



P R E S S R E L E A S E

DATE PUBLISHED: 8 MARCH 2010

REASON FOR PUBLICATION: Response to Lord Alton's speech in the House of Lords on Friday 5 March 2010 regarding the Anti-Slavery Day Bill

WHERE PUBLISHED: DFN UK website and circulated via e-mail to DFN UK contacts list

House of Lords recognises the problem of Dalit trafficking

Dalit Freedom Network UK welcomes Lord Alton's comments made on Friday 5 March in the House of Lords, highlighting the issue of trafficking in relation to India's Dalits. Lord Alton was speaking in support of a Bill proposing an Anti-Slavery Day.

In his speech last Friday, Lord Alton spoke about the caste system leading to people trafficking, specifically highlighting the issue of Dalit trafficking.

Lord Alton's detailed description of the scale and injustice of India's trafficking problem climaxed in his reference to DFN founder, Joseph D'souza, a tireless campaigner for the Dalit people and an internationally recognised voice in support of their rights.

He said, "In my study at home in Lancashire, I have a small terracotta pot given to me by Dr Joseph D'souza, president of the International Dalit Freedom Network. Such pots must be broken once a Dalit has drunk out of them so as not to pollute or contaminate other castes. This is the 21st century. It is not the pots which need to be broken, not the people, but the system which ensnares them. Dr D'souza rightly says: 'If we are not intentional about bringing change and transformation in lives and society it will not happen. To love people is to act on behalf of them'."

The Anti-Slavery Day Bill has already been passed through the House of Commons driven by Conservative MP Anthony Sheen and supported by both the Immigration Minister, Phil Woolas and the shadow Immigration Minister, Damian Green and now has to be approved by the House of Lords.

DFN UK's priority is taking action to prevent the trafficking of Dalits so we welcome this move to establish an Anti Slavery Day.

The Anti-Slavery Day is intended to acknowledge 'that millions of men, women and children continue to be victims of slavery, depriving them of basic human dignity and freedom'. It is also intended as an opportunity to 'raise awareness amongst young people and others of the dangers and consequences of slavery, human trafficking and exploitation and encourage them to be proactive in the fight against it'.

Gary Sloan, Chairman of the DFN UK Board said, "DFN UK sees this as a welcome opportunity to raise awareness among the British public of the millions of Dalits in modern slavery – half of all those trafficked around the world – and to call for action to be taken to bring this to an end. Lord Alton's speech to the House of Lords is a huge step forward in raising British and international awareness of this issue and we hope it is the start of greater pressure from our Government and country."

The Lords debate took place on 5 March, and the bill now goes to the Lords committee for further consideration on 22 March.

Ends

Notes to Editors:

- Dalit Freedom Network UK (DFN UK) is a working name of Freedom Network International, a charity registered in January 2008 in England and Wales.
- DFN UK is a non religious, non-partisan human rights organisation.
- DFN UK has an office in London.
- DFN UK currently comprises: 6 trustees; 9 part time volunteers; 1 part time employee – Campaign Manager (to be appointed in 2010).
- The aim of DFN UK is to bring an end to the trafficking of Dalit men, women and children into various forms of modern day slavery by specifically focusing on educating and leveraging support from the UK while working with Indian and other international partners.
- DFN UK is unique as it is the only organisation in the UK focused on the issue of Dalit trafficking.
- DFN UK launched a UK focused three year programme in 2010. The foundation of the programme is educating the British population about the problem of Dalit trafficking in order to gather support for the anti-trafficking programme both in the UK and in India. The support will come in the form of fundraising, UK advocacy, generating volunteers to travel to India and physically support anti-trafficking programme activities, generating support from individuals in specific professions such as legal, healthcare, victim care, witness protection, to provide targeted advice and assistance to key areas of the anti-trafficking programme. This three year programme is the first programme undertaken by DFN UK. The organisation's previous function was to facilitate Indians championing the Dalit cause engaging with the UK public and politicians on an occasional basis.
- **For further information please contact:**

Lucy Khoneizer
Press Officer and Organisation Communications
DFN UK
Tel: 07858 519760
E-mail: lucy.khoneizer@dfn.org.uk

DFN UK Registered Office, 39 Honor Oak Road, Forest Hill, London, SE23 3SH.
Tel: 0208 699 9966. Email: info@dfn.org.uk Web: www.dfn.org.uk

DFN UK is the working name of Freedom Network International, a charity registered in England and Wales (No1122937) Co Reg No 06256996