

Late last month, a raid conducted by Thai police freed 15 Vietnamese women (half of them pregnant) from a surrogacy clinic operated by a company called Baby 101.

Four Taiwanese, one Chinese and three Myanmar nationals have been arrested for illegally working in Thailand in connection with the business. Baby 101 was the name of a company headed by a Taiwanese citizen, named Siang Lung Lor, who was arrested on charges of human trafficking and sheltering illegal immigrants. He's said to be the executive and manager of the Baby-101 Bangkok home. Particularly discreet, the company conducts most of its activities through its website. This site was aimed at couples without children - in Thailand and elsewhere - to whom he offered the services of women, young and pretty to host "their" baby in exchange of a large sum of 1.5 million baht [a little over \$32,000 plus expenses], according to the police investigation.

The police said that the Vietnamese surrogates were lured to Thailand with promises of "well-paying jobs", but with no mention of surrogacy. Once arrived, they had their passports seized by Baby-101 officials. They couldn't refuse anymore. They received 165,000 baht [about \$5,000] to carry the foetus to term. The company had of course other costs, but still managed to make a handsome profit on this

[seedy trade](#)

. Last year, after the government got wind of this case, it was decided to block the website. Meanwhile, the company had nonetheless found other ways to recruit other young women. The 14 women were released in late February have sought help from the Vietnamese embassy.

Practicality, sincerity, credibility

The company presents itself on the site like a baby farm, "based on eugenics". From a slightly different named site, Babe-1001, the Eugenic Surrogate firm describes its sperm donors like beautiful Caucasian men while the "selected ova" (eggs) are from Asian women, reads a page of the site displaying dozens of photos of young women, presented in a mannequin fashion in suggestive poses (where in Baby-101's site they were scantily dressed). Baby 101 used a particularly sensitive issue and capitalized on it in the most vile way. Phil Robertson from Human Rights Watch said:

This is human trafficking in its most perverse and horrific form, sexual exploitation and rape, the mind boggles that something like this could happen. This case combines two problems at once. Medical and hospital regulations prohibit marketing services in surrogacy in Thailand. During its two years of existence, Baby-101 has

produced

an indefinite number of births and some hospitals and doctors must have been in cahoots with the company [the government announced that doctors and clinics would be prosecuted].

Thailand can not become a

breeding farm for babies

, and even less through victims of human trafficking.

The issue of surrogacy raises many moral issues. This topic has been of little discussion in Thailand, where such practices were deemed unlikely frequent. Whatever one thinks of this problem in general, the case of Baby-101 - which was a purely commercial service - is well beyond the limits of ethics. The government must seek the extradition of officials of this company [one of them was arrested in Taiwan]. Prosecution should be brought against the Taiwanese leaders, Thais who helped and all the doctors or hospital and clinic managers who participated in this traffic. By sending a strong signal today authorities might discourage the recurrence of such practices.

Only 15 of the presented 40 women were freed by Thai police. Where are the other 25? Since more addresses appeared on the website, more raids are to be expected

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