

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY  
OF PRAYER AND AWARENESS  
AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING



**XII EDITION** THE INTERNATIONAL  
DAY OF PRAYER AND AWARENESS  
AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING –  
**FEBRUARY 8, 2026**

## CONCEPT NOTE

# Peace Begins with Dignity: A Global Call to End Human Trafficking

*"Peace be with you all! It is the peace of the Risen Christ  
– unarmed, disarming, humble, and persevering.  
A peace rooted in God's unconditional love."*

– Pope Leo XIV, 8 May 2025

Each year, on the feast of Saint Josephine Bakhita, the **International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking (IDPAAHT)**<sup>1</sup> invites people of faith and goodwill from around the world to join a global movement of **prayer**, **reflection**, and **action** against the injustice of human trafficking.

The theme for the 12<sup>th</sup> edition in 2026, **"Peace Begins with Dignity: A Global Call to End Human Trafficking,"** draws inspiration from **Pope Leo XIV's** powerful reminder that true peace is gentle and humble, born of love, and sustained where human dignity is upheld. The exploitation and objectification of people through trafficking fundamentally destroy the foundations of peace and justice, making its eradication essential to building a just world.

**Human trafficking** is a global wound that denies human dignity and shatters the peace of communities everywhere. Victims – predominantly women, children, migrants, and displaced persons – endure exploitation in many forms, from forced labour and sexual exploitation to servitude and forced marriage. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime<sup>2</sup> reports that women and girls constitute **65% of identified victims**, while nearly **one-third are children**. These vulnerable populations are often targeted due to war,

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<sup>1</sup> The first edition was celebrated in 2015 at the desire of **Pope Francis**, who the previous year had commissioned the International Unions of Superiors and Superiors General to be its promoters. <https://preghieracontrotratta.org/history>

<sup>2</sup> 25 per cent increase between 2022 and 2019, as more children are exploited and forced labour cases spike due to vulnerabilities brought on by poverty, conflict and the climate crisis. The 2024 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons Source: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/glotip.html>

poverty, and displacement. Migrants and displaced people are at even greater risk as safe pathways disappear and borders harden.

### Imagine if this were your life:

- Fleeing war or famine with your children, and finding every door closed.
- Living undocumented, in fear of detention or deportation.
- Watching your daughter fall into the hands of traffickers, with no way to stop it.

This is not a distant story — it is the daily reality for millions.

Let us not look away. Let us respond with open hands, open eyes and ears, open hearts, and open communities.

In the shadow of injustice, **hope** is still alive — rooted in faith, upheld by action. Around the world, local communities — led by women and men religious, lay leaders, and youth — are responding with courage by providing care, protection, and spiritual support. Their dedication shows that peace is possible when dignity is defended and nurtured.

We also hope to do more to enable local communities to join survivors in preventing this scourge and defending their rights — to become communities of protection, where vigilance, solidarity, and compassion create safe spaces that uphold human dignity and foster lasting peace.

The organizing committee of the **Day**<sup>3</sup> urges faith-based, civic, and political leaders to take concrete steps in support of survivors—especially women, children, migrants, and refugees. It calls for safe spaces for young people through mentorship and education, with attention to the digital sphere, and advocates for the protection of migrant women and girls, including the right to asylum. The **Day** also promotes awareness in communities and addresses the root causes of trafficking, promoting a spirit of encounter where every vulnerable person is seen, heard, and welcomed.

To mark the **2026** observance, a week of coordinated events will take place in Rome, and other parts of the world from **February 4 to 8**, bringing together church leaders, survivors, youth, civil society partners, and advocates. These events aim to raise global awareness and promote collective action against human trafficking. The program includes a **Vigil of Prayer** in Rome, accompanied by **parallel vigils worldwide**, symbolizing global solidarity. A **torchlight pilgrimage** will serve as a spiritual and symbolic act of unity, while an **online prayer pilgrimage** will ensure inclusive international participation. Initiatives such as Eucharistic celebration, workshops, school programs, and conference and exhibition will showcase survivor stories, research, and artistic expressions, offering a platform for voices often unheard. Local awareness campaigns will be carried out by partners globally, with a special focus on youth and survivor leaders to foster intergenerational engagement. The week will culminate in a **significant audience with the Holy Father** (TBC), providing a sacred moment for listening, encouragement, and renewed shared commitment.

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<sup>3</sup> The Day is coordinated by Talitha Kum International in collaboration with Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Dicastery for Communication, Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, Caritas Internationalis, CoatNet, Focolare Movement, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), World Union of Catholic Women Organizations (WUCWO), JPIC - Anti-Trafficking Working Group (UISG/USG), The Clewer Initiative, Association of the Community of Pope John XXIII, International Federation of Catholic Action, Italian Catholic Guides and Scouts Association (Agesci), Santa Marta Group, Community of Sant'Egidio, USMI (Union of Major Superiors of Italy).

These activities will be shaped by **survivor leadership and engagement** and strengthened through **inter-organizational collaboration**, culminating in a joint appeal to the Church, government and community leaders for continued support and concrete action.

Together, through prayer, peacebuilding, and intentional action, we are called to end human trafficking and all forms of exploitation. Inspired by **Saint Josephine Bakhita's intercession** and the words of the prophet Isaiah —

***“Learn to do what is good; seek justice, correct oppression;  
defend the rights of the orphan, advocate for those in need”***

(Isaiah 1:17)

— we affirm that **peace** begins in dignity. **Dignity** is restored when we recognize the humanity of every person and act decisively to end trafficking's vicious exploitation. By seeking justice and correcting oppression, we build communities rooted in respect and love, transforming suffering into **hope**.

Through prayer, we open our hearts; through reflection, we deepen our commitment; and through action, we bring Christ's peace and freedom to those who need it most.

***Will we turn away from women, girls, and all those vulnerable to human trafficking, or will we stand together in solidarity—committing ourselves to do everything within our power to protect, support, and restore their dignity?***

**The choice is ours. The time to act is now.**