

MEDIA RELEASE

Do Disturb – RADIO DOCUMENTARY ON NEWSTALK 106-108FM

BROADCAST DATES:

- **Sunday 5th July, 2020 at 7am**
- **Repeated on Saturday 11th July, 2020 at 9pm**

Newstalk explores modern day slavery, also known as Human Trafficking.

Trafficking of human beings, referred to as modern day slavery, is one of our largest humanitarian crises, with over 40 million adults and children enslaved worldwide. Half of these people are sold into the sex trade, the majority of whom are women and children.

Ireland is not immune to this global catastrophe. The annual Trafficking in Persons Report, published recently by the US Department of State, further downgraded Ireland to ‘Tier 2 – watch list’, criticising the country for major failings in its treatment of human trafficking victims. Human trafficking is a growing criminal activity and justice issue here in Ireland. The need for public awareness is paramount. The statistics are frightening and overwhelming.

How do we respond to such an issue? An Irish charity MECPATHS (Mercy Efforts for Child Protection Against Trafficking with the Hospitality Sector) took one small step. Hotels are known as one of the places where women and children are sex trafficked. MECPATHS is working with hotel groups to deliver training programmes for hotel staff on the indicators and protocol of reporting child sex trafficking. *Do Disturb* is about the importance of increasing public awareness and understanding that no matter how overwhelming this global issue is, there is something we can do to bring about change.

Do Disturb is a Curious Broadcast production funded by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland with the television license fee.

Do Disturb is broadcast on Newstalk 106 – 108FM on **Sunday 5th July, 2020 at 7am and again on Saturday 11th July, 2020 at 9pm**

The programme will be available for download from newstalk.com after the broadcast. For further information, please contact Patricia Baker, Curious Broadcast patricia@curiousbroadcast.com or 087 830 8046.

Note to Editor

Sound and Vision is a funding scheme for television and radio that provides funding in support of high quality programmes on Irish culture, heritage and experience, and programmes to improve adult literacy. The scheme is managed by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

Extracts from the Do Disturb

“When we look at the global number it is estimated that over 40 million people suffer from human trafficking, also referred to as Modern Day Slavery, today. If we think of the times of the transatlantic slave trade which were shocking times, during the two centuries, there was about 15 million people in slavery. So the problem is worse now.

“Trafficking is about being moved, being kept, being harboured, being recruited, for the purpose of exploitation. Which can be forced labour, domestic servitude, forced criminality, sexual exploitation or in some cases, and thankfully this does not happen in Ireland, for people’s organs. So there is so many things that human trafficking is connected to. It is a gender issue, because 70% of the trafficked victims are women. That goes up to 92% when it is sexual exploitation. ...

“If we turn it back to here in Ireland, I have met women who have been trafficked into and within Ireland and used as a commodity. The people controlling them have often been Irish people, the people using the service have been Irish people. .. We have now turned people into a commodity and that generates income and profit to \$150 billion a year.

“We need to open our eyes. Ireland is not achieving international standards on what is a human rights issue, as well as a criminal justice issue. At the moment Ireland has been downgraded at the international standards which means it is not meeting international standard that is expected of a country like Ireland.

“We can talk about human trafficking in a very complex way, we can talk about it in legal terms, talk about it in terms of department failings. But let’s talk about it in human terms. Let’s talk about when I have been around the world and I have met young girls who have been moved to Eritrea, down to the Lake Chad basin and into Libya and kept three months in what is called connecting houses. These 14 / 15 year old girls are raped everyday. Sold for prostitution, sometimes 20 times a day. Then when they have been used enough, and earned enough money for their captures, they are given a seat on a dangerous vessel that then goes across the Mediterranean. They could end up in anywhere in Europe; a brothel in

London, a brothel in Dublin. I meet boys in the same situation, in the same places, who have been promised contracts with big premier league football teams. They are told they are going to earn millions, and they really believed it. But they were also destined for sexual exploitation in Europe.

Kevin Hyland OBE: Kevin is a renowned international specialist in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking. His expertise has been shaped by 30 years experience as an officer in London's Metropolitan Police Service, notably, as head of the Human Trafficking Unit. In 2014 Kevin was appointed as the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. In 2015 Kevin was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.), acknowledging his outstanding service in combating human trafficking.

"There is evidence of human trafficking occurring in every village, in every town across the island of Ireland. And I don't think we know exactly how prevalent it is, because it is very much a hidden crime.

"I know from working overseas that human trafficking and child trafficking is on the rise. It is one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world. I would say that is our number one obstacle to overcome, is to overcome the perceived idea that human and child trafficking is something that happens overseas and not here in Ireland.

Ann Mara, Education Manager, MECPATHS

"Ireland is not immune to it. It is about the awareness, it is about having the conversations. Maybe it is an Irish thing; that we do not like to talk about the elephant in the room. But we need to talk about it.

"Hospitality staff are among those frontline professionals most likely to encounter a victim of child trafficking. From international reports it has been very clearly outlined that hotels can be the second most popular destination for a trafficker to bring a victim of trafficking. There is the privacy, the anonymity. In Europe over 83,000 people are identified as victims of trafficking in hotels. In Ireland we have positioned ourselves as preventative rather than reactive. Our educational programs hotel staff to be prepared rather than to be the institutional responders that we have seen in the past. It is not like we have not experienced this in Ireland before, those curtains need to be twitched a little bit more in Ireland. The

conversations need to be had.

JP O'Sullivan, Networks and Communications Manager, MECPATHS

"This became a safe house. The Gardaí would do a raid, I would be informed, and asked would I have a place tonight for a girl. They would come from Monaghan, Sligo. We would prepare a place for them. They would come, stricken, eyes down, terrified. Sit on the chair there, I would give her a cup of tea.

"She was only 14, picked up off the streets. A kid, I had to bring her to the doctor, gynecology, because of the abuse and rape she withstood from her traffickers. She will never had children.

Sister Mary Ryan, Co Founder of MECPATHS

"I am a United Nations' definition, but not what Irish people would expect or imagine when they think of a trafficked person. I was trafficked by my father when I was a very young child, my first memory of being trafficked was when I was 4, I was in my school uniform.

"Interfere. Get stuck in there, be the noisy ol' one. That would have made a difference in my case. If one person had stood up for me and said 'this child matters enough to be removed from a situation where she is being abused on a daily basis'. That would have changed my life immeasurably. And it never happened. And people knew.

Hazel Larkin, Writer, teacher, activist.

Ends.