

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Issued by

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF RELIGIOUS AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (INRATIP)

For Immediate Release

*Institute of Maria SS Bambina
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Introduction

At their first international conference on human trafficking, Catholic Sisters from 26 countries and all continents gathered in Rome. Statistics indicate that there are 800 congregations and over 1 million Catholic sisters in the world. Delegates to the conference committed to use their personnel, resources and historical commitment to those living in situations of poverty to eradicate human trafficking - a modern day form of slavery. The following is their statement to the world.

Definition

Trafficking in human beings means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons using threat, force, coercion, fraud, deception or abuse of power by payments to achieve consent of control over a person for the purpose of exploitation. Trafficking in children requires only the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall mean among other things, sexual exploitation, domestic service, forced labor or removal of organs. (Palermo Protocol)

To Victims

We say to you who have been trafficked especially women and children - We stand with you, you are not alone. We will fight with you to release you from your bondage. In solidarity with you, we will confront the traffickers. We challenge unjust systems and those who exploit you. Do not give up hope.

To Traffickers

We, the women religious from across the world say to you traffickers: Stop the exploitation! Look at the children, women, and men you are destroying with your physical and psychological abuse. By violating their fundamental human rights you damage, deny and destroy their identities, names and status. We condemn these actions as well as the subtle ways you use to exploit them.

To Demanders and Exploiters

We call on you who exploit women, children and men for commercial sex or forced labor to stop buying human beings, for without your demand the evil of human trafficking would not exist. We

call on you to realize that all women, children and men have equal rights and dignity and that in your demand you cause irreparable harm and lose your own dignity.

To Governments

We acknowledge that many governments have laws against trafficking and call for an increased enforcement of these laws. We further call on the governments of the world to address the issues of economic inequality, poverty and corruption which lead to the destruction of so many lives. The physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological torture of millions of people, hidden in back streets, ghettos, hotels and parlors all over the world is criminal activity. We urge governments to create and implement policies and strong legislation which criminalize the exploiters. Good governance demands that traffickers do not benefit from the vulnerability of others.

To All Religious Leaders

We appreciate all the religious leaders who have supported us in the fight against trafficking in persons. We call on all religious leaders to end religious practices and customs that discriminate against women and girls, and hence contribute to the attitude of gender inequality underlying the growth of human trafficking in our world today.

We urge all religious leaders to denounce injustice and violence against women, children and men who are exploited or used in the sale of organs. We encourage you to relentlessly use your pastoral responsibility to defend and promote the human dignity of persons exploited by these forms of slavery.

To People of Good Will

We urge all people of good will to open your hearts to the victims and to act to change the root causes of human trafficking - poverty, gender inequality, discrimination, greed and corruption. Each small action of restoring dignity to another person furthers the dignity of each one of us. Our hope rests in a vision of humanity which honors the principle that no woman, child or man is a commodity for sale. Relying on the love of God, we ask you to join us in our prayers and our actions to eradicate this social and moral evil.