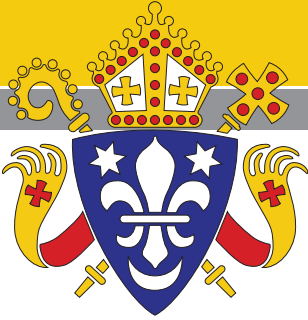


COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Church and Law Enforcement in Partnership

Rome, 9 - 10 April 2014



A Model that Works: A Government's Role in Combating Human Trafficking

Rt Hon Theresa May, Home Secretary, UK

CASINA PIO IV, 00120, VATICAN CITY STATE, 9 APRIL 2014

His Holiness Pope Francis has described modern slavery as “a crime against humanity”. There can be few descriptions that so aptly match the appalling nature of this crime. The men, women and children who are forced, tricked and coerced into servitude and abuse, are often the world's most vulnerable.

Many endure lives and experiences that are horrifying in their inhumanity. Some are sold or betrayed by loved ones, others duped, tricked or lured by criminals with promises of a better life. Victims can be exploited and trafficked in their country of origin, or moved across borders. They are preyed upon by slave drivers and traffickers precisely because they are seen to be so defenceless.

Tackling this crime is an immense and complex challenge. The forms of exploitation are frightening. The numbers involved almost unthinkable.

The task is made all the more difficult because victims are usually hidden and rarely visible to society.

But the sheer horror and scale of the slavery and trafficking that takes place in so many of our countries, must not be allowed to overwhelm our determination to stamp it out.

Stripped of their freedom, exploited for profit, victims endure violence, rape, hunger, and abuse. Some are forced into a life of crime, and kept in terrible conditions, with no means of escape. The emotional, psychological and sometimes physical damage is incalculable.

It is a crime which has no borders. Humans are moved around as though they are not human at all. This conference sends out such a powerful signal that international action is needed to fight this evil, and stamp out this misery.

I would particularly like to thank His Holiness Pope Francis for the leadership he has shown on this issue, as well Cardinal Vincent Nichols who I know shares my personal commitment to combating this crime. I would also like to thank Bishop Patrick Lynch for organising this conference and Bishop Sanchez Sorondo for hosting it.

Addressing modern slavery and human trafficking will require many different approaches. But as the presence of so many law enforcement chiefs here today from around the world demonstrates, the best way to protect and reduce the number of victims, is to disrupt, convict and imprison the criminal gangs behind much of the modern slave trade.

Today I want to share with you the work the UK Government is doing to ensure we save victims, put slave masters behind bars where they belong, and increase the number of prosecutions for this hideous crime.

As Home Secretary, I have given UK law enforcement a very clear message that they must make stamping out modern slavery and human trafficking a priority.

Last December, I published in the UK Parliament a draft Bill on Modern Slavery – the first of its kind in Europe – which will ensure the harshest penalties are available for offenders.

The draft Bill consolidates and simplifies existing offences. It toughens sentences for the worst perpetrators to a maximum of life imprisonment, and it introduces a vital policing tool to disrupt criminals involved in this crime. Anyone convicted of trafficking anywhere in the world can be stopped from travelling to a country where they are known to have exploited vulnerable people in the past.

It also creates a new role – an Anti-Slavery Commissioner – who will hold law enforcement and other agencies to account.

Once this Bill goes through Parliament I expect more ways of helping victims can be added before becoming law.

In the UK, we recently launched the National Crime Agency. It has four commands: Border Policing, Organised Crime, Economic Crime and Child Exploitation and Online Protection. Many of you in this room will have worked internationally with our National Crime Agency officers.

The structure of the National Crime Agency means it is ideally placed to crack down on a complex crime such as slavery. At its heart is the intelligence hub. Everyone in this room will understand that good intelligence is vital in disrupting and prosecuting the crimes involved in modern slavery and human trafficking. That is why we are here today: to work together closely across borders; to share experience; to share intelligence and to work together for the same purpose – putting slave masters behind bars and freeing victims from a horrendous existence.

Police, border officials and others on the frontline must also do more to spot the signs of slavery whenever they come across it. Training is already mandatory for British Border Force officials and the UK's College of Policing is developing training and guidance for police officers. I have also appointed specialist anti-slavery teams at our borders to help identify potential victims who are being trafficked into the country.

As I have said, modern slavery is an evolving, complex crime, in which criminals are quick to adapt, and change patterns. Expertise can be invaluable. The Metropolitan Police Service's specialist Human Trafficking Unit led by Kevin Hyland, has built up substantial experience.

The unit is at the forefront of police practice in this field, and has forged relationships with anti-slavery charities leading to increased trust and confidence, and in turn the charities have encouraged more victims to come forward and give evidence, in order to help convict organised criminals.

Our efforts must also focus on going after the profits of those involved, and compensating victims with seized assets.

But at the heart of everything we do, is the desire to protect and support victims and help them recover from the trauma they have endured.

And much more must be done.

Modern slavery and human trafficking touches the countries of all of us here, the criminals involved operate across our borders, their networks connect across our countries.

And while the scale of this crime shows no sign of decreasing, prosecution and conviction rates remain far too low.

So the message is clear: we must all do more to increase prosecution rates across the board.

Within Europe, traffickers abuse free movement. They con potential victims with promises of employment and opportunities elsewhere.

This is why it is so important that we work to crack down on the criminals and organised crime groups collaboratively.

And in Europe there is a mechanism to facilitate that.

The UK's Metropolitan Police Service's Human Trafficking Unit uses Joint Investigation Teams to work with colleagues in other European countries.

This is a valuable tool for tackling crime which stretches across different jurisdictions. And through this mechanism we have secured notable successes.

A few years ago, using the Joint Investigation Team mechanism, the Human Trafficking Unit was able to break up a criminal gang involved in sham marriages and the trafficking of over 100 vulnerable women to Britain for forced prostitution. 12 arrests were made in the UK and abroad, assets seized and nine convictions and three cautions eventually secured.

Numerous women were rescued from appalling slavery.

And the activities of a ruthless gang – who may well have gone on to exploit countless others – were stopped.

We owe it to victims to find practical policing solutions such as this. I believe we need to widen the type of collaboration we have in Europe to the rest of the world.

The spread of organised crime networks through many known trafficking routes, should compel us to work together, so that we can ensure slave drivers and traffickers know there are no safe havens.

Conclusion

The fight against modern slavery is gathering momentum. But much work remains to be done.

And international co-operation must be at the heart of that work.

This conference will focus on what we can do to fight the crime, support victims and raise awareness.

It is a crucial first step, and one that I hope we can build on.

Following this conference, an international group of senior law enforcement chiefs – “The Santa Marta Group” – will be set up.

Bernard Hogan-Howe, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in the UK, will lead this group.

And as a next step, the Commissioner and I would like to invite members of the Santa Marta Group, to meet again in London in November at a conference hosted by the British Government and held in collaboration with the Catholic Church.

I do not believe anyone here is under any illusion about the enormity of the task ahead.

Stamping out modern slavery and human trafficking will not happen overnight.

But the chance to truly make a difference is here. Everyone in this room, and many more beyond, has a role to play. Around the world there is growing awareness that the horrors of slavery have not yet been banished.

Governments must set the lead. Faith organisations can provide guidance and support.

But law enforcement officers must catch the individuals and criminal gangs that trade in this human misery.

The chains of modern slavery may not often be visible, but the suffering is real. This is a moment when together we can take a stand against this evil.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, His Holiness Pope Francis denounces modern slavery and human trafficking and makes the call: “Let us not look the other way.”

Your Holiness, the people here and many more around the world, will look straight into the eye of this crime and we will do everything in our power to free the vulnerable people who find their lives so cruelly stolen from them.