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'Red Light' District In Rome Seen As Way To Fight Human Trafficking

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Rome is considering a proposal for a red light district starting in April, which backers argue could help tackle sex trafficking. St. Peter's Square in Rome is pictured here, Feb. 5, 2015. REUTERS/Alessandro Bianchi

Officials in Rome are considering a proposal to allow a “red light” district in the city starting in April to help shield prostitutes from exploitation. Mayor Ignazio Marino said in an interview Sunday the aim would be to “find a balance” by designating certain streets for the sex trade to keep prostitution away from places frequented by children and families, [the Associated Press](#) reported.

While prostitution is already legal in Italy, some residents of Rome have pushed for a solution to reduce the visibility of the trade in certain neighborhoods, including the EUR district in the south of the city, which sees rampant prostitution on more than 20 of its streets, [Agence France-Presse](#) reported. The neighborhood’s local council is now considering a proposal to allow prostitution in one nonresidential area, giving police the authority to hand out fines of as much as 500 euros for those caught soliciting outside of the designated streets.

Officials in the neighborhood have framed the plan as a way to help tackle human trafficking, with EUR official Andrea Santoro arguing that by designating certain streets for the trade, authorities could ensure prostitutes were not being placed there by traffickers, the AP said. The

city would also provide psychological support and health care to workers in the designated area. Italy has an estimated 70,000 to 100,000 prostitutes, with half believed to be foreign nationals.

The plan has already come under fire from Church figures, with the weekly magazine of the Conference of Italian Bishops lambasting it as “shameful” for “a city that is the cradle and the heart of Christian humanism,” AFP reported. A member of the Pope John XXIII Community Catholic group said the city would be instituting “tolerance zones for the slavery of women.”

Prostitution is legal in a number of European countries, including Germany, which has red-light districts in a number of cities. The country’s prostitution legislation, which is seen as one of the most liberal in the world, has been criticized by some groups for encouraging human traffickers to force women into the sex trade, [Deutsche Welle](#) reported. Germany’s government is currently debating an amendment to its prostitution law that would implement greater protections for prostitutes, including compulsory medical examinations.

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