

Statement on the occasion of the International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking

Eradicate slavery once and for all!

On the occasion of the International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, 8 February, Caritas Europa casts the spotlight on the global tragedy of trafficking in human beings. This scourge affects millions people in the world and generates billions of euros for criminal groups.

“I was 12 when a friend of the family visited my parents. She said that she knew people in Paris who were about to be parents and they were looking for a teenager who could take care of the baby. They promised that I will be paid and receive an education. I felt I was dreaming. I was on my way to France to study,” said **Olivia**, who was trafficked and abused as a domestic slave for 9 years in Paris.

Caritas organisations from across Europe work daily with victims of trafficking like Olivia. But neither Caritas nor civil society alone can seriously challenge the global indifference that feeds trafficking in human beings. Caritas Europa thus calls on European states and the European Union to fully ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. And to do their utmost to tackle the root causes of trafficking.

“Considering today’s world is increasingly instable, loaded with conflicts, climate change-triggered emergencies and an increasingly widening gap between haves and have-nots, it is vital to end factors that contribute result in horrendous trap of modern-day slavery. Special attention must be directed to children, as they suffer the most, especially linked to conflict and post-conflict situations and few options for legal channels of migration. The children often escape dire conditions at home with hopes and dreams. But eventually they end up as labour or sex slaves. They’ve been robbed of their childhood and dignity. The psychological wounds are tremendously deep,” said **Geneviève Colas**, Caritas Europa’s expert in trafficking in human beings.

For these and numerous other reasons, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings should be ratified and implemented immediately.

For more information, please contact:

<p>Geneviève Colas Caritas Europa expert in the field of trafficking Mob: + 33 (0)6 71 00 69 90 genevieve.colas@secours-catholique.fr</p>	<p>Alain Rodríguez Communication Officer Tel: +32 (0)2 235 26 54 Mob: +32 (0)478 58 54 37 arodriguez@caritas.eu</p>
---	---

Notes to editor:

- Council of Europe Convention on Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/about-the-convention>
- Full testimony of Olivia (in French): <http://www.secours-catholique.org/actualites/olivia-ou-la-parole-dune-invisible>

- Video reportage #invisible (English subtitle):
http://contrelatrite.org/spip.php?page=article&id_article=812
- Caritas' report on low trafficking prevention in conflict and post-conflict situations:
<http://www.caritas.eu/news/new-caritas-report-casts-spotlight-on-poor-level-of-trafficking-prevention-in-conflict-and-post>

Caritas Europa is a network of 49 member organisations in 46 European countries and one of the 7 regions of Caritas Internationalis. Our members assist and provide services to millions of people in need. Caritas Europa aims at lifting people out of poverty by empowering them and by influencing unjust structures and unfair policies that keep people trapped in positions of disempowerment.