easy to obtain from hotel personnel at the original point of pick-up, in the case of a taxi driver, or survey location, if done outside a hotel.

The purported extortion scam is alleged to work like this: After a target individual has been initially identified, he is then followed and photographed on visits to establishments offering sexual companionship with those above the age of consent.

The taxi driver or survey-taker next provides the name and photograph to the NGO. The NGO then gives the name of the individual to the police, who visit the innocent alleged “perpetrator” and demand a financial payment in order to avoid arrest for allegedly having sex with an underage female. This amount has generally been reported to be \$30,000 USD. In this fashion, the taxi driver and police official both make a profit from the extortion racket, while the NGO adds yet another spurious statistic to its list of Western males having sex with underage girls. NGOs use such statistics to solicit additional funding from Western sources. Everybody in this story accrues a financial gain except the victim. If he doesn't pay up, he is threatened with arrest as a pedophile as well as notification to his own government for potential prosecution in his own country.

An additional issue arises when the individual seeking sexual favors does so with an individual of legal age, but who appears —to the eyes of Western police officials —to be younger, based on a photograph of the alleged underage female. Local police can use this additional “evidence” to their advantage by threatening to turn the male victim over to his own Embassy, for prosecution in his own country. In this manner, names and photographs can easily be used by local police to “shake down” the innocent victim for a bribe, even though the police know that no crime against children has been committed. If unwilling to pay the bribe, the victim could, in theory, be reported to the government of his nation of origin as a suspected or known pedophile, with accompanying photographic evidence to “prove” the suspicion, and the imprimatur of an international NGO to confirm the suspicion.

Today, an individual unjustly accused of sexually molesting children is all too often presumed guilty until proven innocent, and the costs associated with defending himself legally are significant. Victims of nefarious “stings” are rarely willing to call attention to themselves by complaining to the local or international Press.

Critics of the use of paid informants to provide unreliable data on alleged perpetrators of crimes often refer to the excesses of the days in the 1950s when Senator Joseph McCarthy rode roughshod over civil liberties to root out alleged Communists in the United States. In that era, thousands of innocent victims were harassed and persecuted. With today's reliance on databases, dishonest information and shaky allegations may stay in one's international police files in perpetuity.

The overwhelming majority of people in all nations condemn sexual abuse of children, and NGOs have certainly done their part in bringing attention to the problem. In bringing perpetrators to justice, though, it's important to ensure the rights of the innocent. If justice is the goal, the rights of all must be respected. Reliance on word of paid informants is always suspect, overburdens prosecutorial systems, and greases the chain of bribery. Is there any substance to these allegations of NGO and Police dishonesty? If so, perhaps it's time to take a better look at how NGOs go about collecting and storing information on individuals loosely suspected of abusing children, and sharing the information with local, national, and international police agencies. In moving forward to help eradicate the crime of sexual abuse of children, we must ensure that the innocent aren't being thrown in with the guilty.

Tell us your story

Have you been unjustly accused of pedophilia by an NGO? We'd like to hear your story. If you've been harassed or persecuted by a Non-Governmental Organization in the course of seeking sexual relations with a non-minor, we'd like to know about it. Please provide the name of the NGO, places, dates, and approximate times if possible, and tell us what happened. If you'd be willing to go public with your name, please tell us that as well.

Update: see our [post](#) on a legal follow-on to this subject.

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