

**THE ROLE OF CHURCHES AND FBOs IN FIGHTING
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS: CATHOLIC INITIATIVES**

European Parliament, Brussels, 14 February 2024

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Thank you to COMMECCE COMECE and Members of the European Parliament for inviting the Santa Marta Group to Brussels and the EU Parliament today. It is an honour to be with you today amongst leaders in European politics, religions, and civil society.

At a time when multilateral collaboration and unanimity are more challenging than ever, the EU leads the way. That's why I want to share with you an exciting new global development to combat human trafficking and invite you to be a part of it.

As Bishop William mentioned, my name is Kevin Hyland and I serve as Strategy Director for the Santa Marta Group. Our goal at Santa Marta Group was to create a unique partnership between leaders in criminal justice, faith groups, business, government and civil society leaders. These partnerships are built on trust and the idea that to stop human trafficking, we need a new approach...one that recognises this as a serious crime and develops measures to introduce integrated prevention. And crucial are effective victim identification and support that allow a trafficked survivor to become members of society without stigma or marginalisation.

Having met 15-year-old girls trafficked to Europe from Eritrea who were held in connection houses in Libya, sold at slave markets and raped daily was chilling. These markets have been linked to the funding of terrorists in Northern Iraq.

Or the men working on farms in Southern Europe that supplied fruit to major supermarkets and businesses. Forced to work excessively long hours, living in squalor, with little or even no pay.

Or the woman sold three times, forced to be a domestic worker and sleep under the sink. This was bad enough, but her experience of being raped by the man in the house when his wife was out was depraved.

Or the young women sleeping under the stairs in forced prostitution, earning hundreds of 1000's of pounds for a criminal network operating in Thailand, Romania, Belgium and the UK.

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Each of these ended in convictions or sanctions, and in the latter two, compensation was obtained by pro-bono law firm Hogan Lovells working alongside police.

But to do this, high levels of investigation standards, excellent victim care, and cooperation that transcended borders.

It is well proven that compensation or reparation is so important, allowing survivors to rebuild their lives and make their own decisions.

If my plane had been delayed this morning, firstly, I would not be here. But in most circumstances, if the delay is more than three hours, I can receive compensation for my inconvenience..... a victim of human trafficking would have many more hurdles to get through and may not even qualify for a single euro.

As a police officer, I recall being told I could never seize criminal assets in Thailand until I did.

Or that international sanctions would not be imposed on Libya's traffickers until they were..

The four cases I mention come from thousands of cases of human trafficking I have encountered over the past 15 years.

One thing I am sure of is that we need to improve, at scale, the prevention of these crimes so they do not occur in the first place.

Many reasons heighten the potential to become a victim of human traffickers, and of course, those need to be addressed. However, human trafficking is never inevitable. It can only occur as a deliberate criminal act or by wilful negligence by an individual, an organised crime group, a business, a corporation or, in some cases, a country. And in all cases, it is always a serious crime.

Despite global estimates of over 49 million victims and criminal profits of over US\$150 billion annually, disincentives to commit these crimes are negligible. The incentive, however, is enormous. The potential to have a share in the US\$150 billion criminal assets comes with impunity or, in some geographic areas, with immunity.

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Those who commit these crimes must feel reassured knowing that 99.98 per cent of crimes remain undetected, and only one in every 8,700 victims worldwide will see justice. Making this almost a perfect crime.

So, what can bring change?..... Making this a crime that doesn't pay?

Santa Marta has six priority pillars:

1. Government procurement must not end up funding criminal traffickers. This is something governments can control through vigilance, monitoring and good contracts. Those who use forced labour or human trafficking should never benefit from taxpayer money. Political party manifestos always include crime prevention..... not funding it. And likewise, businesses must prevent their transactions and trade from benefitting those who commit crimes of human trafficking and modern slavery. Many businesses respect crime prevention and the safety of their employees in their business model. Let's ensure all big businesses follow suit; this should be done by law.
2. Tainted money: we need to target this crime's profits and benefits to remove the incentive. A concept of tainted money, beyond that of proceeds of crime, will significantly impact prevention. If you make money from human trafficking or modern slavery, even unwittingly, there needs to be a notion that you lose it. This would not only capture business profit but also, by example, landlords where sex trafficking occurs and many others who make a profit, all too often through wilful blindness. This will also increase awareness and due diligence, shifting the responsibility to prevent trafficking to those who potentially benefit from it. This notion will be a game changer.
3. The internet and transactions on the virtual highway must be regulated, just like any normal highway. If paedophiles, traffickers, fraudsters or any other serious criminals peddled their wares on the streets, shops and highways of the US, they would be pursued and brought to justice. A shift in the governance of the internet and the cyber world is needed and must go beyond the bounds of criminal justice. Technology, digital, and social media companies have the technology and ability to do far more in prevention. The safety of our children, communities and national and international security depend on them taking more deliberative action.

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4. We must view human trafficking and modern slavery in the context of other serious crimes and global threats. This crime destabilises economies, national security and the safety of communities. Of course, victim identification and support are crucial, but these crimes have a much wider negative impact. For example, human trafficking is used to fund terrorist groups. Traffickers recruit child soldiers to fight illegal battles in contradiction to our respect for democracy and the values it brings. Trafficking for human organs is increasing. Illegal surgical operations that will result in the death of donor and recipient have been highlighted by national medical experts. The shocking criminal sale of human organs attracts many millions every year as premium charges are on the up. So, understanding and implementing the conventions and protocols designed to prevent human trafficking and forced labour is crucial.

5. National Intelligence and international intelligence gathering bodies have a role in fighting this crime. For example, in peacekeeping and conflict pre-deployment preparation, the US and British Army introduced the identification of human trafficking as part of the training. It has also been introduced into smaller military nations' curricula, like the Irish Defence Forces. Sanctions and wider introduction of measures like the US Customs and Border Protection withhold release orders and the introduction of a list of rogue traders will send a clear message: human trafficking must be prevented. And red flags on finance, and for example, new styles of red flags such as airlines making compulsory notifications of multiple one-way flights for women and girls using the same IP address or payment card, have previously proven to be incredibly useful. This means the institutions that have a role in preventing and sanctioning international crimes and crimes against humanity must be fully engaged in fulfilling their duty. This should include agencies such as the World Bank, the World Health Organisation, the International Criminal Courts, and multilateral bodies such as the EU.

6. Importantly, point six is moral leadership, something we must all strive to do. We must be courageous to face change, recognise systems are not working and collectively nurture and, where necessary, require change to become the norm.

Now, I recognise that these are large and complex challenges. You may be asking—how are you going to make this happen?

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This is where you come in.

Santa Marta Group is promoting a partnership with the G20 Interfaith Forum called “30-by-30” to deliver on these six points. The goal is for G20 member countries to collectively invest and encourage other countries to invest US\$30 billion annually in the fight against human trafficking and modern slavery by 2030.

This might sound like an incredible sum, but it is just a fraction of the US\$150 billion profit that criminals make from human trafficking annually. We must give statutory bodies the funds to improve prevention, detection, robust intelligence gathering, and deployment against evil traffickers. The G20 Interfaith Forum and Santa Marta Group believe that the G20, representing 80 per cent of world GDP and 66 per cent of world population, is the right platform to bring global change.

While the world's leaders have included human trafficking or business transparency in their G20 declaration since 2018, now is the time to deliver. Move words into action.

The time is overdue for change: a quarter of a century since the UN Palermo Protocol, 16 years since the Council of Europe Convention and 13 years since the EU Directive have failed to stem this crime. Further, it has been over 90 years since the League of Nations introduced the slavery and forced labour ban, followed by further bans in 1956, 1999, and 2014. This is long enough to recognise that we need different tools, systems, and approaches.

This crime, unlike others, has many opportunities for prevention and intervention during preparatory acts, such as conspiracy, serious organised crime enterprise offences or aiding and abetting.

However, it is crucial to disincentivise these crimes by removing all the financial benefits and placing fear into the mere thought of committing human trafficking or modern slavery. This must become a priority for businesses, governments, communities and the criminal justice sector so future generations are not left with a legacy of failure to respond effectively to trading in human exploitation.

The proposed amended Directive is welcome, and the accountability of business and government procurement is crucial, but to make this serious, it will require oversight, like with GDPR. In Ireland, GDPR breaches recently resulted in over

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€1 billion in sanctions. Data must be protected, but so must the lives of workers, and not just those living within the EU.

The G20 consists of 20 nations and includes the 27 EU states and, for the first time this year, the 57 African Union nations. It also has many observer nations, so its economic reach and population cover all regions of the world. The EU and the US account for almost half of the world's GDP, which means this group can shift the dial.

Actions, not merely words, are needed. But it will take great leadership, proper investment, and political will.

The Santa Marta Group knows that leaders like you will be the key to changing the paradigm,

'From a crime that is a profitable enterprise – to one you fear to commit.'