



## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

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### **Dalit Freedom Network welcomes Anti Slavery Day in UK**

An annual Anti-Slavery Day will now be a feature of the British calendar due to an act of Parliament passed today.

The purpose of Anti-Slavery day will be to:

- acknowledge that millions of people continue to be victims of slavery
- raise awareness of the dangers and consequences of slavery, encouraging pro-activity to fight it
- draw attention to progress made to combat slavery and highlight what more needs to be done

Trafficking is one of the biggest and most lucrative industries in the world today with annual profits from forced labour alone estimated at \$31.6 billion<sup>1</sup>.

Dalit Freedom Network UK (DFN UK) is excited about the exposure that an Anti-Slavery Day will bring to the issue of trafficking and in particular the opportunity it brings to highlight the trafficking of Dalit men, women and children.

Of the 27 million people estimated<sup>2</sup> to be living in slavery today, some 20 million are in the Indian subcontinent and the vast majority are Dalits. DFN UK is working to raise awareness of this problem and generate support for anti-trafficking programmes both in the UK and India.

Lord Alton, who supported the proposal for the Anti-Slavery Day in the House of Lords and specifically highlighted Dalit trafficking in his speech on 5 March said, *"I am really delighted that the Government has agreed to designate a day to acknowledge the problem of human trafficking and encourage people to do something about it. This day gives us all an opportunity to make a difference to millions of people unable to help themselves."*

Dr Joseph D'souza who has worked tirelessly to raise international awareness of Dalit trafficking said, *"I want to thank the British Government for openly recognising the global problem of human*

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<sup>1</sup> Forced Labour Statistics, International Labour Organisation: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/--declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_decl\\_fs\\_20\\_en.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/--declaration/documents/publication/wcms_decl_fs_20_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Disposable People* – Kevin Bales, University of California Press, London, 2004 – this figure was also quoted by the UN

*trafficking and providing such a clear opportunity for British citizens to get involved in its solutions. The Dalit people are one of the largest people groups trafficked in our world today, comprising up to half the total number. I hope that the Anti-Slavery Day will be used to raise the profile of these people and encourage Britons to engage in our anti-trafficking programmes in India.”*

The specific date designated as the annual Anti-Slavery Day will be announced later in the year.

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.
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