

Human Trafficking - Rev. Anne Fitcher, Archdeaconry Social Concern Officer

'Abolish slavery everywhere, forever.' So read one of the placards under which we walked. At 10am on October 19th, the seafront at Limassol looked just a little different. There were the usual tourists dressed to enjoy the sunshine. But there were also some 130 people of different ages and nationalities clothed completely in black. Christopher and I were among them. Silently, in single file we walked slowly along the promenade.



In the mid-morning sun our figures cast anonymous shadows, as if symbolising one of the many men, women and children enslaved in the world today. And as we in Limassol, walked in silent witness, others did too – in Nicosia, and in other major cities in over 50 different countries.

This campaign, under the auspices of 'A21 #Walk for Freedom', highlighted to me the global injustice of human trafficking.

I'd like here to share with you something of what I've learnt from conversations on that day, and over the past few weeks.

What is human trafficking?

It is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of men, women and children through force, fraud, deception or the abuse of power for the purpose of exploitation. Essentially, it is a form of modern day slavery - and a profound violation of the intrinsic dignity of human beings.

Human trafficking is far from new! The first Book of the Hebrew Scriptures records the selling of Joseph to passing Midianite traders by his own brothers (Genesis 37:12-36). And such practices continue: recent estimates indicate that approximately 21 million people worldwide are being bought and sold against their will through force, fraud, and coercion.¹

Cyprus is no exception. The Island is a key destination for people who are subjected to trafficking. But there is some good news for much work is currently being undertaken to address the issue. In June 2019, the government of Cyprus was judged to be fully meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking, and continuing to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts to tackle human trafficking.²

In March 2017, religious leaders of the five main faith communities of Cyprus³ signed a joint statement strongly condemning all forms of violence (including economic, psychological, sexual and physical) against women and girls. They committed to: 'share this message with our respective faith communities and society as a whole'....'ensure

¹ International Labor Organization (ILO) 2012 Global estimates

² US State Trafficking in Persons Report 2019

³ i.e. Greek Orthodox, Muslim, Armenian Orthodox, Maronite and Latin Orthodox

that violence against women and girls are recognised, condemned and that there are legal frameworks and institutions capable of dealing with it and 'work together with state and civil society partners to end violence against women and girls in Cyprus'. They stated that they 'categorically reject the misuse of religion to vindicate any form of violence against women and girls' and 'pray for healing and wholeness and reach out to all women and girls that have fallen victim to violence'.

On behalf of the Anglican Church in Cyprus, Bishop Michael has wholly endorsed the 2017 statement of the religious leaders of the five main faith communities on the island.

So what can we do?

In my role as archdeaconry social concern officer since early September, I have had opportunities to meet both with ecumenical partners and with a range of NGOs to understand more about human trafficking here. I hope to be able to share this understanding across the archdeaconry in different ways over the next year. I'd like to begin by encouraging you, as parishes and as individuals, to do three things:

1. Please be vigilant. These are some of the common signs that a person may be trafficked. They may:

- appear to be under the control of someone else and reluctant to interact with others
- not have personal identification on them
- have few personal belongings, wear the same clothes every day or wear unsuitable clothes for work
- not be able to move around freely
- be reluctant to talk to strangers or the authorities
- appear frightened, withdrawn, or show signs of physical or psychological abuse
- dropped off and collected for work always in the same way, especially at unusual times, i.e. very early or late at night.⁴

If you have some initial concerns that a person may be trafficked and want to discuss them further, please speak to your parish priest, safeguarding representative, or to me.

Contact details for reporting a case of trafficking are attached.

2. Please pray - for victims of modern slavery and for an end to human trafficking. I attach two prayers that may be a helpful starting point.

3. Please do get in touch with me If you, or your church community, are seeking to:

- **learn more about human trafficking**
- **find out how you can support trafficked persons through local NGOs.**

28.10.19

⁴ <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/spot-the-signs-of-slavery/>

To report a case of Trafficking, please contact:

Office for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings, Police Headquarters, 1478 Nicosia ,

Tel:+357 22 808919; email: www.oocthb@police.gov.cy

Headquarters of the Social Welfare Dept., Prodromou 63, 1468 Nicosia,

Tel: +357 22 804400; email: central.sws@sws.mlsi.gov.cy

Civil Registry and Migration Dept., Ministry of Interior, 1453 Nicosia

Tel.+357 22 804400; email: migration@crmd.moi.gov.cy

KISA – Action for Support, Equality and Antiracism, 48 Arsenoes Street, Nicosia 1010,

Tel: +357 22 878181; email: kisa@cternet.com.cy

STIGMA, P.O. Box 53687, 3317 Limassol,

Tel: +357 25 770238; email: Stigma@cytanet.com.cy

Republic of Cyprus emergency police telephone hotline:

7.00am-7pm: 22 808063 or 22 808064. After hours: *1460

Prayers for victims of modern slavery and for an end to human trafficking

Loving God

We call to you with hearts in pain for all in our world

who suffer the horrors of modern slavery;

for all who dream of a better life in another place

only to be trapped, tricked and traded;

for all those who labour, forced and unseen, to make our everyday possessions;

for all who agonise for loved ones lost into this trade in humans.

Your Son came to bring good news to the poor and freedom for the oppressed.

May we too be voices against oppression, channels of good news;

May our eyes be opened wide to all who suffer in our midst but out of sight.

All this we pray to you, loving God, for whom no one is invisible. Amen.

Written by Revd. Rachel Carnegie, Executive Director of the Anglican Alliance

Heavenly Father,

who sees the unseen and notices the unnoticed,

help each of us to hear the Hidden Voices of those

who pray for release from slavery and exploitation,

so that we may give ourselves more fully to the service of your saving love,

and be strengthened together as agents of your healing and hope,

through Jesus Christ,

who himself came to serve as a slave,

so as to bring freedom and grace to all. Amen

Written by Rt. Revd. Dr Alastair Redfern, Chair of The Clewer Initiative

<https://www.theclewerinitiative.org/news/2019/9/24/prayers-for-ending-modern-slavery>