

TLHRC Briefing on the Demand Factor in the Global Sex Trade

Human Trafficking as a Human Rights Crisis

Introductory Remarks of the Honorable Randy Hultgren (IL-14) | March 1, 2016

- Good morning. Thank you all for being here today.
- As many of you know, this briefing was rescheduled from January due to the epic snowstorm that shut down the city then. I appreciate everyone's flexibility to readjust their schedules.
- We don't get much snow here in Washington, but when we do we seem to get it all at once.
- I want to thank the Co-chairmen of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Congressman Joe Pitts and Congressman Jim McGovern for their strong leadership and for raising their voices through this commission on behalf of those around the world deprived of their basic human rights.
- I also would like to thank Exodus Cry and Shared Hope International for their valuable work in fighting human trafficking and restoring survivors and for their assistance with today's briefing.
- I especially want to thank our distinguished panelists here today from whom you will hear shortly.
- Some are themselves survivors of human trafficking and now advocate for those still entrapped in this sinister and nefarious global enterprise.
- All are on the frontlines fighting on behalf of victims and against those who seek to steal the souls of society's most vulnerable, especially the purchasers of commercial sex who stoke the demand for sex trafficking.
- Demand for commercial sex that fuels the global sex trade resulting in human trafficking becoming a major human rights crisis is the central theme of today's briefing.
- Increasing evidence reveals that demand plays a critical role in sustaining sex trafficking.
- It remains an industry run largely by and for the benefit and profit of men. Men overwhelmingly tend to be the buyers of commercial sex.
- Frankly, we could end sex trafficking overnight if all men stopped buying sex.
- Human trafficking at its base, then, is an economic –albeit insidious -- enterprise. It is fundamentally an issue of supply and demand.
- Earlier this Congress, I introduced H.R. 611, the *Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Act*.
- This legislation acknowledges the significance of the demand factor inherent in human trafficking.
- It requires nations to recognize demand and to account for their actions to reduce demand in their efforts to fight sex trafficking.
- Their commitment to address demand will be factored into a country's tier ranking in the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report.
- Sex trafficking flourishes where demand exists for commercial sex and in an environment of impunity for its customers.
- Therefore, eliminating demand is a major step toward eliminating human trafficking as a global human rights crisis.
- Today we will hear from the frontline experts in the fight against human trafficking as they discuss its dangers and the damages caused by purchasers of commercial sex.
- We will also hear about the successful efforts employed to combat demand.
- It is my hope that through today's briefing we will come away with a better understanding of how demand for commercial sex drives the human trafficking industry...
- ...and a greater resolve to stand with those who fight for the basic human rights of those who are violated and exploited.
- With that, I would like to introduce our first presenter.