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Paris, France

On Oct. 22, an article in *Le Monde*, a French daily, accused the U.S. National Security Agency of spying on French diplomats in Washington and at the U.N. *Le Monde* claims that the U.S. implanted spyware after hacking foreign networks with the help of Genie: the NSA's mass surveillance program. In another recent issue, *Le Monde* also alleged that the NSA "spied on 70.3 million phone calls in France between Dec. 10, 2012, and Jan. 8, 2013," the BBC reports.

Odisha State, India

On Oct. 11, Cyclone Phailin rolled in with gusts of up to 190 mph and wrecked the eastern coast of India. Residents of Odisha feared a repeat of 1999, when a cyclone of Phailin's caliber took more than 10,000 lives. When the storm receded and 21 deaths were recorded, residents credited the government for an evacuation of over 900,000 from the low-lying region to shelters in schools and government offices.

Sparks, Nevada, USA

Early afternoon on Oct. 22, a 12-year-old boy shot and killed a math teacher at Sparks Middle School before taking his own life. While it remains to be seen whether or not the boy had premeditated targets, authorities told CNN that the teacher who was killed bought time for students to flee after the boy opened fire and injured two classmates. Sparks Deputy Police Chief Tom Miller revealed that the boy used a Ruger 9mm semiautomatic handgun, which allegedly belonged to his parents.

New South Wales, Australia

While an array of wildfires ravage forests in Australia's most inhabited state, firefighters have reason to believe that the worst has passed. Over 200 homes were destroyed by fires as of Oct. 21, but according to New South Wales Premier Barry O'Farrell, firefighters have saved thousands others with a clever tactic: back-burning. In the vicinity of Sydney's metropolitan area, firefighters back-burned two fires, strategically joining them to prevent a merger with a third, larger one.

Educating girls helps combat burgeoning sex trade

BY VALERIA SOSA
STAFF WRITER

At the tender age of eight, Meena Hasina was kidnapped and sold to a brothel. There, she was beaten with sticks and iron rods, threatened with swords, drugged and raped. With a broken spirit and her dreams of escape shattered, Meena was forced to have sex with 10 or more customers a day, seven days a week.

This story is not unique to Meena, or even to India, where sex trafficking runs rampant.

On the contrary, sex trafficking has victimized millions of girls and women from 162 countries, including the U.S.

It is the fastest growing commercial enterprise in the world.

The Somaly Mam foundation empowers victims to fight sex trafficking. Anastasia Plotnikova, communications associate at Somaly Mam, spoke of the difficulties of escaping sex trafficking.

"Oftentimes those trapped in slavery don't believe they have a way out," Plotnikova told *The Guilfordian* in an email interview. "They have been taken from their homes and are scared to return because of the negative stigma attached to sex slavery in many cultures.

"Many victims come from poverty and are uneducated ... they do not know that there are ways out or whom to turn to."

Is sex trafficking really that brutal and widespread?
No. It is worse.

Francesca Tarant is a communications and development associate of Apne Aap, an organization that works to stop sex trafficking internationally. Tarant described sex trafficking as

a self-perpetuating crime.

"Sex trafficking is both a product of inequality and contributing to inequality," Tarant told *The Guilfordian* in a phone interview. "Taking women out of the labor force impacts towns and communities by making education less available to children and less money will be spent on health care and nutrition."

Mark Justad, director of the Center for Principled Problem Solving, addressed the social constructs that contribute to sex trafficking.

"Most of human culture has arisen with this notion of gender hierarchy: male being above female," said Justad. "That just creates a kind of shadow over these issues. And, of course, there are a lot of people making money out of this."

A study conducted in 2003 in The Netherlands found that a single sex slave earned her captor at least \$250,000 a year.

When lax government regulations and great demand for illicit sex ensure plenty of protection for the already lucrative industry, many wonder: how do we even begin to address this situation, much less try to eradicate sex trafficking?

Triad Ladder of Hope Ministry, a faith-based non-profit organization in North Carolina, fights to eliminate the exploitation and slavery of humans. President and founder Sandra Johnson noted that ending sex trafficking requires commitment and collaboration across borders.

"It is going to take everyone working together to end modern-day slavery," Johnson told *The Guilfordian* in an email interview. "The challenge is for people with faith to present hope and share their love with survivors by building loving relationships with them."

In "Half the Sky," a book that narrates the story of Meena

and others in similar situations, journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn offer an effective solution to diminish sex trafficking: education.

Recent Bard College graduate Georgina Kronfeld is biking from Katonah, N.Y., to San Francisco, Calif., to facilitate education for 47 children in Sonagachi, India. Sonagachi has Asia's largest concentration of prostitution and sex businesses.

"If you can't even read, how can you know your rights?" said Kronfeld in a phone interview. "That's how the sex industry works: keeping people uneducated and ignorant, taking away their autonomy and turning them into slaves. So, education is simply the most valuable thing for these children."

Partnered with Apne Aap, Kronfeld aims to raise \$30,000 to support a year of education for these children, the mothers of whom earn their living by prostitution. Without education, hopes for the children to escape Sonagachi's sex trafficking industry are bleak.

Today, after rescuing both of her children from the brothel in which they were born, Meena works with parents in India to prevent their daughters from falling into the trap of prostitution. Her efforts to fight sex trafficking by supporting education have made waves in the revolution for gender equality.

In "Florence of Arabia," his satirical novel about equal rights for women in the Middle East, Christopher Buckley sums up a belief that is slowly but surely permeating the globe:

"Women might just have something to contribute to civilization other than their vaginas."