

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 3, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary, U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We are writing to encourage you and the State Department to continue to do everything possible to combat human trafficking. This reprehensible criminal industry has exploited millions of men, women, and children across the world, and it is our duty as a beacon of freedom to protect the dignity of the most vulnerable populations. We urge you to continue to engage directly with our global partners in ending this deeply harmful practice.

Nowhere is the urgency to stop this practice felt more than in countries experiencing the effects of growing Syrian refugee populations. Lebanon hosts approximately 1 million registered refugees, which means that one in five people in the country is now a refugee. Jordan hosts the largest Syrian refugee camp in the world, with a large enough population to make it the country's ninth largest city; and Turkey is now host to over 4 million refugees, 90 percent of which live outside of camps. The fragility of the situation in these countries has led to the exponential growth of the threat of human trafficking activity.

This is exemplified in the horrific account of a sex trafficking operation that was broken up by Lebanese authorities earlier this year, where 75 Syrian women were being held, some for over two years, and forced into sex slavery. Trafficking conditions in Jordan and Turkey are similar to other countries in the region. Women and girls in particular are targeted for domestic servitude as well as sex trafficking in nightclubs and bars, and in some instances, being sold for temporary or "summer" marriages through online forums to men in other countries. In Turkey, refugees are paying traffickers for passage to Europe, making the Syrian migration a billion-dollar enterprise for traffickers.

While we applaud the efforts of the Jordanian and Lebanese governments in updating their human trafficking laws in 2009 and 2011 respectively, and new trafficking regulations put in place this year by the Turkish government, there is still a long road ahead in curbing this deplorable enterprise. So far, there have been few trafficking convictions since the implementation of these laws. Too often, victims of trafficking – particularly sex trafficking – are being picked up by law enforcement and detained as criminals, despite the new laws in place.

Human trafficking in this region is also a national security issue. Terrorist organizations like ISIS continue to kidnap individuals, particularly women and young girls, and sell them into marriages and sex slavery to fighters. The human trafficking industry profits number in the billions each year, contributing to dangerous organizations like ISIS, Hezbollah, and Jabhat Fatah al-Sham that threaten the safety of millions of Americans at home and abroad. Trafficking

in this region is used to humiliate minority religious groups, promotes rape and forced sex slavery as a tool of war, and is used to extort families for ransom. It is estimated that the practice trafficking of refugees to Europe alone has generated over \$320 million for ISIS and other jihadist groups in the region.

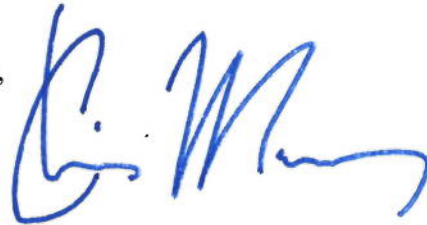
We are therefore writing to urge you to work directly with these governments in educating their law enforcement officials, judges, and security forces on how to identify, investigate, and prosecute human trafficking operations. We would advise you to take specific, direct action with their governments, and the NGOs operating within their borders, to assist in monitoring and curbing the growing threat of trafficking operations among the most vulnerable displaced Syrians. We must do everything in our power to protect these populations that have faced incomprehensible violence and upheaval, support the governments that are being affected by enormous increases in population, and end the dangerous practice of trafficking.

It is imperative that we continue to strengthen our relationship with the Jordanian, Lebanese, and Turkish governments in order to end the practice of human trafficking among the growing refugee population. Complacency and inaction are no longer an option in this increasingly dangerous region. We must ensure that human trafficking does not continue, so that we may ensure the safety of millions of men, women, and children as well as halting an inhumane practice that provides funding for terrorist organizations. We appreciate your efforts and we look forward to seeing your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Shelley Moore Capito  
United States Senator



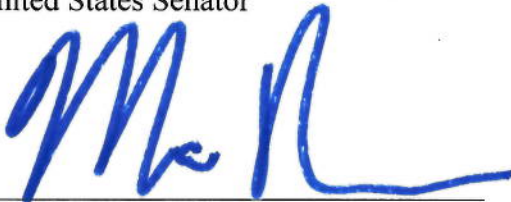
Chris Murphy  
United States Senator



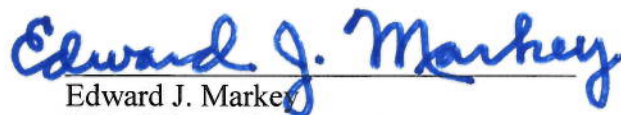
Bill Cassidy  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



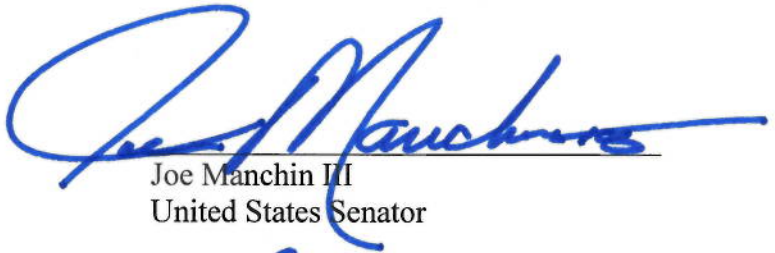
Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



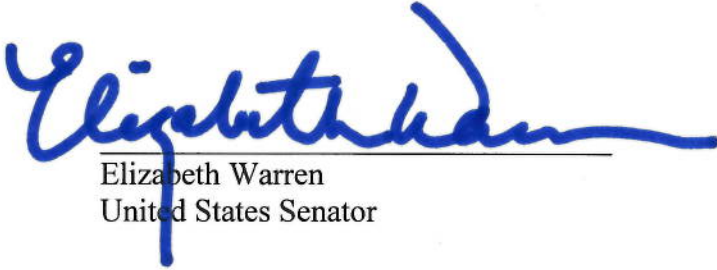
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



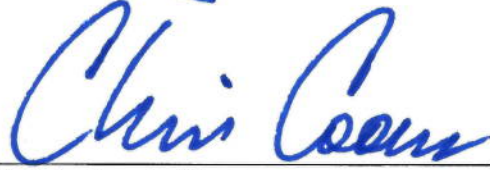
Rob Portman  
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator