

Testimony of
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before the
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Ending Modern Slavery: Now is the time

Chairman Corker and Ranking Member Cardin,

It is an honor to be here today to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the important issue of human trafficking. I am particularly pleased to join you on the eve of ENDIT day and appreciate the increased attention this committee is bringing to ending the many facets of human trafficking.

First, I'd like to commend the committee for focusing attention on this issue, and you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership on this topic and for your authorship of the End Modern Slavery Initiative Act along with Senator Menendez. I look forward to seeing its passage and implementation.

I am also honored to be testifying alongside Mr. Maurice Middleberg from Free the Slaves, whose remarkable efforts to combat trafficking on the international level are nothing short of inspiring.

Human Trafficking is a pervasive problem, touching every state in our nation and every country around the world. Because it is such an insidious, horrible and under reported crime, accurate statistics on the number of victims and traffickers are very difficult to produce. Sex trafficking of minors is particularly hard to estimate as the victims are often abused and traumatized at such a young age that they don't recognize themselves as victims. Their stories and problems are tragic and complicated and we as a nation owe our children our collective efforts to end this travesty. We need to recognize that we have a global problem that calls for a global solution.

While precise data on the number of victims of trafficking is difficult to come by, we know that the numbers are way too high. The number of adult women, as well as young boys and girls whose childhoods and very lives

are being lost to trafficking everyday, is heartbreaking. The anecdotal stories of survivors and victims tell us that there are individual operations, and very well orchestrated, well financed trafficking networks worldwide. I firmly believe that human trafficking is directly tied to drug and gun trafficking and ultimately to illicit terrorist organizations like Boko Haram and ISIS.

The McCain Institute has sponsored targeted research projects that tell us that an alarmingly high percentage of children passing through our child welfare and foster care systems have been trafficked. Vulnerable populations, such as homeless and LGBT youth, are also shown to be at a much higher risk for trafficking. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported that 68% of these likely victims were in the care of social services or the foster care system.

The International Labor Organization estimates that of the nearly 21 million victims of forced labor worldwide, 11.4 million are women and children. Globally, an estimated 2 million people are exploited by State actors or rebel groups, and 19 million people are exploited by individuals. 4.5 million people are victims of forced sexual exploitation by individuals and enterprises. It is estimated that forced labor generates \$150 billion annually in illegal profits to traffickers worldwide. A December 2012 UNODC report identified trafficked victims originating in 136 countries, these numbers are staggering.

While these numbers are overwhelming, I am encouraged by the increase in efforts to combat human trafficking globally in the last few years. UNIAP has found that 61 countries have passed national laws against trafficking and 90% of these laws have been enacted in the last five years. The potential of the End Modern Slavery Initiative to laser focus known strategies to find victims, break up trafficking networks and tactically organize the many people who care deeply about this issue into more effective action is unlimited. It is time we work together to stop this heinous crime against humanity.

Congress mandates reports on human trafficking. One of the most well known is the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. This report was mandated to assess each country's progress in achieving minimum standards for fighting trafficking. Countries are ranked in Tiers from 1-4, with the Tier 1 being the best. The report was designed to

be an honest assessment of each government's commitment to fighting trafficking in both source and destination countries. The TIP report should be an accurate assessment and countries that do not meet the minimum standard for fighting trafficking should face other penalties until they take it seriously and improve. It seems that several countries, with whom we had other prevailing interests, moved up in their rankings without real action on reducing trafficking. The report should be factual and not swayed by outside interests.

The fight against trafficking has not played a large enough role in the President's rhetoric toward Asia. US Government officials recently met with ASEAN leaders in Los Angeles. I hope that these countries advance on the TIP report rankings because they have made concrete advances in the fight against trafficking and not because of outside political considerations. It's time that the measuring tools used to fight trafficking internationally are used fairly and honestly without regard to trade or other factors.

There are increasing numbers of people dedicating their lives to fighting trafficking every day and some NGO's that do outstanding work. The McCain Institute has had the honor of partnering with THORN, Digital Defenders of Children, to help get their innovative Spotlight tool into the hands of over 2,000 police departments in 49 states. THORN's work on the pervasive use of the internet to buy and sell human beings for sex, using the brightest minds in technology to disrupt trafficking networks, and save victims one at a time is making a difference. The global battle against human trafficking has many shifting fronts and there are a variety of weapons, like the Spotlight tool, available to combat it.

I recently traveled to both Greece and Turkey with the International Rescue Committee, and I was stunned by the horrific conditions that refugees have to endure. This desperate situation is a breeding ground for traffickers. Vulnerable refugees are lured by the promise of safe passage to a new country, before being subjected to a dangerous transport in harrowing conditions. The wave of refugees coming from Syria is placing many vulnerable people at risk to be trafficked. Young girls and boys are traveling by themselves, ahead of their families and arriving on shore alone. Children are being trafficked out of camps, where traffickers and smugglers prey on vulnerable children and desperate families. We are at risk of losing an entire generation if we do not defend those who cannot defend themselves.

Human Trafficking is not just an international issue and we as a country need to address it in our own states and communities. Through the efforts of the Arizona Human Trafficking Council, which I co-chair, we have been able to strengthen the laws, giving victims better services and protections and increase penalties against traffickers and buyers, but our fight is far from over. Once we protect the most vulnerable among us in our nation, we can become a global leader in the fight to protect those that cannot protect themselves.

Mr. Chairman, I again congratulate you on your dedication to this issue. It is an honor to work with you in the fight against all forms of human trafficking. Thank you for allowing me to speak to the Committee today. I look forward to any questions you may have.