

News From...



The Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness

Chairman Dan Burton (R ~ IN)

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Contact: Nick Mutton
(202) 225-2276

IS MODERN-DAY SLAVE TRAFFICKING A BOOMING BLACK MARKET INDUSTRY?

-Chairman Burton to examine the ongoing tragedy of international slavery and human trafficking-

Washington, D.C. - Although many people believe that slavery and human trafficking are no longer a major problem in the 21st Century, these abhorrent practices still directly affect tens of millions of people around the world. According to the U.S. Department of State's *Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons Report* released in June of 2003, human trafficking is a worldwide crisis that affects over 116 countries, including many industrialized nations. The House Government Reform Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness will convene a hearing to examine the multi-faceted issue of international human trafficking, including illicit sex trading, child slavery and indentured servitude.

Congressman Dan Burton (R-IN), Chairman of the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness, will hold an oversight hearing entitled, **"The Ongoing Tragedy of International Slavery and Human Trafficking: An Overview" on Wednesday, October 29, 2003, in Room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building at 2:00 p.m.**

Stated Chairman Burton, "Although there are no conclusive statistics on these illicit trade activities, it is estimated that more than 27 million cases of human trafficking occur every year, and 800,000 - 900,000 of these modern-day slaves are being transported across international borders. Those estimates represent the highest number of slaves (known to be alive) at one time in the entire history of the world. This is a tragic commentary on our global community, and we must all work together to put a stop to these egregious human rights violations."

Human trafficking encompasses all facets of slavery, including debt bondage, sweatshop labor, domestic servitude, and forced prostitution by any means, particularly through forced coercion, fraud, or deception. The principal reason for these widespread illegal practices is profitability. According to figures released by the United States Department of State, it is

estimated that human slaves contribute over \$13 billion every year to the global economy, \$7 billion of which is a direct result of the illicit sex trade.

Currently, the United States has measures in place to help combat trafficking in persons. The “*Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000* (Public Law 106-386),” was signed into law in October of 2000. This law assists and protects victims by authorizing grants to shelters and rehabilitation programs to help victims of trafficking, and by further establishing programs to prevent trafficking through the enhancement of economic opportunities for potential victims. The law also promotes public awareness of the dangers of human slavery, and provides stringent penalties for persons who facilitate these crimes. To further address the issue of human slavery and trafficking, President George W. Bush signed *Executive Order 13257* on February 13, 2002, which established the Cabinet-level Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

While the United States has enacted comprehensive laws to deal with existing human trafficking violations, many other countries have non-germane laws that fail to address these criminal activities. At present, more than 154 countries have laws in place that **minimally** target trafficking by prohibiting the procurement of women and children for purposes of prostitution and forced labor. Clearly, more needs to be done. The Subcommittee will hear testimony to examine this ongoing tragedy and what is being done to address it.

PANEL ONE WITNESSES:

The Honorable John Miller
Former Congressman (WA-01)
Director, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
United States Department of State

The Honorable Dr. Kent Hill
Assistant Administrator
United States Agency for International Development

PANEL TWO WITNESSES:

Mr. Kevin Bales
President
Free the Slaves

Dr. Mohamed Mattar
Co-Director of the Protection Project
Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies

Dr. Janice Raymond
Co-Executive Director
Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

Mr. Andrew Johnson
Save The Children Federation

Ms. Sharon Cohn
Director, Anti-Trafficking
International Justice Mission

This is the Subcommittee's first hearing regarding international slavery and human trafficking. For more information, or to look at hearing resource materials, please visit Chairman Burton's designated human rights section on his website at www.reform.house.gov/WHR <<http://www.reform.house.gov/WHR>>.

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