

Statement of  
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President, PREDA Foundation

Before  
The House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health,  
Global Human Rights, and International  
Organizations

On  
Accountability and Transformation: Tier Rankings  
in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

April 22, 2015



Good Afternoon. I am Fr. Shay Cullen, Catholic Columban Missionary and President and Founder of the PREDA Foundation, Inc., a Philippine social development organization.

Hon. Chairman, Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA), ranking member, and all the members of this distinguished sub-committee, I thank you for inviting me to be here again.

Today, I will share with you my personal experience working to address the widespread situation of Human Trafficking in the Philippines. My remarks will focus on Human Trafficking for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation, and the exploitation of innocent and blameless street children for begging and drug deliveries by criminal gangs. Many but not all of the children victims of trafficking for begging, prostitution or drug couriers are frequently confined in jail-like conditions instead of being helped as victims some are as young as 8 to 12 years old.

**When I previously testified** before this sub-committee it was a testimony regarding the street children, some victims of human trafficking incarcerated in jail cells with adult criminals. A letter signed by members of this sub committee and other members of the house to then President Gloria Arroyo of the Philippines recommending the separation of minors from adults had an immediate strong positive effect at that time.

**President Arroyo ordered this separation.** However, prison officials all over made separate ever smaller overcrowded cells, and since then street children as young as 8 years old are now being confined in jail cells in sub-human conditions with accused youth offenders of the ages 17 and 18 year old accused. They are deprived of their human rights and are placed in grave circumstance of being and physically neglected starved and abused. The small children when rescued by the social workers of the Preda Foundation and given protective shelter, therapy and counseling reveal the sexual abuse.

#### **I. TRAFFICKED FOR BEGGING AND DRUGS.**

Some of these small children are victims of human trafficking brought into the city to beg for organized criminal syndicates or to be exploited drug couriers. While the Juvenile Justice Welfare law (RA9344) disallows criminal liability for children 15 and younger many are still imprisoned in dire circumstance contrary to law. (Photos)

**The photos show the conditions going back several years** and some more recent. It indicates the systematic neglect and abuse not just a few isolated incidents as some Philippine government official would like us to believe. Or claim that the photographs are not genuine, or insidiously say were released for fund raising purposes.<sup>1</sup> The center where the photographs the chained girl and the starved boy were taken in Manila are now closed as a result of the media generated. However, there are still many other centers where reform is needed. At the time of

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<sup>1</sup> ["Pope Francis and the Mystery of Manila's Vanishing Street Children."](#) Charlie Cambell. *Time Magazine*. 21 January 2015.

controversy of Pope Francis' visit, the Web site of the Preda foundation was hacked and removed by agents unknown. It has since been restored.

The human trafficking of youth and children for sexual exploitation some as young as 18 months old to 14-year-old are procured for pedophiles, video making and for commercial sexual exploitation in sex bars where they are exploited by sex tourists some being US Nationals.<sup>2</sup>

## **II. VIDEOS OF TRAFFICKED AND ABUSED MURDERED CHILDREN**

Recent investigations carried out by the Dutch police and the Australian police in recent months shocking evidence showing children as young as 18 months, have been video taped ,one tortured and sexually assaulted and murdered. Other children 6 and 12 years old have been victims of torture and sexual assault and videoed .The videos one for example The Destruction of Daisy is an example. The videos are and commercially distributed over the Internet and sold in the United States, the UK and European countries as seen in the evidence gathered and the recent arrest of suspect Australian Peter G. Scully and his local helpers.<sup>3</sup>

## **III. FORCED ABORTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

The growth of human trafficking is linked to the use of the Internet for promoting sex tourism and for transmitting images of child pornography made in the Philippines as described. Some Victims of human trafficking are subjected to several human rights violations and even forced abortion in some cases, although these are difficult to prove with for the lack of medical or forensic evidence since it is illegal and done secretly but revealed d in therapy and the oral narratives of rescued victims.

**The anti-child pornography law mandates the Internet server providers (ISP) to filter and prevent such illegal images and content.** The Internet is widely used for transmitting live sex acts using children despite the anti-cyber-sex laws. The telephone companies which have US nationals among their top 100 shareholders are violating the law by not having these filters in place as demanded by the Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009 otherwise known as RA 9775.<sup>4</sup> They have seemingly placed themselves above the law and it is possible they get away with it with some collusion with Philippine government officials The Philippine National telecommunications commission is responsible for the implementation of the regulations. In addition to the anti-child pornography law, they are also allegedly violating with impunity the Public Telecommunications Policy Act of 1995 or RA 7925 and Executive Order No.

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<sup>2</sup> ["Sex Trafficking in the Philippines."](#) *Nightline-The Raid*. 25 February 2013.

<sup>3</sup> ["Catching a Monster."](#) *60 Minutes*. Ch 9 Australia. 15 March 2015.

546 issued in 1979.

**40% of tourists come for sexual exploitation, they return to the USA and endanger children.** Thousands of young people many underage are vulnerable and both foreign nationals and locals prey upon to supply the demand of the thousands of sex tourists that come to the Philippines. As Former US Ambassador to the Philippines Harry K. Thomas, Jr. said during his time 2010 to 2013 that “40% of male tourists to the Philippines go there for sex tourism.”<sup>5</sup> While he withdrew the comment, the fact remains that the Philippines is a destination for sex tourists despite Philippine denials.

#### **IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT’S EFFORTS TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN 2014**

**While indeed there is strong political commitment by President Ninoy Aquino** and especially Justice Secretary Leila De Lima, and the office of Ombudsman to fight corruption with some notable success and much effort to address the widespread human trafficking, unfortunately the implementation of this by police and prosecutors results in a very low arrest and conviction rate. In 15 years only 150 convictions were achieved. This places The Philippines on Tier II of the TIP report.

**The grave economic inequality** creates a very rich elite, a developing middle class in a strong growing economy but an ever-widening gap between the rich few and millions of poor people.

**Corruption by some of the prosecution and judiciary.** Besides the slow pace of the judicial process, the lowering of charges of human trafficking to child abuse allows many foreign suspects of trafficking to escape.

#### **V. DEATH SQUADS PROTECT HUMAN TRAFFICKERS AND THREATEN JOURNALISTS**

**Death squads were widely used** then and are still active today in certain towns and cities allegedly under the control of some mayors. These places are also where traffickers operate with impunity and human rights workers combating human trafficking are vulnerable to retaliation.

Recommended Reports:

- The Report of the Human Rights Watch, “One Shot to the Head” Death Squad Killings in Tagum City, Philippines is very instructive.<sup>6</sup>
- Amnesty International report gives some indication how difficult it is to investigate human trafficking since some police are protecting the traffickers.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [“U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Sparks Diplomatic Row after Saying 40% of Male Tourists Visit Country for Prostitutes”](#) *Daily Mail*. 9 October 2011.

<sup>6</sup> [“One Shot to the Head.”](#) May 21, 2014. Human Rights Watch.

<sup>7</sup> [“Above the Law: Police Torture in the Philippines.”](#) *Amnesty International*. 4 December 2014.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

**While the Philippine government is striving** to address the problem of human trafficking and improve the recorded of convictions much remains to be done. The efforts of the US State department are lauded but reform of the police and judiciary in the Philippines is of the utmost importance. Local government who issue permits and licenses to sex bars that take in trafficked persons must be restrained and sex trafficking must be greatly reduced. Children trafficked must have greater protection and shelter and assistance. Suspects must be prosecuted in a robust manner with integrity.

# **VII. PAST AND PRESENT KIDS IN PHILIPPINE JAILS**

**Rescued by Preda Foundation, Inc.**

















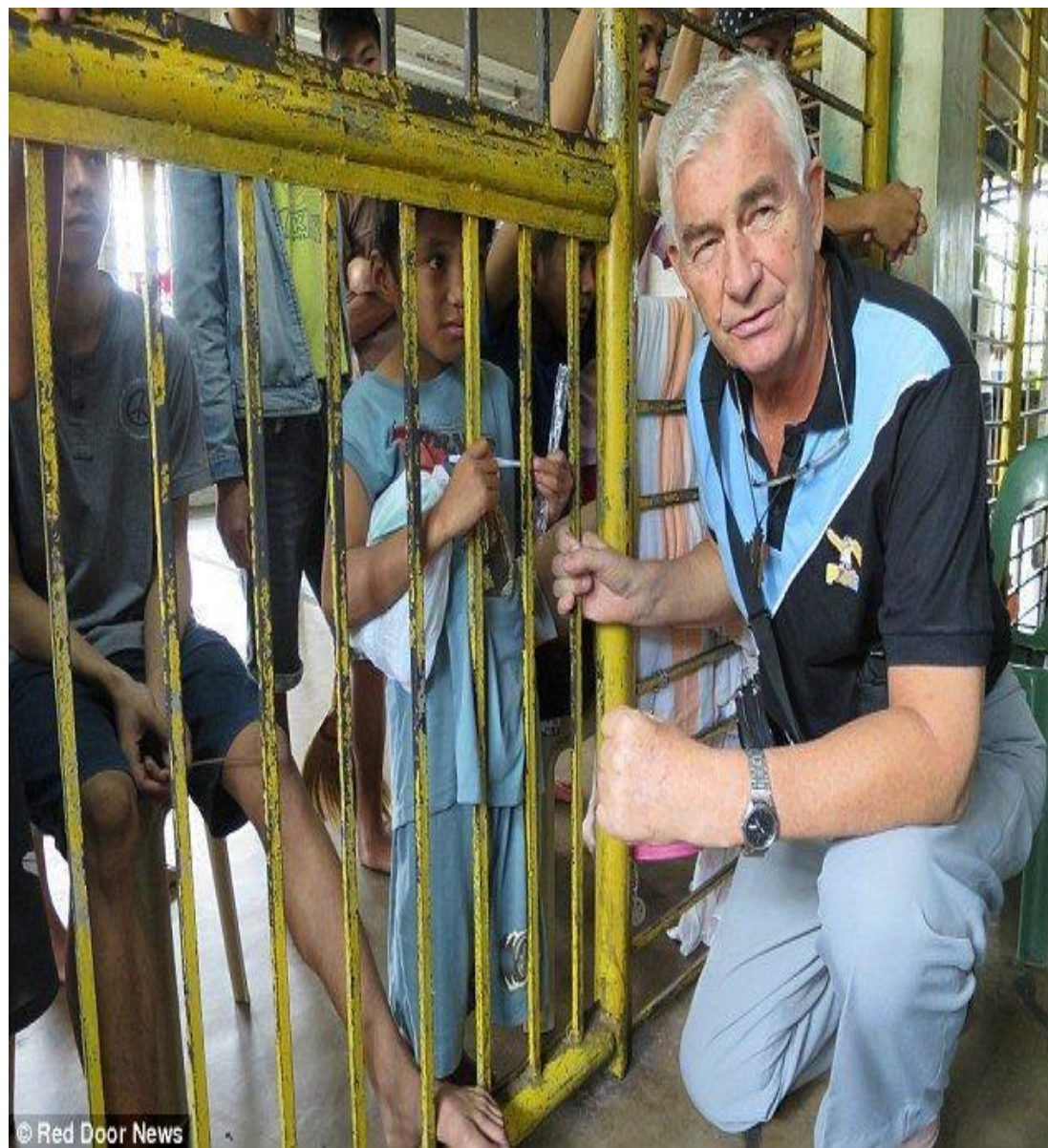














## **VIII. Supporting Articles About or By Fr. Shay Cullen and the Issue of Human Trafficking in the Philippines**

### **Human Trafficking is an Intrinsic Evil and a Crime Against Humanity**

Shay Cullen, SSC April 17, 2015

[Web blog]. Retrieved from <http://www.PREDA.org>

WASHINGTON, DC. – Just call him Jose, or Joseph in English, because in the bible story (**Genesis 37:18-36**), Joseph was sold into slavery by his own jealous brothers and taken to Egypt by the slavers.

The small twelve-year old boy that I met along the road in Sacatihan Subic town, Philippines, coming from the hills, was barefooted, wearing only shorts and carrying a heavy sack of charcoal on his back. He looked emaciated, tired weary, and sickly.

I stopped and asked him who he was working for. Was he paid? Did he go to school? Where was his family? “Come with me to the PREDA youth home nearby and get rest and food,” I said. His answer was a shake of his head, “No,” and clearly afraid, he staggered off across a field before I could help him. I wanted to find and confront his master and owner. In all likelihood, Jose is a modern day slave and PREDA social workers are on the lookout to rescue and free him and give him a better life.

Daisy was only 14 years old when she was first noticed by retired Australian federal police volunteers from Australia doing undercover work in the sex bars of Olongapo and Subic. When the bar was later raided and arrests were made, several underage girls and women were rescued. I learned that she and others were being forced to work as child prostitutes.

The young 19 year old girls were held against their will and forced into prostitution by fear of violence against their family members in a distant town. Others had debts for food, transportation and lodging and had to work in the sex bar to pay them off or were threatened with being jailed. They are victims of forced bonded labor. They returned home. These and millions more around the globe are the victims of human trafficking or modern-day slavery.

When PREDA social workers brought charges against the bar owners in Olongapo City, Subic Bay, the victim witnesses were contacted by the bar operators and threatened with retaliation if they testified. They were too frightened to take the stand and the traffickers and sex bar owners walked free. However, the rescued minors in the PREDA shelter are testifying against the US national who sexually exploited them.

This is one of the reasons why there are very few convictions of the modern day slavers in the Philippines today. Corruption and bribe-taking practice of some prosecutors and judges and refusing to prosecute and convict traffickers, abusers and pimps is another disgraceful reality that enslaves children in lives of abuse and institutionalized slavery and rape.

It takes up to two years of therapy and shelter for these unfortunate children to regain normal childhood and have hope for a dignified future.

The Philippines will remain in the disgraceful Tier-Two of the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) index. The Philippine government witness protection program and compensation for victims is allegedly mired in corruption and fraud. Without protection and assistance as witnesses, there can be few convictions and no end to the crimes against children and women.

Thousands of young girls, many of them as young as 14, continue to suffer as victims of modern day slavery. Sex tourists from rich countries seem to be encouraged by the authorities. They are not closing sex clubs and prosecuting human traffickers.

When defenders of children's rights exposed the abuse of children with photographic evidence, they were dismissed by the authorities as fake. Such blatant denial of the truth and reality and failing to bring the child abusers to justice and hold them accountable is, in effect, condoning the abuse of children. Silence and inaction in the face of crime against children is a form of consent.

I am writing this from Washington DC where I have been invited by the United States Congressional Sub-committee on human rights to present information about modern day slavery and human trafficking in the Philippines. It is ironic that the United States Congress is open and willing to hear the truth and act to save the children but Philippine legislators are not.

I have been working as a Missionary with the Society of St. Columban for the past 46 years combating human right abuses, human trafficking and sex slavery of children and women, and have some knowledge of the extent of the human suffering of trafficked victims.

The practice of the rich and powerful dominating and controlling the impoverished, weak and vulnerable people is still widespread today. And although slavery was banned hundreds of years ago by the British parliament and done away formally after the American Civil War and outlawed by the United Nations everywhere, it still continues in various forms thinly disguised but ignored by corrupt politicians and controlled by criminal gangs and individuals enslaving domestic helpers, agriculture and factory workers and fishermen.

Unregulated labor practices and racist attitudes continue the abhorrent abuse and exploitation of poor migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and the downtrodden through discrimination, racism, bonded labor and kidnapping by criminal gangs. The victims of this criminal trafficking and selling of people into extremely low paid jobs or bonded labor are treated by authorities as criminals rather than exploited victims.

Even migrant children are criminalized and jailed. Street children in the Philippines are frequently exploited as beggars and drug couriers and then accused and jailed.

Police allow the syndicates to operate with impunity and claim to have solved the crime when the kids are behind bars.

The statement of Pope John Paul II (*Veritatis Splendor*), that slavery is an inherent evil, and that nothing can ever justify it under any circumstances and the statement of Pope Francis at the interfaith meeting at the Vatican, December 2014, declared that human trafficking is "a crime against humanity,". Pope Francis and the leaders of other major faiths across the globe vowed Tuesday to work to eradicate slavery by 2020

However despite his much acclaimed visit to the Philippines last January 2015, that message has fallen on deaf ears. We have to shout it from the rooftops and take action to save the victims and bring the criminals to justice.

## John Paul II on Slavery as Intrinsically Evil

Shay Cullen, SSC April 15, 2015

[Web blog]. Retrieved from <http://www.preda.org/news/world/john-paul-ii-on-slavery-as-intrinsically-evil/>

*Veritatis Splendor*, paragraph 80, in which the late Pope John Paul II condemns slavery as an “intrinsically evil” act.



PublicDomainPictures / Pixabay

“Reason attests that there are objects of the human act which are by their nature ‘incapable of being ordered’ to God, because they radically contradict the good of the person made in his image. These are the acts which, in the Church’s moral tradition, have been termed ‘intrinsically evil’ (*intrinsece malum*): they are such *always and per se*, in other words, on account of their very object, and quite apart from the ulterior intentions of the one acting and the circumstances.

Consequently, without in the least denying the influence on morality exercised by circumstances and especially by intentions, the Church teaches that ‘there exist acts which *per se* and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously wrong by reason of their object’ [*Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), 17: AAS 77 (1985), 221; cf. Paul VI, *Address to Members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer*, (September 1967): AAS 59 (1967), 962].

The Second Vatican Council itself, in discussing the respect due to the human person, gives a number of examples of such acts: ‘Whatever is hostile to life itself, such as any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit; whatever is offensive to human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children; degrading conditions of work which treat labourers as mere instruments of profit, and not as free responsible persons: all these and the like are a disgrace, and so long as they infect human civilization they contaminate those who inflict them more than those who suffer injustice, and they are a negation of the honour due to the Creator’

## The Mission to End Slavery

Shay Cullen, SSC

*Fighting Slavery - Faith in Action*. Ed. Nick Kinsella, Pete Stanley. (2015). Kent: River Publishing, 2015. Chapter 4.

**S**lavery saturates society. It is present in the clothes and food we buy which are made with slave-like labour. These products are soaked with the sweat and suffering of their victims. They are for sale in the high street shops, on our dining tables, in the food that we eat, worn by children in school and on the sports fields, and present in the mobile gadgets we use daily. The products of modern-day slavery are ever present, but to see them, we need to be freed from blind ignorance.

The sweatshops of Bangladesh are shocking examples of some of the twenty million trafficked humans in slave-like conditions worldwide. Hundreds have died in factory fires and inside five-storey, poorly constructed buildings which collapsed on them as they made the clothes we love to wear. The cocoa fields of Africa and the gold mines of Peru are slave pits where the poor are working in subhuman conditions for less than a survival allowance, and some for none at all.

We might think that slavery ended with the American civil war, or when it was banned by the British parliament through the work of great Christian campaigners against slavery, like William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson and their supporters.

For thousands of years, slavery was common practice; it was condoned and a source of revenue for most religions. Churches and the ruling elite of England, Spain, Portugal, Denmark and others, in cahoots with plantation managers and the ruling families of the Americas, all grew rich on the slavery of the captured and enslaved Africans and native peoples.

Humans have a propensity to dominate and exploit their weaker and vulnerable fellow humans. Sadly, history shows that so-called Christians did it with harsh and cruel torture, some while reading the Bible. That Christians could enthusiastically embrace slavery to enrich themselves, was and is a mind-boggling contradiction.

The modern slavery behind much international trade and in our everyday products calls us to question our understanding and practice of our faith. The most vigorous stand against slavery was taken by the Quakers, to their great credit.

In the past, church-going slavers, ship captains, and their financial backers paid lip service to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Shameless hypocrisy was worn with pride. Today, secular society has more openly rejected and ignored Christ's words and example. As a result, thinly disguised modern slavery, as found in brothels, for example, has a sheen of legality. The trafficking of persons that supplies the victims is generally ignored or dealt with lightly in many countries.

There is arguably as little compassion, social and economic justice and equality today as in days when slave ships brought the African captives to the Americas and returned back with the produce of their labour: sugar, cotton, tobacco, gold. There are as many, if not more, exploited and trafficked workers disguised as legitimate employees today, as in the past.

As many as thirteen million Africans were captured, chained, beaten, abused, and enslaved. They were transported like animals and perhaps 1.3 million died on the way in the foetid holds of the slave ships, designed and built to hold as many chained prisoners as space would allow. Their families were torn apart; they were agonisingly separated from wives and children, exiled to the American colonies and their horrific slave plantations to provide products for Western capitalism and commerce for European citizens.

The wealth of much of Europe was founded on the labour of enslaved Africans. Churches built in the 19th century were possible because of slave trade earnings, which is truly a shame and abomination. All prospered at the expense of the enslaved people. They rejoiced in the fruits of slavery and thanked God for their wealth and so-called 'good fortune.' What God did they worship?

Today, as many as 20 million people are trafficked into forced, unpaid labour or on the dollar-a-day survival menu. Slavery has not gone away. The greed for riches produced by enslaving our fellow humans, exploiting them along with the murderous trade in arms and chemical weapons, and life-destroying drugs dominates our global trade. It is clear that governments with a human rights protection agenda are not doing nearly enough, and are having little impact.

True Christians must step into the gap, take a stand and campaign for the gospel values to change society and end slavery. What greater cause than to work for an end to social and racial injustice, bonded labour and slavery and the trade in persons? Putting faith into action is a life worth living; anything else is indifference and apathy in the face of evil.

The peace and compassion, freedom and dignity, championed by Jesus are ideals that give purpose and meaning to human existence. Slavery of any kind by any means is a deprivation of what makes us preciously human: thoughtful free choice. When this unique attribute that sets us apart from all other living creatures is taken from us, our human dignity is diminished, our rights are denied, and we are being treated as less than human.

That's why the captivity that goes with human trafficking is devastating to human beings. Their self-esteem is taken from them and their will to live is weakened. Many turn to suicide. Without the freedom to choose, to exercise free will, to decide for oneself how and where to live without the chains of debt, paralyzing fear and

threats, the helpless captive is reduced to the state of the silent caged bird, the chained whimpering puppy.

When Jesus declared in his home town that his mission was to fulfil the promise and prophecy of Isaiah to uplift the poor, open the minds and hearts of those blinded by tradition and ignorance, and declare a Jubilee year where all captive slaves would be freed and debts be cancelled and forgiven, and land would be returned to its rightful owners, there was an angry uproar from the elders, landowners and the wealthy.

His veiled message was clear to the astute teachers of the law and the biblical scholars. To them he was going to turn the power structure of society on its head, deliver it to the poor and the downtrodden and give power to the freed slaves. The rich were outraged, and the poor were delighted.

The mission statement of Isaiah was adopted word for word by Jesus. In the synagogue of Nazareth, he was invited to read the scripture. He opened the scroll, looked for the passage from Isaiah and read:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring the Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind: to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people. (Luke 4:16-19).

No wonder the authorities were outraged. What an audacious, arrogant statement to make! We can imagine their response: 'Who is this son of a carpenter to claim he is equal to the great Isaiah and that he would implement and fulfil the prophet's mission?'

This was pure fantasy if not blasphemy to them. But it was also dangerous and subversive. Talk of freeing captives and slaves was treason to the Romans, and the proxy rulers of Palestine feared losing their religious power and wealth if they lost their positions.

The slave rebellion of Spartacus only a hundred years previously in 73 BC and two previous uprisings of hundreds of thousands of slaves terrified the Romans, as their economy was run on slave labour. It was much like today's world, run on the bonded labour of twenty million people.

To the ruling elite of Palestine, Jesus was an upstart, self-appointed preacher, teaching without any official authority and challenging the traditional teaching of Judaism.

The poor were taught by the Pharisees and teachers of the law that the power structure and religious elite was God's will. They were told to accept their poverty and slavery as punishment because they were sinners and beyond redemption. Or

perhaps they were suffering for their parents' sins. The rich considered that their wealth was God's reward for their virtue and righteousness.

Jewish rabbis spoke of a vengeful and unforgiving God. A sinner or defiled person could make atonement to God if he could afford to make sacrifices in the temple. This required him to buy the animals from the herds of the rich, and give the sacrificed dead carcass to the temple priests who in turn supplied the meat market at great profit. The rich landowners and the priestly caste had a clever, vertically integrated enterprise going on between them.

Besides that they ran a foreign exchange business inside the temple to facilitate the purchase of animals by the Jews returning from foreign lands. They were enraged when Jesus said it was all wrong and he would sweep it all away. They considered him a dangerous heretic, dragged him from the building and tried to kill him by throwing him from a cliff. Somehow he walked away.

But he always made it clear that he was not going to sweep tradition and the law away, he was going to fulfil it, and it would not be instant. Because people had free will to do good or evil, to choose to have their eyes opened to the truth and repent. That would take time. It is still taking time.

Slavery was common in every town and village of Palestine at the time of Jesus as it was in the Roman Empire. No one thought there was anything wrong with it. But Jesus did. He would probably be killed on the spot by the Romans for openly opposing it. After quoting the words of Isaiah, he was a marked man.

Advocating openly for equality and freedom for the captives and the poor was a dangerous mission. Jesus' challenge to the system and denunciation of corrupt hypocrites eventually led to his execution.

While the Sermon on the Mount was a powerful social and spiritual declaration for the rights of the poor, he taught most forcibly by example. He related as a concerned friend to the downtrodden and the rejected. It established before the world their worthiness as God's children and their inalienable rights to be free from all bondage, imprisonment, domination and control by others.

'Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters you do to me,' was another statement identifying with the captives, the slaves. He taught us and gave us the choice to imitate his example. He established their status as God's children with equal rights irrespective of wealth, age, gender, colour or creed. All were deserving of freedom, equality, a life of decency based on justice and compassion, love and truth.

He turned upside down the status quo of society of his time and for all time and



favoured those who had no standing in society. When asked who in his kingdom was the most important of all he choose a child. 'Whoever welcomes this child welcomes me,' he declared to all. This was so shocking in his day that he made enemies.

Even the early Christians struggled with slavery; it was commonly accepted, an unquestioned way of life. They couldn't change the system but now after two thousand years of Christianity, you would think the message of Jesus would have come through to modern society. Yet only a small band of committed anti-slavery advocates champion the rights of the exploited poor who have fallen into the hands of modern-day traffickers and merchants of vulnerable persons.

More of us have to stand up and see our faith in the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth in a new light. We have to shake off the old institutional model of religion that passed for Christianity, become true disciples, and join the prophetic voices calling for freedom from slavery for all.

There are strong prophetic voices of people putting faith into action. This book is one of them. As James wrote in the New Testament, 'Faith without action is dead.' We cannot be fully mature Christians if we remain in our church pews without going out to confront the evil of slavery in society. Some are doing it with great effect.

Most uncaring officials would never even consider slavery a political or policy issue. In fact, local governments in the Philippines and elsewhere give business permits to sex bar operators linked to the international sex Mafia. In these slave camps, the chains are invisible debts and threats where women and children are victims of sex slavery of one kind or another.

But that is changing, thanks to the impact of the anti-slavery advocates. The United States government under President Obama has taken on the issue to end the trafficking in persons and modern-day slavery with vigour and commitment.

I never thought this would be so. When I began this work forty years ago, it was because the US Navy made Subic Bay, Olongapo and Angeles City their home port and airfields. Together with the local ruling political family, they developed these villages into huge, exploitative sin cities where sex slavery was and still is as common as selling meat in the market.

An anti-slavery, anti-child abuse campaign by PREDA Foundation from 1982 to 1992 succeeded with others to drive the US military bases from the Philippines – with some help from the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. Although the slavery business shut down for a few years, it has since been restarted by returning US retired marines and an international sex Mafia. Now sex tourists fill the brothels and bars. With the help of the Almighty we were able to get rid of the huge US military bases, so there is great hope that we can get rid of sex tourism in the Philippines and save thousands

of enslaved young girls, women and children.

The battle is spiritual. We need the influence of Eternal Goodness to conquer the hearts and minds of enough politicians, to legislate for clean tourism that is safe for women and children, and against modern forms of slavery. We need an international campaign where Christians of courage and commitment take an active stand for what they believe. Prayer is great, but action for justice is greater still.

Until very recently, no one thought that in our time, still soaked in racism and prejudice, we would see a black president in the White House, a seat of awesome power, built with slave labour. He and his wife Michelle, herself a descendant of slaves, have been advocating an end to slavery as a matter of state policy and priority. Transformational social and moral change is possible with great spiritual commitment to human rights and dignity.

The latest Trafficking in Person (TIP) report, released and publicized on 20 June 2014 by the US Secretary of State John Kerry, stated that trafficking of persons is modern slavery and its eradication is a top-priority policy for all US government departments.

Who would have foretold that the US government would do this? The former administration was advocating policies to invade, fight and kill, conquer and occupy. So we welcome this amazing change of policy.

There has been nothing much like it in government since William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, with former slaves Ottobah Cugoana and Olaudah Equiano and their supporters campaigned for many years to abolish slavery and challenged the British Parliament to do so. Eventually the campaigners persuaded MPs to ban the slave trade. The Slave Trade Act received Royal Assent on 25 March 1807 and many years later slavery itself was outlawed, just three days before William Wilberforce died.

There are many forms of slavery. It is the physical control of another human being, making him or her work for little or no pay and controlling their behaviour from dawn to dusk.

There are also addictions where the human will is dominated by chemical substances or other compulsive behaviours. The drug traffickers and pushers trap, enslave and destroy young lives. There is intellectual slavery where people's minds, feelings and spirits are captured and controlled by an ideology and their will is no longer free. Some can become fanatics, even suicide bombers.

The fight against human trafficking is one of the greatest challenges we have to face this century. Yes, we have wars, famine, typhoons, massacres and climate change. But I believe that Christians must face the problem of evil epitomized in the slavery

of the poor and vulnerable people who are left unprotected by family and community.

The inevitable question for people of faith is, 'If there is a loving, all-powerful God who cares for us, why does evil thrive to enslave the innocent, especially women and children and cause them to suffer?'

There is no easy answer to this but I have grappled with it and sought answers all my life. I found that action for justice against evil and slavery helped me live with the many challenges to my faith. Reggie and Angelica are just two of many.

A few months ago, after the devastating typhoon Haiyan that hit the Philippines, hunger was rampant. People would do anything for food. The youth were easily exploited by human traffickers.

PREDA Foundation social workers rescued Reggie, a teenager who was lured with his six friends on board a fishing boat and were exploited as slave labour. They worked for weeks without end for sixteen hours a day and were then cast ashore without pay or compensation.

Sixteen-year-old Reggie, as if he had not suffered enough, was then arrested for 'vagrancy,' for being homeless. The police didn't believe him or were in cahoots with the slavers and exploiters, the traffickers of Reggie and his friends who went off to exploit more minors on their fishing boat, a slave ship of sorts. He told us later he felt that God had abandoned him.

There are about ten million homeless people in despicable slums, living in pushcarts on the streets all over the Philippines; they are prisoners of poverty, another kind of slavery. PREDA human rights workers demanded the release of Reggie from illegal detention and succeeded in getting him out. There were dozens other small boys in the same cells arrested and accused of theft for stealing a banana, a T-shirt, or some petty offenses, some as young as ten years old. We could not rescue all of them.

In the jail house they endure hardship and are forced into another form of slavery. Like other boys, Reggie was bossed by the bigger inmates and had to be their unpaid servant. Some are turned into girly-boys, forced to give sexual favours to the guards or adult prisoners in adjoining cells. Young girls are also sold as sex slaves to the older adult prisoners to appease their cravings and prevent riots.

These victims of abuse work without pay. Boys and girls wash the guards' clothes, clean the filthy toilets, cook and serve food, and do whatever they are ordered just to eat and avoid being beaten up. They are totally impoverished so no one cares about them.

Reggie was released into the custody of the PREDA human rights workers and had

his first meal in a restaurant. He was then brought to the PREDA home in the countryside to rest and recover his broken health.

During the sharing of testimony, he told his story of exploitation and suffering and what he witnessed in the jail. He also described his journey in Christian faith and hope: 'I only had God to trust and prayed to God to save me. I hoped every day would be the day when I would be saved, but my prayers were unanswered.'

The worst of all human traffickers and slavers are those who recruit children and young women and sell them into sex slavery. These are the government-approved, licensed brothels and sex bars operated by the international sex Mafia which bring in sex tourists from all over the world. Fourteen-year-old Angelica was sold to a trafficker by her relatives and ended up a sex slave in the 'Sweet Sixteen Bar' that specialized in minors. When we rescued her from that sex bar where she endured a year of suffering, she told us she was forced to take customers six times a night and she begged God for deliverance.

'I prayed and begged for God to save me, to take me out of that place, to bring me safely home.' That child was deeply traumatized by sex slavery. She hated adults, trusted no one and it took almost a year of counselling and emotional expression therapy before she could heal and trust again.

Many survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse live with that deep distrust of other humans. It's a lonely life not being able to have close friends and happy relationships.

It is not God who is ignoring the horrific suffering of these enslaved people. It is those who claim to be Christians but are not, who abandon them to the abusers and slavers. All of us are challenged and called to be Good Samaritans but most walk on by, so the bandits win and the innocent suffer.

Eternal Goodness does not allow or ignore human suffering; people do. Eternal Goodness is present when there are good people acting for justice and love and personifying it. True Christians are those who act on their faith, extending the mission of Jesus of Nazareth in the world. Together in his spirit, and that of Isaiah, people of faith combat evil.

We wouldn't be truly human without the freedom to exercise free will, nor could we choose to help, love and save others. So evil is not allowed by God, but for humans to be fully human, they must have the freedom to choose to do good or evil. It is for Christians to present eternal goodness and eliminate evil.

More people in the world seem to choose wrongdoing than doing good, which is why bad things happen to innocent people. Slavery is the result of the evil choice of

traffickers and abusers.

I believe that 'Eternal Goodness' did come through the PREDA human rights workers in saving Reggie and Angelica and many more children with the help of our supporters. Their prayers were answered at last.

All of us are called to act as did the Good Samaritan, to help the victims of slavery and bind up their wounds and care for them. As disciples of Christ, our calling is to implement and live out in action that mission statement of Isaiah as Jesus did. We can eventually end slavery by working together with caring

## **Saved from the Death Squad – By Street Children**

Shay Cullen, SSC May 28, 2014

[Web blog]. Retrieved from

<http://www.preda.org/mailings/mail.cgi?flavor=archive;list=preda;id=20140527202134>

What should be a matter of outrage and great moral concern of every Filipino and decent human being is the very recent, well documented revelations by Human Rights Watch, alleging the actions of a death squad in Tagum city, Mindanao where hundreds have been murdered including street children as young as 9 years old. The killings were allegedly carried out by hit men allegedly on orders of the former mayor. Each person was killed for a payment of only five thousands pesos (US\$110).

“One Shot to the Head”: Death Squad Killings in Tagum City, Philippines” (see [www.preda.org](http://www.preda.org)) is a 71 page report released on 22 May, 2014, with damning evidence and interviews with former hit men who allegedly said they were paid by former Mayor Rey “Chiong” Uy to kill anyone they were told to. One text message allegedly set them in motion. They were paid US\$110 for every killing and they divided it among themselves, one former hit man said in a taped interview posted on Youtube. The former mayor has denied the allegations.

“Tagum City’s former mayor helped organize and finance a death squad linked to the murder of hundreds of residents,” said Phelim Kine, deputy Asia Director at Human Rights Watch. “Rey Uy called these citizens “weeds”. He and other city officials and police officers underwrote targeted killings as a perverse form of crime control.”

Such revelations are not new in the Philippines. Other city officials throughout the Philippines have been accused of using death squads to kill street children and anyone considered a threat or critic of local government. As many as 298 victims have been documented in this Human Rights Watch Tagum report. The report said...”Targeted killings have continued but with less frequency since Uy stepped down as mayor in June 2013”.

The Human Rights Watch press release said that “On April 28, 2014, the media reported that the Philippines National Bureau of Investigation had recommended the prosecution of four security guards employed by the Tagum City government for their alleged role in the abduction, torture, and murder of two teenage boys in February 2014. The current Tagum City mayor, Allan Rellon, reportedly told the media that he was “bewildered” by the allegations, saying that, “as a local chief executive, I abhor any form of summary killing.”

This is not the first report documenting the dark side of Philippines where government officials, have been accused of using private assassination squads of hit-men that go around on motor bikes killing children, priests, missionaries, pastors, church and human rights workers. This column has documented many of these murders. The Sun Star of Davao has bravely documented many of the death squad

murders over the years. Investigations by the Philippine Commission on Human Rights have failed to uncover the killers or those behind the murders.

A prominent columnist in The Philippine Daily Inquirer last 24 May, 2014 defended the death squads and the actions of Mayor Uy and the Mayor of Davao Rodrigo Duterte saying no one in the Philippines is complaining about them except Human Rights Watch. Citizens would have benefited too, he wrote, if the police in Manila had implemented a plan to organize a death squad to eliminate alleged corrupt judges and prosecutors.

The killings are done to drive away begging street kids, create fear and silence critics and defenders of human rights on the pretext of preserving law and order by killing people said to be suspected criminals. Anyone can denounce their neighbor as a drug pusher and it's likely that person would be killed. This is how the tiny minority of wealthy Filipino elites use fear, force and murder to intimidate the people, eliminate rivals, cheat at elections and stay in power through family dynasties. Thus, the one percent can rule the nation as they have always done. The hit-men do it for money and the elites do it for political and economic advantage. They act with total impunity.

The Human Rights Watch report gives credence to the many allegations made by Filipino human rights workers for many years including this writer who exposed a Davao death squad and was sued by the former Davao Mayor De Guzman in 1999, although no allegation was made against him personally. After a harrowing, dangerous year of legal defense, and a scary visit to Davao where a group of street children formed a protective cordon around me at the airport lest the death squad would kill me. I was trying to save them, but they saved me.

Mayor De Guzman withdrew the allegation on the day when I was to be arraigned in the Davao City Regional Trial Court. The intervention of Archbishop Fernando Robles Capalla of Davao persuaded the Mayor to withdraw the charge. The Archbishop's brother Romy Capalla, a human rights defender was assassinated with a bullet to the head last March 2014 in Ilo-ilo for his work defending the rights of small farmers to organize independently of land owners and practice Fair Trade. The sugar mill they operated was burned down destroying their livelihood. No one has been caught for the brutal murder.

A Survey by the Ateneo De Davao University says 98 percent of those polled support the mayor, government and 77 percent support the police. Perhaps they dare not say otherwise. Western embassies have warned their citizens not to visit Mindanao due to the crime rates. The death squads have not deterred lawlessness, only added to it.

## Pope Francis and the Mystery of Manila's Vanishing Street Children

Charlie Campbell @charliecamp6ell Jan. 21, 2015

*Time*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/3676027/pope-francis-manila-street-children-philippines/>

Pope Francis took the helm of the Catholic Church last year, [vowing](#) to refashion the institution “for the poor.” Yet during his recent five-day visit to the Philippines, where he presided over Mass for more than six million rapturous worshippers, it appeared many of the nation’s most impoverished were cruelly banished from view.



Noel Celis—AFP/Getty Images A homeless child in the streets of Manila in 2014.

As the Pontiff touched down in Asia’s most Catholic nation, reports [emerged](#) that street children had been rounded up and caged in order to sanitize Manila’s streets. Local authorities vehemently denied this was a case, pointing out that the accompanying [photographs](#) of an emaciated toddler and young girl handcuffed to a metal pole had in fact been taken months earlier.

However, rumors continued to swirl as more anecdotal evidence arrived. So was the Philippine capital purged of unsightly urchins? In a word, yes, although only a small fraction of this was anything new.

According to local activists, street children are constantly being rounded up across this sprawling metropolis of 12 million. This is generally for vagrancy and petty crime — they are often scapegoats for the deeds committed by organized gangs — and,



although numbers are hard to pin down, the Pope's visit seemed to herald a slight uptick.

"There's definitely been a ramp up," Catherine Scerri, deputy director of the Bahay Tuluyan NGO that helps street children, tells TIME. "They were definitely told not to be visible, and many of them felt that if they didn't move they would be taken forcibly."

Those detained end up at various municipal detention centers sprinkled all over Metro Manila, says Father Shay Cullen, the Nobel Peace Prize-nominated founder of the Preda Foundation NGO. These local adult jails each adjoin euphemistically named "children's homes," which, like the adult facility, has bars on the windows.

Children are summarily kept for anything up to three months without charge, with little ones sharing cells with young adults. Many fall prey to serious sexual and physical abuse: Kids just eight-years-old are often tormented into performing sex acts on the older detainees, says Cullen. (Amnesty International documented such abuses in a December [report](#).)

"They are locked up in a dungeon," says Cullen, explaining that some 20,000 children see the inside of a jail cell annually across the Philippines. "We keep asking why they put these little kids in with the older guys."

Nevertheless, Philippines Welfare Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman explicitly denies that homeless children were rounded up for the Papal visit, highlighting that they were, in fact, central to the 78-year-old Pontiff's reception. Some 400 homeless kids — albeit in bright, new threads — [sang](#) at a special event (and [posed](#) awkward theological questions.)

Any children detained, explains Juliano-Soliman, were "abandoned, physically or mentally challenged or found to be vagrant or in trouble with the law, and we are taking care of them." Father Cullen's allegations, Juliano-Soliman suggests, are a sympathy ploy to win donations "One can't help but think it's a good fundraising action," she says wryly.

However, Juliano-Soliman did [confirm](#) that 100 homeless families — comprising 490 parents and children — were taken off the street of Roxas Boulevard, the palm-fringed thoroughfare arcing Manila Bay along which Pope Francis traveled several times, and taken about an hour and a half's drive away to the plush Chateau Royal Batangas [resort](#). Room rates there range from \$90 to \$500 per night.

This sojourn lasted from Jan. 14, the day before Pope Francis's visit, until Jan. 19, the day he left. It was organized by the Department of Social Welfare's Modified Conditional Cash Transfer program, which provides grants to aid "families with special needs."

Juliano-Soliman says this was done so that families would “not be vulnerable to the influx of people coming to witness the Pope.” Pressed to clarify, she expressed fears that the destitute “could be seen as not having a positive influence in the crowd” and could be “used by people who do not have good intentions.”

For Scerri, though, this reasoning doesn’t cut it: “It’s very difficult to believe that children and families who have lived on the streets for most of their lives need to be protected from what was a very joyous, very happy, very peaceful celebration.”

In fact, families involved were only told two days prior that they were to make the trip to Chateau Royal Batangas. “Many felt that if they didn’t participate that they would be rounded up,” says Scerri, adding that those who returned to their usual digs by Malate Catholic Church found large signs had been painted in the interim that prohibited sleeping rough.

Ultimately, whether jailed or stashed in a resort, “there’s nothing new,” says Father Cullen. “Every time dignitaries come it’s a common phenomenon for more children to be locked up.”

So where did Manila’s street children go? The truth is that most people didn’t really care, just as long as they did.

## **Seeking Justice, Ending Impunity**

Shay Cullen, SSC November 23, 2011

Web blog]. Retrieved from <http://www.preda.org/fr-shays-articles/seeking-justice-end-to-impunity/>

As 13 year-old Angelica walked out of the court room she was crying her heart out. Her friends from the PREDA home for abused girls were hugging and embracing her trying to give her comfort. She felt she had been cheated, violated again and again every time the Clerk of Court reading the court's decision declared her rapist "not guilty". Every count was dismissed on one technicality after another. The accused stood there smirking, as if knowing the outcome in advance.

Clever lawyers, weak uncaring prosecutors and a lazy ignorant judge seemed to be on the take and caused the emotional and mental anguish to Angelica and a lifelong trauma. So a trial is a money making sham and the fig leaf for the impunity enjoyed by the bribe making accused. Bribery is usually assumed then such cases are decided in favor of the accused despite strong evidence.

Without a well-paid private prosecutor child victims don't have a chance of winning a case and getting justice. The abuser goes free laughing all the way to his next victim and many more after that. It's estimated that a child abuser has up to a hundred victims before being caught. Such corrupt officials are co-rapists in my view. When a person knows in his or her conscience that a crime has been committed and the evidence is strong and clear and then acts against it, that's a crime in itself.

Impunity is the norm when it comes to child sexual abuse cases. The child rapists, traffickers, sex abusers and assassins are seldom caught, charged or convicted. Police too can get away with brutality and torture since they are seldom investigated and brought to trial.

The gruesome massacre and mutilation of some 57 people that included 32 journalists in Maguindanao, in Southern Philippines two years ago on November 23, shocked the international press. It was the worst attack ever recorded against media practitioners. No convictions yet and little hope of justice it seems.

The horrific crime allegedly perpetrated by the Ampatuan clan to block there political rival from entering the elections is still in the preliminary stages. Only 93 suspects out of 196 have been arrested and of those only 29 have been arraigned. Eight months were lost due to petitions of the accused for the judge to inhibit herself. Out of 300 prosecution witnesses only 72 have been presented in court. The accused have applied for bail which is the center of the legal battle at present.

Media practitioners around the world have declared November 23 as "The international Day to end Impunity". The Southeast Asian Press alliance led by Executive director Gayyathry Venkiteswaran, based in Thailand and an advocate of the campaign against impunity says that "Impunity is a chronic failure by states, judiciary, and law enforcement agencies to bring perpetrators to justice". In Wikipedia we find the following definition of impunity, "In the international law of human rights, it refers to the failure to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice and, as such, itself constitutes a denial of the victims' right to justice and redress".

The blatant and obvious failure of the state to convict many accused where the evidence is convincing and strong could be taken as de facto impunity. In such cases the trial is a charade and money writes the favorable judgement. This injustice is the deepest wound in society that causes rebellion and war.

Wherever there is the abuse of power, influence and money and where corruption thrives there is the chance for alleged criminals to evade prosecution through influence and legal loopholes. Bankers are in the spotlight for defrauding investors, depositors and grossly mismanaging the funds entrusted to them by customers. Their excessive greedily huge salaries and bonuses are said to be the cause of the financial ruin of hundreds of thousands of people. Yet they enjoy impunity.

Impunity is never right and while we mourn the assassination of priests, pastors, human rights workers and abused children we must not abandon the pursuit of justice. Those that aid and abet impunity for the criminals are close to being criminals themselves.