



“Serving victims of Human Trafficking”

For Immediate Release-

The Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking Raises concerns over allegations of potential Human Trafficking in Haiti.

The Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking raises awareness on the issue of Human Trafficking here in the State of Florida. However, in the aftermath of the horrific earthquakes in Haiti, the focus must shift to the human tragedies unfolding there right now. Human trafficking tends to increase after any type of a natural disaster where many children are left homeless and orphaned. Many families, too, are left in dire conditions and become vulnerable targets for traffickers. UNICEF is reporting that thousands of children in Haiti are being trafficked out of the country, including 15 children taken right out of hospitals there.

At this time, there are numerous international groups involved in relief efforts, bringing supplies into the country by air and across the border from the Dominican Republic. Given so much chaos, it has suddenly become very easy for traffickers to infiltrate the country concealed among the many hundreds of foreign groups and organizations going there to render assistance and lure or abduct innocent lives into the dark world of human trafficking. Due to the immense challenges of identifying the living and the dead and locating the misplaced, there is practically no way at present to account for the citizens of Haiti. There is also little control over criminality. This makes abductions very easy to commit and helps traffickers conceal their activities and hide the identities of victims, including those being kidnapped and sold as hosts for the black market in organ trafficking.

The Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking supports Save the Children and World Vision in calling for a halt to adoptions currently taking place in Haiti. The Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking understands that there are many people with good intentions who want to provide a safe and stable home for so many Haitian children who are homeless. However, the lack of monitoring and control over adoptions in Haiti at this time makes it too difficult to discern who is adopting a child out of the goodness of their heart and who is adopting this child due to the amount of money this child is worth on the black market. There is also evidence that some of the orphanages found in Haiti today are connected to human traffickers waiting to make a profit out of innocent children.

The issue of Human Trafficking is not new to the country of Haiti. Most of the child slaves are referred to as *resteveks*. This has been a long-standing issue and violation of Haitian children’s human rights. Statistics show that Haiti’s population currently consists of poor youth, with 45 percent of the population being under 15 years of age. Before the earthquake, more than 300,000 children were already in forced labor in Haiti and that number will only increase.

As we continue to assist Haiti in sending additional aid to restore and rebuild the country, we also need to exercise much greater vigilance in protecting the most vulnerable population: Haiti's children. Here in Florida, our community needs to become more proactive and consistent in monitoring adoption placements as we see can anticipate an increase in the number of Haitian human trafficking victims entering the state

The Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking would like to ask President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hilary Clinton to establish an International Task Force with organizations such as UNICEF, OAS, International Justice Mission, EPCAT, Save the Children, Clinton Foundation, OIM, World Vision, Secretary of Health and Human Services, US Attorney General, Secretary Janet Napolitano, Polaris Project, Ricky Martin Foundation, FCAHT, The Salvation Army and a government representative from Haiti to ensure that all children in Haiti are reunited with their surviving families, accountability and safe shelter to protect them from becoming victims of sexual and labor exploitation.

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