

Caritas Internationalis on the International Day for Abolition of Slavery

Caritas Internationalis strongly condemns all forms of slavery, forced labour and human trafficking. Such practices of abuse are recurrent in contexts of crisis and weak governance. They are unacceptable and a crime against humanity wherever they happen.

There have been recent media reports revealing slave markets in Libya where migrants are sold. Caritas believes there are many more victims exploited for labour, which are unfortunately invisible.

Caritas organisations witness the hardships and abuses that migrant workers suffer. They highlight the lack of adequate mechanisms to protect them from labour exploitation and slavery. Abuses often go unpunished. Migrants should have access to justice through effective redress mechanisms, independent of their migration status.

Caritas Internationalis would like to highlight the situation of seafarers and fishers, who are often migrants. They are invisible and because of the nature of their work easily become victims of exploitation and abuse. Their working environment makes it difficult for them to seek help and protection in situation of need.

Caritas draws attention to the situation of migrant domestic workers who may become victims of trafficking by unscrupulous recruitment agencies and end up in bonded labour. Their working conditions are close to slavery, as their passport is confiscated and they prevented from leaving their employer's home or communicating with their family. The inspection of work places is often not possible because many countries do not recognize domestic work as regular work and the need for protection of rights.

Caritas calls upon governments to ratify and implement the conventions to eliminate human trafficking and exploitation to protect vulnerable groups and to fight impunity of the perpetrators. These are the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and the two relevant Protocols: the Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

A lack of legal channels of migration leave people resorting to dangerous routes and to become victims of human trafficking. In the shaping up of the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees, Caritas calls upon governments to live up to their commitments made in the New York Declaration (art. 57) in 2016 and ensure legal and safe channels for human mobility/labour migration.

Caritas remains close to migrant communities, serving them and promoting social justice for them. Caritas works to advise and protect all migrants to prevent trafficking and abuse. Caritas advocates for the rights of migrant workers – and for proper legal protection for all people who move to find work and security.