

# MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**SERIES: TAKING A STAND**

**EXPLORING THE ARMY'S INTERNATIONAL POSITIONAL STATEMENTS**

*Members of the International Moral and Social Issues Council (IMASIC)  
reflect on The Salvation Army's International Positional Statements.*

## STATEMENT OF POSITION

The Salvation Army is deeply committed  
to fighting modern slavery and human trafficking.

Modern slavery is an umbrella term including  
human trafficking for sex, labour or organs, exploitative labour practices,  
child labour and early and forced marriage.

It involves not just individuals but also social and economic systems.

The Salvation Army believes in the biblical principles of the inherent and  
equal value of all persons and the duty to care for one's neighbour.

The exploitation of human beings commodifies and  
dehumanises the individuals who are trafficked,

rewards the inhumanity of the traffickers,  
and weakens the moral, social and economic fabric of society.

The Salvation Army is opposed to the abuse of power against  
other human beings that is inherent in modern slavery and human trafficking.

Addressing modern slavery and human trafficking must involve  
addressing both supply and demand. The Salvation Army is committed  
to achieving justice by working with all involved. Restoration of persons who  
have been exploited and traumatised may be a long and complex process.

Recognition of their inherent dignity, and restoration of choice  
and control of their own lives are critical.

Modern slavery and human trafficking needs to be stopped.

Everyone has the responsibility, both individuals and institutions, to work  
for the liberation of those who have been subjected to slavery and trafficking.

Legal and social mechanisms to stop slavery and trafficking  
must be established and those involved held to account.

Transformation and healing of hearts and minds of everyone involved  
in modern slavery and human trafficking is both necessary and possible.

**Download the complete International Positional Statement on  
Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking at [salvationarmy.org/isjc/ips](https://salvationarmy.org/isjc/ips)**

## FOR REFLECTION

- \* How is The Salvation Army taking action against human trafficking in your area? Is there something more you can do?
- \* Arrange a Bible study/time of prayer specifically to think and pray for those who are trapped in trafficking.
- \* Consider and check out the background to cheap goods or services. Are there people who are harmed by producing or providing these particular goods?

**H**ISTORICALLY, The Salvation Army has been actively involved in shedding light on evil. Fighting against modern slavery and human trafficking is no exception to this. Not only raising awareness of those who are vulnerable to being trafficked, but also encouraging Salvationists to watch out for signs of trafficking in our own neighbourhoods, as well as becoming active in supporting those who have escaped their trafficking experience, allows us together to make a difference. At the heart of The Salvation Army we fight for justice, and we are uniquely positioned in more than 130 countries, giving us an opportunity to work internationally with other agencies to wage war against this terrible evil.

Millions of vulnerable people, through no fault of their own, find themselves trafficked and exploited in this way. Perhaps they live in very difficult circumstances when someone comes along who they think they can trust and who promises a much better life, almost too good to be true. Sadly, to their horror, they step into a nightmare and are forced into labour, servitude, removal of organs or sexual exploitation. They have been tricked, and the psychological impact on them leads to self-blame and feelings that they should have realised these terrible things could happen. Sadly, this is all part of the exploitation.

It is hard to measure the level of trauma suffered by victims of such exploitation; they have been violated as human beings in unspeakable ways. The trafficker lies to them, threatens them, uses physical violence and verbal, emotional and psychological abuse. They are treated inhumanly, sometimes provided with appalling sanitation, inadequate nourishment and are often isolated from human contact. They lose their

freedom and contact with their family. Frequently, they are drugged, and they are always humiliated. They may have had all dignity taken away from them, yet they are still precious children of God!

When victims manage to break free, some have been held against their will for many years, their lives are broken with indescribable pain. Life after trafficking can be very difficult to negotiate. The 'freed' person is often shackled with emotional difficulties, flashbacks, depression and low self-esteem, as well as fear and anxiety. They live in fear they may be found by their trafficker or haunted by a threat that their family members may be punished for their escape. Post-traumatic stress and nightmares follow them. Sometimes they have suffered violence, even leading to broken bones. There are situations where medical care was not sought and so their bodies have 'healed' without adequate medical intervention. Some will carry emotional, physical and psychological scars for life. When The Salvation Army steps in with befriending and support, the impact of sharing the love of Christ is transformational to these lives in despair.

The true grip trafficking has on our world can cause feelings of helplessness, and we may doubt we can make any difference to those who have been trafficked, and yet by raising awareness lives can be impacted for good. Around the world there are some excellent educational programmes warning children of the dangers and snares that traffickers use.

Those who have found release need support to rebuild their lives. The violation of trust is a hard bridge to rebuild. They need people who are willing to invest long-term unconditional love and support,

walking with them at their pace as they negotiate the most difficult of journeys and reconstruct their lives. Sometimes, they may turn to drugs and alcohol to numb the pain. Understanding and grace can be offered in a befriending, patient way.

Prayer is an important weapon in this war. Jesus' own manifesto recorded in Luke 4:18-19 exhorts, 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'. May this be our personal prayer.

### Visit the International Social Justice Commission website ...

[salvationarmy.org/isjc](http://salvationarmy.org/isjc)  
The section 'Fight for Freedom' provides more information on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

#### The Salvation Army appoints International Coordinator of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Response

Priscilla Santos has joined the International Social Justice Commission team in the role of International Coordinator of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Response. In this role, Priscilla will help the global Salvation Army in connecting with what God is doing in the world as it relates to anti-trafficking and to build a more just and loving world. Priscilla is a Salvationist from the USA Western Territory where she has served in recent years as Territorial Social Justice and Anti-Trafficking Initiatives Coordinator. She has an MA degree in Intercultural Studies – International Development and Children at Risk Specialization, from Fuller Theological Seminary.

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### PERSONAL REFLECTION

When most people hear the word trafficking, their minds go directly to images of women who are sold to men for their bodies. But there are many other forms of trafficking that are far less talked about – people being sold for their body parts and organs, children being sold and forced to fight in wars, and thousands of people being moved illegally across borders every day, forced to work for no money and to live in atrocious conditions.

All these different forms of trafficking are happening every day, all over the world. Globally, more than 40 million people are subject to forms of modern slavery, and a shocking 71 per cent of those are women and girls.<sup>1</sup>

Growing up and living in relatively safe countries my whole life, it's easy to feel like this is not an issue that has ever touched me. But with numbers like that, how could it not have? It makes me wonder who made that item I just ordered online? Who cooked this food I'm eating at a local inexpensive restaurant? What is happening to that woman I just passed on the street? Trafficking is everywhere. It is a complex global problem and no country is immune.

In recent years we have begun to shine a light on the sex-trafficking industry. We are finding ways to fight against it, to rescue people and to advocate for governments and authorities to do more to stop it.

But what are we doing about those types of trafficking and modern slavery that just aren't talked about as much? The International Positional Statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking reveals The Salvation Army's commitment to fight against all forms of trafficking, based on the biblical principle of 'the inherent and equal value of all persons and the duty to care for one's neighbour'.

The problem can feel overwhelming, but we have a responsibility as Christians to actively look for those in our communities and societies who are being exploited and to become agents of awareness, prevention and support.

The reality is that trafficking is occurring in our community, no matter where we live. It may look different to the community next door, but it is there, and we have the power to be able to shine a light on it and work toward the elimination of all forms of modern slavery and human trafficking.

### ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization, Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, 2017

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### PERSONAL REFLECTION

When you do not know anyone affected by modern slavery, it seems as if it is a distant issue or something that takes place only in movies. The truth is that thousands of people are living the reality of human trafficking and slavery. It is our responsibility to keep speaking about the issue and offer support to victims.

On The Salvation Army's Annual Day of Prayer for Victims of Human Trafficking in 2018, I was asked to give a talk about the subject at my corps. A day after the presentation, a woman came to see me, referred by a corps member, and told me her story.

She had a nephew who had travelled to another country, having been assured of a better salary there. Given the economic hardships in Zimbabwe, he was quick to agree to leave and his aunt gave him her blessing. This was his breakthrough; things were finally going to be better for him and his family. Sadly, many people living in poverty are preyed upon by traffickers.

When this woman came to see me, it had been three years since she had last heard from her nephew, and he had never sent any money to his family. The last time he called her, he indicated that the man who trafficked him had taken away his passport and that he had not received any salary. His 'benefactor' wasn't giving him any salary because he had to pay off the amount for his travel from Zimbabwe to the country. Not

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knowing what had become of her nephew was unbearable. Her family were persecuting her for the misfortune that had befallen her nephew. I can still remember the fear, the desperation in her voice as she cried in my office asking if The Salvation Army could help look for him.

There is hope; God does answer prayers. Her nephew called the week after Salvationists prayed for victims of modern slavery, and he came home. He is one of the fortunate ones to have been released from bondage.

Prevention involves addressing both the factors that make people vulnerable and those that create the demand for exploited labour.

Have you or your corps started looking at income-generating projects or child sponsorship? Are you being fair when paying wages to your employees? Are you being a friend to those affected?

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

Having had the privilege of working as a therapist with women who have been sexually trafficked, I am aware that for each of them, they have been violated on every level. To make someone compliant involves the breaking of their spirit. Enforcing control takes away every possible freedom of choice. The psychological impact of trafficking stretches beyond our imagination. Therefore, to start building trust with victims is paramount and helping them to see a way forward, make the simplest of decisions and find hope is so important for their future as free people.

Finding a way to pray for them, I use Scripture, particularly Psalm 10. If we pray this psalm through the eyes of trafficking, it takes on new meaning:

*'Why, LORD, do you stand far off?  
Why do you hide yourself in  
times of trouble?  
In his arrogance the wicked man  
hunts down the weak,  
who are caught in the schemes  
he devises.  
He boasts about the cravings  
of his heart;  
he blesses the greedy and  
reviles the LORD' (vv 1-3).*

It is no surprise that those who have been trafficked wonder where God was during their experiences. We need to be able to communicate to them that God was with them – he saw their need and felt their pain. (See the example of Hagar – Genesis 16:13, 'You are the

God who sees me'.) To have been trapped and every freedom of choice stripped away from you pulls self-esteem down to the lowest levels. Building trust helps victims to restore their faith in humanity. It is like observing the earth move from winter that is dark, lifeless and dismal to spring when there are buds of hope, new life, colour and light coming once more into their lives.

As we contemplate trafficking, may we be aware that we have a voice to speak out for these people, and we have a God who cares deeply for the most vulnerable and seemingly worthless of society. Trafficked people are hidden from view. To find out more about their plight is uncomfortable. Let us feel unease and may it focus us into action.

I am very proud and pleased that around the Salvation Army world we are engaging with this topic in very meaningful and life-changing ways – may we never tire of working towards justice in this way.