

## JUSTICE NEWS

**Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at the Trafficking Victims Protection Act 10th Anniversary Event**

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

Thank you, Roy [Austin].

It is an honor to join so many friends, colleagues, and committed partners this morning. Thank you all for helping to mark this historic milestone. I also want to thank Dorothy Williams and the Eastern Senior High School Color Guard for sharing their gifts with us this morning and for helping to make this celebration so special.

Today, we commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. And together, we celebrate a decade of progress and service, of liberation, and of long-overdue justice.

This record of accomplishment has been the result of extraordinary dedication and collaboration. In particular, I want to recognize, and thank Roy and Hilary [Axam], Assistant Attorneys General Perez and Breuer, and U.S. Attorney Dettelbach, as well as the other members of the Attorney General's Advisory Committee, for their efforts.

Since Congress enacted the TVPA in 2000, many of the leaders in this room have been on the front lines of our nation's fight to protect the victims of human trafficking and to bring traffickers to justice. Your efforts have liberated thousands and given trafficking victims across the globe an opportunity to live in freedom, and with the dignity that every person deserves.

The human trafficking prosecutions brought by the Department of Justice are a critical part of our efforts to protect civil and human rights. This work is a priority for many of the Justice Department's components. And for me, it is also a source of great pride.

In particular, we should all be encouraged by the work of the Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit, and by its impressive record of achievement. Since its creation three years ago, this unit has used the tools and resources provided by the TVPA to dismantle trafficking networks operating in every region of the country. More important, their work has provided trafficking victims from more than 80 countries with long overdue freedom, and with long denied justice.

The Justice Department has rescued trafficking victims from hotels in South Dakota, eldercare homes in California, farms in Florida, and suburban houses in Wisconsin. From Connecticut to California, our agents and prosecutors have liberated victims from sex-trafficking rings. We have secured forty- and fifty-year sentences against traffickers who once thought that they could exploit and abuse their victims with impunity. And we have obtained millions of dollars in restitution.

But the Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit isn't working alone. The Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section is leading efforts to combat sex trafficking of minors and collaborating with state and local law enforcement, the FBI, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to make the Innocence Lost Initiative a success. To date, this initiative has rescued nearly 900 children and produced more than 500 convictions in state and federal courts.

The Justice Department isn't the only federal agency working to eradicate human trafficking and to protect its victims. I'd like to thank our partners in the Departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, State, Defense, and Labor for their efforts, as well as our colleagues in state and local law enforcement – and the many victim advocate organizations also serving as partners. We are more effective in the fight against human trafficking when we work closely together.

This is true internationally, as well. And with the help of our counterparts in other nations, the United States is working to disrupt trafficking networks that operate across international borders, including the Southern border of the United States. Through the Bilateral Enforcement Initiative – a collaboration between DOJ, Homeland Security, and Mexican law enforcement – we are investigating and prosecuting trafficking networks that operate on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. As a result, we're bringing help, and hope, to victims who have seen their dreams for a better life become nightmares. And, today, I am pleased that some of our key partners in this work have joined us. I want to join in welcoming Diputada Rosi Orozco, a member of Mexico's national Congress and President of Mexico's National Commission on Human Trafficking, as well as her colleagues from the Mexican Embassy. Thank you for being with us.

But despite our many achievements, there is still much more work to be done.

Human trafficking has become big business, generating billions of dollars each year. Almost every country in the world is affected, either as a source or a destination for trafficking victims. And here in the United States, unfortunately, far too many continue to live in bondage and in fear.

But we are fighting back.

Today, as we enter the second decade of TVPA enforcement, I am pleased to announce an important new weapon in the fight against human trafficking. In the coming weeks, the Justice Department, in collaboration with our partners in federal law enforcement, will be taking new steps to make our efforts to secure justice for victims of human trafficking more effective than ever before. We will be strengthening the structures of federal law enforcement – both within the Department of Justice and in coordination with our partner agencies – to enhance our capacity to investigate and prosecute human trafficking crimes.

The Department will be working with U.S. Attorneys' Offices across the country to improve collaboration among the prosecutors in the field, EOUSA, and the experts on human trafficking prosecutions in the Criminal and Civil Rights Divisions. Engaging the Department's subject matter experts in the early stages of investigations and prosecutions will better equip our prosecutors to put traffickers where they belong – behind bars. We are going to ensure that every human trafficking investigation and prosecution has access to the most sophisticated expertise that the Department of Justice has at its disposal.

In addition to these steps, the Justice Department will be working with its law enforcement partners to launch pilot interagency teams in select judicial districts to focus on bringing traffickers to justice. These teams – which will bring together AUSAs and federal agents from across federal law enforcement

– will allow us to leverage the assets and expertise of each participating agency. This approach will create a streamlined interagency criminal enforcement structure. And it will allow us to more effectively target our enforcement efforts at the most serious human trafficking threats, and develop high-impact investigations and prosecutions.

Working together, we can ensure that the progress we celebrate today is just the beginning.

Because of the commitment and contributions of the people in this room over the last 10 years, the United States has become a global leader in the fight against human trafficking. But we cannot become complacent. We cannot yet be satisfied.

Too many are still suffering in the shadows. Too many in our communities are being denied their dignity and their right to freedom. Too many trafficking victims are still counting on us.

I look forward to what we can accomplish together. Through sustained collaboration and strong commitment, we can – and we will – deliver on our nation's founding, and most fundamental, promise: liberty and justice for all.

Thank you.