



Statement against Human Trafficking, modern day slavery

Adopted by Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly, Columbus, Ohio
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The request for this statement comes from the Mennonite Women USA Board of Directors (spring 2009). Members include: Rebecca Sommers, Ruth Lapp Guengerich, Gail Harder, Jean Kilheffer Hess, Gail Shetler, Mary Clemens Meyer, Cora L. Brown, Barb Voth, Regina Shands Stoltzfus, Twila King Yoder, Carolyn Holderread Heggen.

Preamble: To join with other Christian denominations in a united voice against the evil of human trafficking, we present this statement of our opposition to all forms of human slavery.

Definition: Trafficking in persons includes the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of:

- **Sex trafficking** – in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person forced to perform such an act is under the age of 18 years; or
- **Labor Trafficking** – in which a person is subjected to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. (from Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000)
- **Any other forms of human trafficking**

Is human trafficking happening today?

- Human trafficking is the third largest criminal industry in the world (with the first and second being drug trafficking and arms trafficking).
- 12-30 million persons are victims worldwide.
- 12-18 thousand persons in the United States
- 2.2 million children are sold into sexual slavery each year.
- 80% of victims are female with a disproportionately high number women of color.
- 50% of victims are children under the age of 18.

Why is a statement by Mennonite Church USA against human trafficking needed?

- A statement can be used to assist Mennonite Church USA members and agencies in advocacy for laws which protect victims.
- A statement provides education for Mennonite Church USA members. Victims of human trafficking look like many of the people we see everyday. As Christians who see Christ in every person we meet, we need to know the signs of those who may be victimized.
- A statement compels us to effectively support those who have been enslaved in finding healing in their lives.

This is our faith:

We believe that God has created human beings in the divine image (Genesis 1:26-31). God formed them from the dust of the earth and gave them a special dignity among all the works of creation. Human beings have been made for relationship with God, to live in peace with each other, and to take care of the rest of creation. (*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, Article 6)

When we care for people who are oppressed and stop violence against them, we show that we are people of God. The prophets repeatedly call on people of faith to stop oppressing those who are poor and vulnerable (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zechariah, Malachi, etc). Jesus urged us to care for one another and offer healing to the hurting (e.g., woman with the issue of blood, Samaritan woman, Canaanite woman).

All violence is fundamentally incompatible with the reign of Jesus Christ in God's kingdom of love. Therefore, as followers of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we must directly confront the reality of violence in and around us. Jesus calls us not to resist evil with violence and to forgive rather than to seek revenge. We want to find ways to reject all forms of violence in our relationships and endeavors, and to increase our efforts to live out the nonviolent way of Jesus. (*And No One Shall Make Them Afraid*, 1997, statement on violence)

This is our hope:

God is actively creating a world in which all can thrive. All will be able to "...sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid." No one will labor in vain, or bear children for calamity. All will receive God's blessing. (Micah 4:4, Is. 65:23)

God invites us to join this creative work and follow Jesus in carrying out his mission: to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to those who are oppressed. (Luke 4:18)

This is how we, as God strengthens us, choose to express our love:

As the scripture in Judges 19 responds to heinous violence against a woman, we also will "Consider it, take counsel, and speak out."

Consider it: Become educated; learn what is happening in our communities and worldwide and our own responsibility as consumers. Repent of all activities connected with the evil of trafficking. This includes use of pornographic material and purchase of products created through known labor trafficking.

Take counsel: Consult with others working against this evil. Be aware of safe procedures when seeking help for any suspected victims.

Speak out: As a body of Christ, we join our voices against all forms of human slavery. We commit to advocate for laws that protect victims and hold offenders accountable. We commit to taking personal responsibility as consumers, and to care for and seek healing for those who have been enslaved.

Our faith, hope, and love give us courage to participate in God's work of redemption, healing and justice.

Statement prepared by:

Rhoda Keener, Mennonite Women USA

Susan Mark Landis, Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership Peace and Justice

Linda Gehman Peachey, Mennonite Central Committee, Women's Advocacy