

Trafficking of Human Beings: Our Response as Franciscans

Statement of Resolution: Be it resolved that we, as members of the Franciscan Federation, upholding the inherent dignity of each human person in the tradition of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, denounce all forms of human trafficking as criminal acts that violate basic human rights and exploit innocent people. We renew our pledge to work for the elimination of human trafficking and its causes; to advocate for rescue, safety and justice for trafficked persons; and to demand prosecution of perpetrators.

Background: Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery. It is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, providing, or obtaining, by any means, of a person for forced labor, slavery or servitude in any industry or site. It includes sex trafficking, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or when the person induced to perform a commercial sex act is not yet 18 years of age.

According to the U.S. State Department, there are over 12 million adult and child slaves worldwide, 56% of whom are women and girls. After drug trafficking, trafficking of human beings is tied with arms trafficking as the second largest criminal industry in the world. It is also the fastest growing. Traffickers generate billions of dollars in profits every year while victimizing millions of people around the globe.

Victims of trafficking can be found in commercial sex situations, domestic situations (nannies or servants), sweatshop factories, construction, farming and landscaping, fisheries, hotel and tourist industries, panhandling, janitorial services, restaurant services, and in many other circumstances including forced marriages, illegal adoptions and the removal and selling of organs or other body parts.

Poverty and inequality are important factors in making people more vulnerable to being trafficked. As a criminal industry driven by large profits and the low risk of prosecution, trafficking will continue to exist as long as the demand is high and the risks are low.

Human Trafficking can be combated in several ways:

1) *Eliminate Extreme Poverty:* In the long term, wiping out slavery requires helping the world's poor gain greater control over their lives. Mandatory primary and secondary education and effective anti-poverty programs are the first steps.

2) *Criminalization & Sanctions:* While there are often laws in place prohibiting sexual exploitation and criminalizing trafficking, stronger penalties and increased enforcement are imperative. Prosecutors need more assistance and protection developing cases against traffickers, while victims must be given public assistance in the form of protection, rehabilitation shelters, healthcare and residency status. The services provided trafficking survivors need to be victim-centered and acknowledge

the further trauma caused when trafficked persons are arrested, charged with crimes or offenses, and detained in holding cells and jails.

3) *Prevention*: Training programs for law enforcement and government officials, public awareness, a warning system (like Amber Alert), and media campaigns have all proven successful against human trafficking.

4) *Communication and Cooperation*: International law enforcement coordination and cooperation are essential. International NGOs that focus on human trafficking give power and protection to those who are fighting human trafficking locally, by putting pressure on corrupt public officials and observing criminal activity from abroad. Political lobbying, legal aid and funding for non-governmental groups are also vital.

5) *Decrease Corruption*: Corruption is one of the primary reasons human trafficking and slavery continue. Therefore, public officials must be regularly investigated, held accountable and punished for corruption.

6) *Decrease Demand*: Human trafficking will continue as long as there is demand for cheap labor, inexpensive consumer products and commercialized sex. The demand side of trafficking includes sweatshop or brothel owners, farmers, clients of sex workers, and people who hire domestic servants. We recognize that we also may be complicit in human trafficking by the misuse of our purchasing and investment power. Careful research into products and corporations is required.

Rationale: As Franciscans, we affirm our relationship with all persons as our brothers and sisters. Following the example of St. Francis who reached out to the poor, oppressed and marginalized in his day, we have special concern for the dignity of all human beings and a call to respond when persons are being oppressed. We aim to transform hatred to love, despair to hope, sadness to joy, and darkness to light for all human trafficked victims.

Therefore, we will continue to call for and support local, state, federal and international legislation, policies and enforcement that are compassionate, comprehensive and just. We advocate that trafficked victims be treated with respect and made safe and secure rather than being treated as criminals. As Franciscans, we recommit ourselves to prayer and advocacy for an end to human trafficking and for respect and justice for all victims.

Call to Respond

Let us, as members of the Franciscan Federation, continue and increase our efforts to address the needs of our times, as we respond individually and collectively to the issue of the trafficking of human beings in the United States of America and around the world.

Members are encouraged to:

- respond prayerfully by engaging in prayer services and remembrances, by offering intercessions during liturgies and on other such occasions, and by holding in contemplative silence: victims, perpetrators, and those responding in various ways to this horrendous injustice.
- become better educated about the issues related to Human Trafficking in the U.S. and around the world.
- engage in advocacy efforts such as petitions and postcard campaigns, calls, letters and visits to legislators, letters to the editor, nonviolent marches, vigils and demonstrations, media and other advocacy opportunities as they arise.
- further specific education and advocacy efforts concerning trafficked adults and children at sports events, conventions, or other public events.
- promote increased education in identification and safe rescue in hospitals, schools, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, motels and other places where human trafficked victims can be rescued and provided with safety.
- engage in advocacy efforts that discourage demand for cheap labor and sexual exploitation which may lead to trafficking. This includes monitoring media for unhealthy messages and educational programs for boys and men regarding respect for women and girls.
- recognize the connections between the broken immigration system of the U.S. and human trafficking, and continue to advocate for immigration reform.
- become aware of our purchasing practices and the use of our investment power by researching the companies we support and the products we consume, to insure that human trafficking is not part of the “supply chain” and labor practices are just.
- collaborate with appropriate organizations working against human trafficking, by engaging in networking meetings, collective actions, advocacy efforts, and by financial support when possible.
- keep records of our responses and activities during the year of this resolution on Trafficking, and share them with the entire Federation at the next Annual Federation Conference.

Recommended Resources for 2012 Resolution: Human Trafficking

DVD's (many of these can be found through www.amazon.com)

The Day My God Died www.thedaymygoddied.com

The Day My God Died is a feature-length documentary that presents the stories of young girls whose lives have been shattered by the child sex trade. They describe the day they were abducted from their village and sold into sexual servitude as, "The Day My God Died." The film also introduces us to the heroes of the movement to abolish child sex slavery – non-profit organizations which rescue and care for former sex slaves. 54 minutes

Lives for Sale – Maryknoll and Lightfoot films www.livesforsale.com

A one-hour investigative documentary exposes the painful, rarely seen human side of illegal immigration - including the growing black market trade in human beings.

Stolen Childhoods www.stolenchildhood.net <http://vimeo.com/17350618>

This film features stories of child laborers around the world, told in their own words. Children are shown working in dumps, quarries, brick kilns. *Stolen Childhoods* provides an understanding of the causes of child labor, what it costs the global community, how it contributes to global insecurity and what it will take to eliminate it. The film shows best practice programs that remove children from work and put them in school. The link above is from a 19 minute ABC NightLine feature on the essence of this movie. If you go to YouTube and type in "Stolen Childhoods," there are many short clips on the same topic.

Friends of Orphans: Healing the Wounds of War

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=251260237581068417#>

Friends of Orphans (FRO) in northern Uganda is a lifeline for former child slaves who were abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army and forced to commit atrocities in their own communities. These former child soldiers have survived the unimaginable. FRO starts with the basic food and medical care before moving on to educational and vocational help. 10 minutes

Dreams Die Hard www.freetheslaves.net/Page.aspx?pid=318

In *Dreams Die Hard*, Filmmaker Peggy Callahan profiles the real-life story of people trapped in slavery across the United States. Ultimately, the stories presented highlight these survivors' passion for freedom and justice. About 36 minutes.

Prayer Services

Prayer Services used at the Annual Federation Meeting in July 2011 by Peace and Justice Commission in support of resolution against human trafficking:

<http://www.franfed.org/PeaceJusticePrayerServiceHT.html>

Evening Prayer against Human Trafficking:

<http://www.sceast.org/SocialJustice/pdf/January%202009%20Evening%20Prayer.pdf>

Two Prayer Services to use on January 11th – Human Trafficking Awareness Day

<http://www.ipjc.org/links/2011TraffickingPrayerJan11.pdf>

<http://www.ipjc.org/links/Trafficking%20Awareness%20Day%202010.pdf>

Web Sites

How much 'forced labor' supports your lifestyle? Was your cell phone made in a sweatshop? Was that sweater you are wearing made by slaves? Were child slaves forced to put that stitching in the Catholic School uniforms or the sports uniforms worn by the students in the school you support?

You are now able to find out by going to: www.slaveryfootprint.org

The *Stop Trafficking* newsletter, hosted by the **STOP ENSLAVEMENT** serves as a forum for exchange among religious congregations and their collaborating organizations:

- to promote awareness re. human trafficking
- to exchange best practices in advocacy for and empowerment of survivors of human trafficking;
- to recommend actions to counter human trafficking.

<http://www.stopenslavement.org>

The Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking (ATEST) is dedicated to ending modern-day slavery and human trafficking around the world. Modern-day slavery manifests itself in many forms—from forced labor to sex trafficking—but each is alike in posing a severe threat to basic human rights.

www.endslaveryandtrafficking.org/action

Polaris Project is a leading organization in the United States combating all forms of human trafficking and serving both U.S. citizen and foreign national victims.

www.polarisproject.org

US State Department – for press releases, reports and up-to-date information on foreign affairs.

<http://www.state.gov>

National Human Trafficking Resource Center of the US Dept. of Health and Human Services (Administration for Children and Families): *Project Rescue and Restore*, a public awareness campaign, which established *Rescue and Restore* coalitions in 24 cities, regions and States. These community action groups are comprised of NGO leaders, academics, students, law enforcement agents, and other key stakeholders who are committed to addressing the problem of human trafficking in their own communities.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) – Bishops’ statement of response to human trafficking, and resources related to the topic.

<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/trafficking/>

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Working for a more just and peaceful world is an integral component of LCWR's vision and goals. While many member congregations are actively engaged in efforts promoting social, economic, and earth justice, LCWR provides opportunities for addressing issues of concern with a corporate voice by taking action on resolutions approved at the national assembly.

<http://www.lcwr.org/lcwrsocialjustice/socialjusticeoverview.htm>

Business Travelers against Human Trafficking supplies high quality training and resources to inform staff on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking and what action to take.

www.businesstravelersus.org

End Slavery Now is a charitable organization devoted to end slavery in the world. There are many resources at this site, opportunities for action; information for businesses, government agencies, legislation, etc.

www.endslaverynow.com

Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center offers resources, prayers, etc. on this issue. Two of the suggested prayer services below come from this site.

www.ipjc.org

Shared Hope International exists to rescue and restore women and children in crisis. We are leaders in a worldwide effort to prevent and eradicate sex trafficking and slavery through education and public awareness.

www.sharedhope.org

Christian Brothers Investment Services and a coalition of U.S. and U.K. investors and NGOs have united to call on corporations to strengthen their focus against human trafficking and modern slavery in advance of the 2012 Summer Olympic Games taking place in London from July 27 to August 12. View this website where CBIS participants and others can join in the fight, both at the Olympics and beyond.

http://www.iccr.org/issues/subpages/olympics_home.php

Journal Articles

- Ager, Joey. "Freedom Songs." *Sojourners Magazine*. March 2009.
- America. "Human Trafficking Victims Need More Help." December 3, 2007
- Anderson, Bridget and Rutvica Andrijasevic. "Sex, Slaves and Citizens: The Publics of Anti-Trafficking." *Soundings*. Winter 2008
- Clark, Kevin. "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Shadow World of Human Trafficking." *U. S. Catholic*. January 2009.
- Davis, Michael Cory. "Human Trafficking." *Hispanic*. September 2007
- Israely, Jeff. "Where the Sun Shines Brightly." *Time*. July 4, 2008
- McNally, Melissa. "Women Rebuild Lives after Horrors of Human Trafficking." *National Catholic Reporter*. August 31, 2007
- Thompson, Emma. "Slavery in Our Times." *Newsweek*. March 17, 2008
- VanDusen. "Peonage in New Orleans." *Progressive*. August 2008

Books

- Fisanick, Christina. ed. Human Trafficking.
- Lankford, Ronald, Jr. Slavery Today.
- Tengalia-Webster, Maria. Slavery (Global Viewpoints).
- Bales, Kevin. The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today.
- Shelley, Louise. Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective.
- Nelson, James. Daughters: The Heartbreak of Human Trafficking.
- Walker, Daniel. God in a Brothel: An Undercover Journey into Sex Trafficking and Rescue.
- Chestnut, Pamala. More Than Rice: A journey through the underworld of Human Trafficking.
- Batstone, David. Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade—and How We Can Fight It.
- Smith, Linda. From Congress to the Brothel.
- Smith, Linda, Renting Lacy. A Story of America's Prostituted Children.