

## JUSTICE NEWS

**Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Perez Delivers Remarks at the Trafficking Victims Protection Act 10th Anniversary Event**

Washington, D.C. ~ Friday, October 29, 2010

Thank you, Attorney General Holder, for your leadership and commitment to combating human trafficking, and your vision in developing forthcoming new initiatives to make our efforts more effective than ever.

It's an honor to be here to celebrate how far we've come since the TVPA was enacted a decade ago. HT is a grave affront to human rights and to our nation's core values, and there can be no higher calling in our commitment to vindicating the individual rights of all people than eradicating this form of modern-day slavery.

In my career with DOJ, I've had the privilege to serve as a prosecutor in the Criminal Section working on the front lines of involuntary servitude cases and other crimes, as one of the first coordinators of the Worker Exploitation Task Force, as a Deputy AAG in the leadership of the Civil Rights Division in the late 1990s as our efforts around human trafficking were gathering force, and now at the helm of a Division doing more than ever to bring justice to human trafficking victims.

While prosecuting involuntary servitude and slavery cases has been a priority of the Civil Rights Division for decades, it is incredible to see the Division's early efforts evolve from a small but dedicated group of civil rights lawyers bringing a few involuntary servitude cases a year, into a broad-based, comprehensive enforcement program in close coordination with critical partners across government, and throughout the NGO community.

The TVPA provided us with powerful tools that have dramatically impacted enforcement efforts. We've gone from charging fewer than four cases a year in the years before the TVPA, to about 18 a year during the first five years of the TVPA, to an average of nearly forty cases each year over the past five years. These results include record numbers of prosecutions in each of the past two years, with a record 52 cases charged just this past fiscal year. These results are a testament to the leadership of our Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit created 3 years ago to prosecute complex HT cases, and to provide specialized expertise to federal prosecutors around the country. They are also a testament to the United States Attorneys Offices nationwide who have stepped up to bring tough HT prosecutions, as well as our law enforcement partner from a variety of federal, state and local agencies and our non-profit partners who serve as the indispensable bridge between victims and government.

And we're not just bringing more cases. We're bringing cases of unprecedented scope and impact, taking on international organized criminal networks; and partnering with the Criminal Division, ICE, and Mexican authorities to bring bilateral investigations and prosecutions. Human trafficking is becoming similar to drug trafficking and gun trafficking in that it frequently involves complex cartels of organized crime.

But this work isn't about how many cases we've charged or how well we work together -- it's about the human lives restored to freedom and dignity.

It's about the widowed mother of six from an impoverished village in Nigeria, enslaved for 8 years outside Dallas, Texas, courageously speaking out against her captors and reuniting with her children while the traffickers serve 20 years in prison

It's about the undocumented Mexican and Guatemalan farmworkers beaten, threatened, and locked in the back of a truck, forced to toil in the fields to pay off smuggling debts, now free to feed their families with the fruits of their labor

It's about the troubled hometown teens compelled into prostitution on the streets of Baltimore by sex traffickers who used violence, threats, and addictive drugs to hold their victims in submission, now living free as survivors, while the trafficker serves 37 years

The work of striving for justice on behalf of these victims and others can be heart-breaking and gut-wrenching. It can also be inspiring, and give us hope as we face the challenges ahead. And great challenges do remain.

Today we are here to celebrate how far we've come, and to recommit ourselves to the unfinished business that lies ahead. We celebrate: The thousands of human lives restored to freedom; the hundreds of traffickers prosecuted and their criminal networks dismantled; the strong partnerships forged with our government and NGO colleagues; and of course our partnerships within the many parts of the Department of Justice who have played key roles in the momentum of today's broad-based anti-trafficking efforts, from the Bureau of Justice Assistance and Office for Victims of Crime who have led the Human Trafficking Task Force Initiative; to the Executive Office of United States Attorneys and the US Attorney community who have joined forces with us on announcing the forthcoming initiatives; To our partners in the Criminal Division who are key experts on sexual exploitation, organized crime, and international collaboration. Each of these partners has been key to the significant strides we have made since enactment of the TVPA, as a testament that human trafficking is a crime against human dignity that will not be tolerated on the shores of a nation founded on freedom.

As Attorney General Holder said, we're committed to doing more than ever before. And we're looking forward to working with all of you as we start implementing the forthcoming new initiatives to streamline coordination.

With that, I'd like to introduce the Honorable Lanny A. Breuer, the Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division, who has been such an incredible force in building these partnerships to take our fight against Human Trafficking to the next level.