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Testimony before: the US House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs

Note: if oral testimony is not selected, please submit as written testimony

Madam Chair and Members of the Subcommittee:

The “ask” in this testimony by the Rebecca Project for Human Rights is not for more money for the Trafficking in Persons (TIPS) Office. The request is for a full review of the methodology and definitions used to gather country information for the TIPS report. The Department of State standing behind the TIPS rating of a Tier 1 status to the Netherlands allows the former Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice, Joris Demmink to continue to evade any serious investigation of his behavior. He can continue to hide behind the official positions he held that were responsible for investigating the very behavior that Mr. Demmink is accused of, namely, sex trafficking and the sex abuse and rape of minors.

The Rebecca Project for Human Rights requests oversight before any appropriations are made to the Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Office (TIPS) to ensure accountability and to enforce effective, efficient, transparent and compliant use of funds. The TIPS report on the extent to which countries are in compliance with the

minimum standards set forth by the Trafficking in Victims and Persons Act (TVPA) (2003, 2005, 2008) recognizes that some 4,500,000 men, women and children are enslaved by sexual exploitation at any given time world wide.

As the Chair and the Members of the Subcommittee are aware countries that fully comply with the TVPA minimum standards are awarded a Tier 1 rating. Tier 2 countries are rated such because of the failure to fully comply with the TVPA minimum standards but are recognized as making “significant efforts” to comply. Tier 2 Watch list adds, in part, to the Tier 2 rating that in countries where the absolute number of victims are significantly increasing or the commitment made by the countries to take further steps to come into compliance has failed to materialize. Tier 3 countries do not comply with the TVPA minimum standards nor are the countries making any effort to do so.

The methodology in place to determine the ratings relies in large part on anecdotal information from US embassies, NGO’s and newspaper articles. As you know, these sources are highly susceptible to bias and influence due to political, economic, diplomatic and social pressures. For example, a high ranking official in the Netherlands alleged to be involved in sex trafficking and sex abuse of minor boys has been shielded by the US embassy, NGO’s, some (but not all) newspapers over the past twenty years. Despite credible allegations of sex trafficking and rape, Joris Demmink the Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice in the Netherlands from 2002-2012 and the Director General for International Affairs and Immigration in

the Netherlands from 1993 to 2002 has not been the subject of an official and comprehensive investigation either in Holland or in Turkey where some of these crimes took place.

Good governance and anti-corruption measures are instrumental in the protection of human rights. Government officials must be subject to the full implementation of the law or to the rule of law prohibiting human trafficking or trust in the treaties and covenants proclaiming to protect victims are rendered meaningless. Under Joris Demmink's watchful eye, witnesses and victims alike were not officially interviewed nor were the petitions filed in the Holland courts heard.

The Netherlands maintained its TIPS Tier 1 rating, despite: (1) a letter to the European Union signed by Reps. Frank Wolf (R-VA), Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Joe Pitts (R-PA); (2) a letter sent to the President of Turkey from the Victims Caucus Co-Chairs Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX) and Jim Costa (D-CA); (3) a hearing led by Chairman Chris Smith (R-NJ) of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE, Helsinki Commission); the introduction of H.Res. 62 by Rep. Chris Smith (R_NJ) detailing the credible allegations raised against Joris Demmink; an Op Ed in the Washington Times Online by Kwame Fosu of the Rebecca Project for Human Rights decrying the Demmink situations comparing Demmink to Jerry Sandusky formerly of Penn State; and protests in both Washington and New York City by anti-sex trafficking coalitions.