

Santa Marta Group on Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking is one of the gravest criminal challenges confronting the international community. The scale of the problem is such that now, according to some studies, it ranks as the second most profitable worldwide criminal enterprise after the illegal arms trade.

The International Labour Organisation estimates that 2.4 million people are trafficked globally and that annual profits generated from trafficking in human beings are as high as \$32 billion.



Global trafficking and the sex trade are increasingly interlinked with prostitution becoming far more exploitative of victims. A UN study on global trafficking found that trafficking for sexual exploitation accounts for 79% of the total while forced labour amounts to 18%.

There is a constant demand for trafficked people and the major sources remain poorer regions such as Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and South East Asia. Trafficking is facilitated increasingly by modern forms of technology, particularly the use of internet.

Both Pope Benedict and Pope Francis continually drew the attention of the Church and wider world to the moral and human crisis evident in this widespread human exploitation.

THE SANTA MARTA GROUP

Following initiatives by the Catholic Bishops' Conference for England and Wales (CBCEW), the Santa Marta Group was developed by the CBCEW and first met in Rome during April 2014 when police chiefs and Catholic bishops came to together, in the presence of Pope Francis, to sign an historic declaration, committing themselves to a partnership to eliminate human trafficking.

Named after the home of Pope Francis, in which the members stayed, the Group now has members in over 30 countries.

Through a series of conferences, the Bishops' Conference has brought together the heads of national and international police and law enforcement agencies including UK National Crime Agency, Interpol, Europol, US Homeland Security, the Argentine Federal Police, Ghanaian, Indian, Thai, Australian,

Irish and many European Police Forces to look at how they can work with the Church to help victims.

London Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe:

“The key issue for me is how we convince all victims that we are here to help, and that we can make a difference to their lives, no matter how desperate their situation may seem. When you are living in the grip of fear, how do you know who you can trust?”

More information: <http://santamartagroup.com/>

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