



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION CANADA CALLS FOR PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE HAITIAN CHILDREN TO REMAIN A TOP PRIORITY IN RELIEF EFFORTS

London, Ont. — International Justice Mission Canada (IJM Canada) calls on the Canadian government and the international community to continue to make the protection of vulnerable Haitian children a top priority as it helps to rebuild the earthquake-ravaged country.

"We are encouraged by recent comments by Minister Jason Kenney that display his government's awareness of the reality of human trafficking and the very real threat to children in the days following natural disasters," said Jamie McIntosh, executive director for IJM Canada.

"The situation in Haiti — with the significant breakdown in the rule of law — means the environment is ripe for abuse by people who prey on children for human trafficking and exploitation," said McIntosh.

IJM Canada is calling on Haitian authorities, the international community and especially Canadian military and aid workers present in Haiti to be aware of the threat of kidnapping and trafficking of children displaced by the earthquake, and to remain vigilant to protect them. "We must make the safety of these children a top priority as Haiti recovers and rebuilds," says McIntosh.

IJM Canada is an affiliate of International Justice Mission (IJM) headquartered in Washington, DC and partners with this organization to protect the global poor from injustice and violent oppression.. IJM Canada supports the press release below, distributed by IJM on this issue.

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INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION ADVOCATES FOR IMMEDIATE MEASURES TO PROTECT VULNERABLE CHILDREN FROM TRAFFICKING RISKS IN HAITI

International NGO urges police and law enforcement in the region to be on the alert to address danger

Washington, D.C. – International Justice Mission (IJM), a human rights agency that brings relief to victims of human trafficking, modern-day slavery and other forms of violent oppression, is calling on the

international community to immediately implement measures to protect vulnerable children from trafficking risks and other forms of abuse in Haiti. It is estimated that 40,000 to 60,000 children have been killed, orphaned or separated from their families as a result of the January 12th earthquake.

Breakdown of rule of law across the country has left many particularly vulnerable to violent human rights abuses, including human trafficking. In the past week, disturbing reports have surfaced of scams targeting Haitian Americans trying to transport relatives from the island, along with scattered reports of the disappearance of children from hospitals across the country.

“We are grateful to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other groups working on the ground to implement serious measures to prevent a devastating wave of human trafficking,” says Gary Haugen, president and CEO of IJM. “Our experience in combating this crime around the globe has taught us that traffickers and pimps head for countries with weak law enforcement. Unfortunately, that is the picture of Haiti today.”

In January 2005, IJM deployed investigators to the tsunami-ravaged region of Southeast Asia where they investigated reports of trafficking in Southern Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and vicinity.

“We found that a strong spike in vulnerability to human trafficking was averted in the wake of the tsunami because public justice systems and security in the region – police and law enforcement officials – went on the alert to address this danger. This is exactly what we don’t have in Haiti,” added Haugen.

Immediate Measures Needed

As chaos continues to reign in the streets, IJM is calling for reinforcements to the United Nations peacekeeping force, most of whose leadership was killed during the earthquake, to effectively protect the vulnerable – especially women and orphaned children.

“There must be focused efforts to investigate and interdict the trafficking and exploitation of children – put into action as soon as possible – as well as a clear way of reporting suspicious activity related to the abuse of children to a central location for investigation,” said IJM’s Vice President of Investigations Jeff Blom. “A hotline or reporting center could be established for this purpose.”

“Additionally, there should be close scrutiny of any individuals or organizations that are involved with caring for, placing or sheltering orphaned children, and a national registration should be established to track children that have been relocated out of the country,” Blom added.

Haitian police have reportedly exhorted the public to take the law into their own hands by killing criminals and looters. IJM joins other voices who call on UN authorities and U.S. troops and Marines on the island to immediately countermand such orders and take action against those who engage in vigilante violence.

Further urgent measures should include securing a facility for detention of those violating Haitian law, in light of the collapse of the national prison and Haiti’s courts. The reconstitution of the Haitian police – and rule of law – must be a top priority of Haiti’s long-term reconstruction.

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About [International Justice Mission](#):

International Justice Mission is a human rights organization that brings immediate relief to victims of sexual exploitation, slavery and violent oppression. A multi-national team of lawyers and law enforcement professionals conduct criminal investigations and collect evidence to relieve victims and bring perpetrators to justice, and IJM social workers secure appropriate aftercare for victims of abuse. IJM was founded by Gary Haugen who was the Officer in Charge of the U.N. investigation into the Rwandan genocide. IJM's multi-national staff works in 14 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America to ensure that the global poor are protected from violent forms of oppression by their countries' own laws. IJM Canada was founded by Jamie McIntosh in 2002 and is located in London, Ont.