



Position Statement on Human Trafficking

The American Psychoanalytic Association (APsAA) strongly condemns the criminal activity of human trafficking.

In 2000, the United Nations provided the first internationally agreed definition of human slavery and trafficking, the Palermo Protocol. It states:

“...trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

Force, coercion or any other means applied to trafficked adults are irrelevant in the case of a trafficked child (a person younger than 18 years of age). The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in the Protocol.

The United States Department of State’s annual Trafficking in Persons Report estimates that from four to twenty-seven million people live as modern day slaves.

800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year

80% of sex trafficked victims are women and girls.

The United States Department of Justice estimates that 50% of trafficked victims are children.

One million children are exploited each year by the global commercial sex trade according to the United States Department of State’s 2005 publication, *The Facts about Child Sex Tourism*.

Victims of human trafficking often suffer severe psychological disorders due to the specific process of abuse and humiliation they have endured. They are often targeted at critical developmental stages. Minds and bodies are attacked and enslaved in an exploitative dynamic leading to corrosive emotional states and enduring health and social consequences.

Psychoanalytic theory and practice support the victim’s need for an immediate safe haven and assurance of no further devaluation.

Incarcerating victims of trafficking reinforces the dynamic of victimization and deepens shame, helplessness and hopelessness.

The American Psychoanalytic Association endorses the dignity and equality of all human beings regardless of race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical or psychological condition or social class. Our goal is to relieve suffering by promoting understanding and healthy development. This cannot be universally accomplished as long as human trafficking exists.

APsAA is committed to fostering a social environment in which all individuals are valued and violence against their persons has no place. It is within this context that APsAA urges our partners across the nation and around

the world to draw on the expertise of psychoanalytically trained mental health professionals in the treatment of victims of human trafficking.

APsaA urges local, national and international program and policy officials to draw on the expertise of trained mental health professionals in developing comprehensive treatment that includes long term, relationship-based psychotherapy for victims of human trafficking.

Meaningful treatment demands a humane approach to the entire person. The relationship-based therapy practiced by psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic psychotherapists is particularly valuable in the treatment of psychological disorders consequent to complex trauma including physical and sexual abuse, abduction and subjugation. Psychoanalysis is unique among the psychotherapies in that it focuses on what is highly personal in this abuse through a disciplined exploration of the way its consequences are expressed within the therapeutic relationship.

APsaA joins the efforts of the UN Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, the American Psychological Association's task force on Trafficking of Women and Girls as well as the International Psychoanalytic Association's efforts on this issue.

Approved by the Executive Council, January 15, 2015