



XI° International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking 2025

CONCEPT NOTE

Inspired by Pope Francis' invitation to “**Be pilgrims of peace and apostle of Hope**”ⁱ as the Church prepares for the Jubilee 2025, the theme of the XI Edition of the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking (IDPAAHT) 2025 is:

Ambassadors of Hope: Together Against Human Trafficking

Every year the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking (IDPAAHT), inaugurated by Pope Francis in 2015, has been celebrated worldwide on 8 February, the feast of Saint Josephine Bakhita.

The coordination of the IDPAAHT has been entrusted to Talitha Kum in collaboration with partner organisations with the aim to gather for prayer, collectively reflect on the realities of human trafficking, and advocate for and with victims, survivors, and vulnerable populations. Particularly, it aims to empower and serve women, children, migrants, refugees and young people.

This year, in line with the spirit of celebration for the Church Jubilee 2025 — the organising committee seeks to highlight this occasion through a series of events aimed at awareness-raising against human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. Over 100 people representing different partner organisations (local and international) – youth from around the world, advocates and activists- *survivors, migrants, forcibly displaced people and public figures in the art/film industry* – will gather in Rome the week of 4th to 10th February 2025 to promote an appeal to the Church calling for Hope, Peace, Love, and Unity to heal our broken world.

The 11th Edition has the following objectives:

- To pray together as brothers and sisters of all ages, cultures, and faiths for an end human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery;
- To raise awareness of the need for a stronger global response to human trafficking at all levels - local churches, other spiritual traditions, and lay communities;
- To share the crucial role played by inter-faith-based groups in supporting survivors, protecting children and vulnerable peoples;
- To come together and construct pathways for a systemic change to address the root causes of human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery.

The vicious cycle of human trafficking is a complex and challenging vacuum that demands a global response. It is a global issue that affects many peoples' lives, particularly that of vulnerable populations: women and children, young people, migrants, and refugees.

Our call to engage in this challenging and necessary work is rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus linked to our Catholic faith. Recently, the Vatican issued the Declaration, "Dignitas Infinita"ⁱⁱ (infinite dignity), which speaks on the "grave violations of human dignity"ⁱⁱⁱ, such as **human trafficking**^{iv}.

The Declaration dwells on "human trafficking", which is taking on "tragic dimensions" and is described as a "vile activity, a disgrace to our societies that claim to be civilised". Similarly, it calls for the fight against phenomena such as "the marketing of human organs and tissues, the sexual exploitation of boys and girls, slave labour, including prostitution, the drug and weapons trade, terrorism, and international organised crime" (42). Furthermore, it speaks of the repercussions of this crime against humanity. "Trafficking profoundly disfigures the humanity of the victim, offending his or her freedom and dignity".

Currently, it is estimated that 50 million people are living in modern slavery around the world.^v Among those most affected are the women and children who are trafficked and enslaved. We are therefore called to action as the dignity and human fraternity we all uphold is at great risk and as the conflicts, climate change and other mitigating factors intensify, we are reminded of the growing danger of becoming indifferent, blind and/or used to these realities which should not exist.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

According to the UNODC Global Reports,^{vi} Children represent a significant proportion of trafficking victims worldwide. One in three victims of trafficking is a child. Over 30% of identified victims of human trafficking globally are children - a figure that is five times higher than it was 15 years ago.^{vii} 79% of victims of sexual exploitation globally are women and girls.^{viii} In fact, female victims are subjected to physical or extreme violence at the hands of traffickers at a rate three times higher than males. A number that has increased significantly during the pandemic.

Conversely, children are twice as likely to face violence during trafficking than adults.^{ix} In 2021, the Global Slavery Index estimated that 12 million children are living in modern slavery around the world.^x They are twice as likely to face violence and exploitation than adults during migration and refugee flows. Forced displacement has also exacerbated the number of people who have become vulnerable to human trafficking. Many of its causes are linked to unjust and destructive governmental, economic and social systems that lack the mechanisms of protection to guarantee their safety and wellbeing in their home nations.

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

The number of people who remained forcibly displaced globally due to war, armed conflict, and violence, **reached 120 million in May 2024**, and continues to grow, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees midyear trends report. This includes **62.5 million internally displaced persons**, 36.4 million refugees, and 6.1 million asylum seekers, according to UNHCR's report.^{xi} Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and forcibly displaced people are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation on their migration journey due to dangerous routes, the

use of coyotes as guidance and the blackmarket practices used to move from one country to another.

The Jubilee emphasises **HOPE** through **concrete actions** such as addressing global issues like the horrific global reality of human trafficking.

We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart, and far-sighted vision. The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire...^{xii} – Pope Francis.

We are all called in this journey in dignity to be ambassadors of hope. Together, our actions have the power to transform lives with compassion and create a world free from human trafficking. As we participate in this Day to which the Church calls us, let us include everyone, survivors and perpetrators, for a transformative power of care, hope, and mercy.

We invite church leaders of other spiritual traditions and all people of goodwill, government leaders, and other organisations who share the same value to join us to dedicate prayer and action to promoting human dignity, eliminating human trafficking in all its forms, and promoting world peace. We journey together – **survivors' advocates, migrants and refugees, young and old** as catalysts for raising awareness against human trafficking and creating paradigm shifts- transformative action for a world without human trafficking and exploitation.

Let us **PRAY** together for transformative **ACTION** to end human trafficking,

Let us be an ambassador of **HOPE** for those dejected!

Let us **LISTEN** from the survivors' advocates to **RAISE** their voices!

Let us **ACT** for justice for the **“Saint Bakhita” of today**, for their liberty and freedom.

Let us **ACCOMPANY** vulnerable migrants and refugees in their **JOURNEY** for their safety to dream of a better life!

Let us **DREAM** with children and young people for a world without human trafficking,

Let us **ACT together** to build a world without human trafficking!

Let us renew our commitment to promote the **DIGNITY of every person** as a response to **Christ's** words:

“I have come that they may have life, life in its fullness” (John 10:10)

“I encourage those who work helping the men, women, and children who are enslaved, exploited, abused as instruments of work or pleasure, who are often tortured and mutilated. It is my hope that government leaders may work decisively to remove the causes of this disgraceful scourge, it is a scourge unworthy of society. May each one of us feel committed to being a voice for our brothers and sisters, who have been humiliated in their dignity.”^{xiii} – Pope Francis

Saint Josephine Bakhita, pray for us!

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/notizie/comunicati/2024/papa-pellegrini-speranza-costruttori-pace.html>
- ⁱⁱ https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dff_doc_20240402_dignitas-infinita_en.html
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2024/04/08/240408c.html>
- ^{iv} <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2024-04/human-dignity-ddf-document-migration-gender-surrogacy-war-theolo.html> #42
- ^v <https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/global-estimates-modern-slavery-forced-labour-and-forced-marriage>
- ^{vi} https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/plotip/2022/GLOTIP_2022_web.pdf
- ^{vii} https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2024/July/a-childhood-of-exploitation--violence-and-fear_-the-story-of-child-trafficking.html
- ^{viii} <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
- ^{ix} <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-human-trafficking-day>
- ^x <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/global-findings/>
- ^{xi} <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>
- ^{xii} <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2022/02/11/220211c.html>
- ^{xiii} <https://preghieracontrotratta.org/>