



SISTERS
OF THE PRESENTATION
of the Blessed Virgin Mary



Stand Together
and spend yourselves for the poor

JUSTICE UPDATE – July 2007

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Trafficking is complex and multi-faceted. By focusing on our experiences and those of others, we can begin to put together a working definition for human trafficking. This month, I encourage you to be more aware of trafficking stories brought to your attention and what they tell us about the issue of human trafficking.

The following is one of millions of stories shared by individuals who are trafficked as persons. As you enter the story ask yourself what type of environment allows trafficking to happen and what defines trafficking in this instance. In addition, pay attention to what feelings arise within you.

Lena's story began when she was sixteen and they came to her village looking for girls to train in jobs as cooks. The program included 3 months of cooking school in China with all expenses paid and guaranteed work for one year in an expensive Chinese hotel. Ten girls, including Lena, signed contracts. Those who came to the village were in a hurry and so the girls couldn't read nor take the contract home to their parents.

The girls were excited when they received their tickets and visas to China and the nice people came to escort them to the plane. The families thought the girls would make good money and be able to help at home. On the flight life changed. "Our escorts began treating us as criminals. In China they tried to burn our passports. When one of the others tried to stop them, they beat and raped her in front of us. There was no cooking school or jobs, only a house for prostitution. They took us to a morgue and showed us the bodies of two girls who jumped from a window trying to escape. They told us there was no way out until we had worked long enough to pay back our debts for tickets and expenses. They kept all our money."

Eventually, the brothel was raided and Lena was deported. You may think she was lucky but she may not be. Someday they will come back for Lena and if she doesn't go, they will kill Lena and maybe her family.

CONNECTIONS:

Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable matter (Earth Charter, 10)

Secure the human rights of women and girls and end all violence against them. (Earth Charter, 11a)

REFLECTION:

Are there any other stories you have heard or read in regard to trafficking of persons? What have you learned about trafficking? Who's involved? What's going on? When? Where? How can this be

happening? Complete this phrase with what you know about trafficking stating your own definition of trafficking. **“Trafficking of women and children means...”**

After completing this statement, share your definition with others and write a composite definition.

ACTIONS:

1. Now read the United Nation’s definition, located below, and note the elements which you have already included in your definition and those you omitted. What did you learn through this comparison?

“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” (Article 3, subparagraph (a), of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol)

2. Last year **Habeas corpus**, the Constitutional right to challenge government detention in court, was revoked when President Bush signed the Military Commissions Act. Last month the Senate Judiciary Committee passed a bill (S.185) to restore habeas corpus. The bill would allow Guantanamo detainees to challenge their detention in US federal courts and end the indefinite detention without charge based on the President’s sole discretion. Urge your Senators and Representatives to strongly co-sponsor/support Habeas Corpus Restoration Act of 2007 and therefore demonstrate U.S. leadership on human rights at: <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/siteapps/advocacy/index.aspx?c=goJT10OvElH&b=953489&action=8301&template=x.ascx>

3. The full House will begin its review of the **2007 Farm Bill** with a vote expected in early August. The Senate will begin to draft its version of the Farm Bill with finalization in early September. The House Agriculture Committee keeps an update at (<http://agriculture.house.gov/inside/2007FarmBill.html>).

From the Catholic perspective, the bill must promote the good of all rather than serve political and corporate interests. The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops in working on the Farm Bill write, “The primary goals of agricultural policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farm workers in this country and abroad. A key measure of every agricultural program and legislative initiative is whether it helps the most vulnerable farmers, farm workers, and their families and whether it contributes to a global food system that provides basic nutrition for all.”

Watch <http://www.ncrlc.com/> for possible actions.