



KIDNAPPED AND COERCED

Liliana is Venezuelan and is being detained at an Argentine federal prison. She has two children in Venezuela.



Prison sentence: Four years and six months for drug trafficking; after serving half the sentence, she can be deported and released in Venezuela.

Many women involved in transporting drugs are co-opted by organizations that operate similarly to those that traffic in persons. This is what happened to Liliana.

Human trafficking has affected a growing number of victims who are lured in, transported, and received elsewhere as a result of threats, force, or other forms of coercion, for the purposes of exploitation. In this case, Liliana was co-opted and went through this same coercive process in order to transport drugs.



“I had a normal life, every day I took my children to school before going to work.”



“One day a Colombian man began approaching me, sort of flirting, and saying that I should carry drugs to other countries. I said no.”

When Liliana refused, the man started threatening to hurt her family.

“My mistake was not seeking help. Little by little I gave in. If they set your life against the lives of your children, your relatives, you will choose their lives. Let them do what they want with me.”

Afraid of putting her family at risk, Liliana agreed to transport drugs to Peru. But she later realized that the original plan was not going ahead and that she'd been kidnapped by this group of people. First they took her to Caracas and then to Ecuador.


“They would tell me: remember that we know where your children are, remember that we know where your family is. First we'll kill you and then your whole family.”



“I thought why did they kidnap me.”

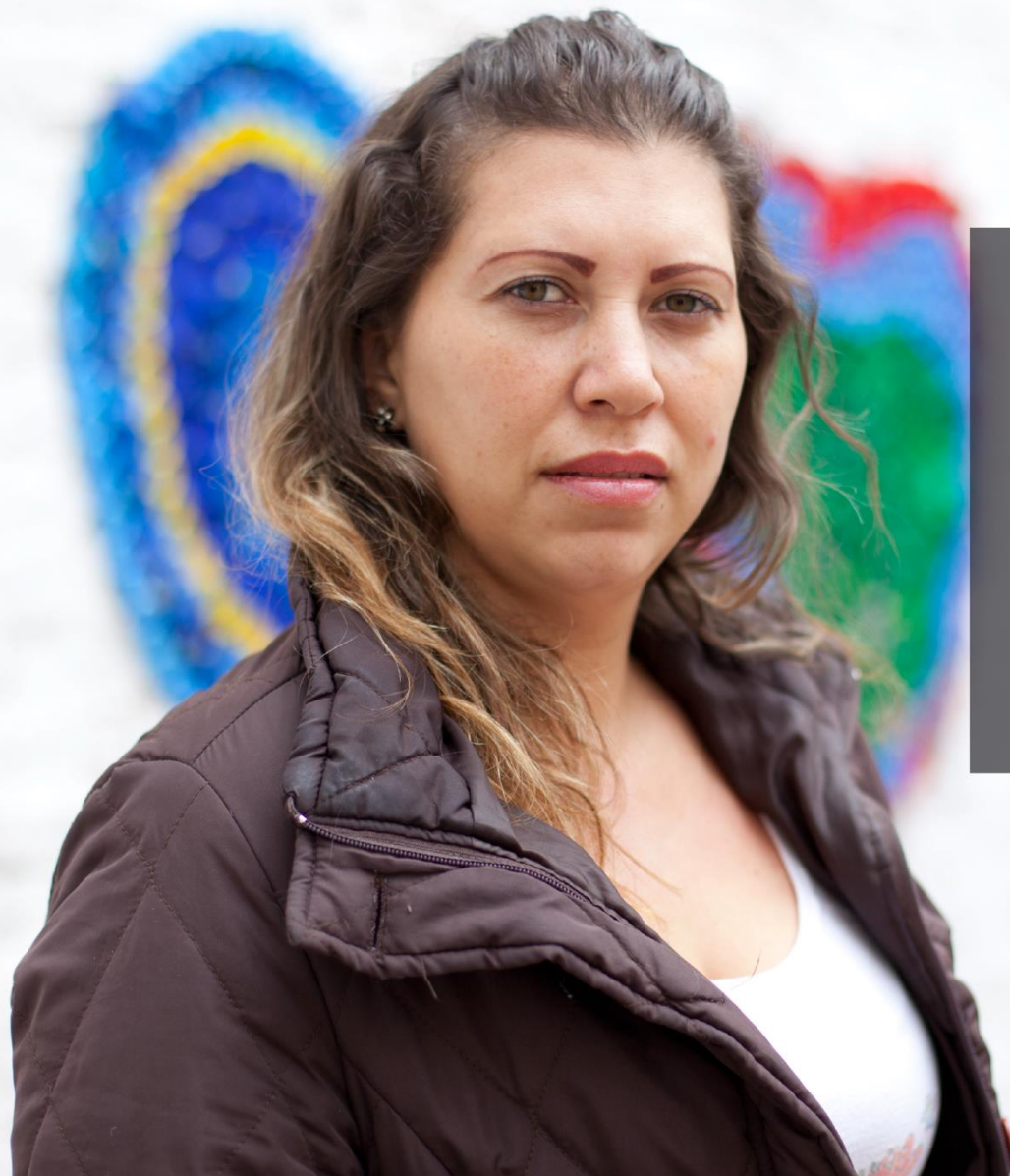
Liliana was taken to another place where they dressed her and placed vacuum-sealed packets of drugs on her.

“They never talked to me about money ... They bought me clothing, I had to pass off as a tourist.”

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a brown quilted puffer jacket over a white shirt, sits on a wooden bench in a classroom. Behind her is a green chalkboard with some faint writing. To the left, a painting of a mountain range under a bright orange and yellow sky is visible. The woman has a serious expression and her arms are crossed.

“Maybe they put me there as a decoy so someone else with more drugs could get through. I was carrying 1 kilo 600 grams.”

They told her she would be transporting the drugs to the country of Georgia, in Asia, with a stopover in Brazil. Before departing they changed the itinerary: her first destination would be Argentina. They said, “Don’t worry, nothing will happen. There’s no scanner, no dogs, there’s nothing there.”



“Even before I got to the end of the walkway, Customs and Migrations officials were waiting for me.”

Liliana accepted what is known as an “abbreviated trial” in Argentina, which is similar to a plea bargain. In these cases, the prosecutor offers the accused a more lenient sentence for a given offense if that person admits guilt. A full judicial trial is thereby avoided and a lighter prison sentence is obtained.



By accepting the plea agreement, Liliana could not explain to a judge that she had been threatened into transporting the drugs.

Nor could she say that she had been confined and put under other people's control, or that they had threatened to harm her children and relatives. During the process no one asked her about the people who had “hired” her to transport the drugs.

“In prison I work in the doll-making workshop and I’m taking an English class and a photography course.”



“I am saving what I earn in the workshop to take it to Venezuela when I’m released.”

“It hurts me not to see my family, my children. But I am not going to put them in the situation of coming to see me here. I’m not there as they go through these moments in life, which we won’t ever get back.”



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