

Dear Christine,

Thank you for your invitation to submit evidence in relation to the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill.

NICCOSA does not wish to comment in detail on the content of the legislation at this stage.

We have already expressed our general support for the Bill in a letter to MLAs. Please see below.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Nicola

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**From:** Marie Purcell  
**Sent:** 08 October 2013 14:25  
**To:** Marie Purcell  
**Subject:** Cardinal Brady's letter to members of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly concerning the 'Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill'



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**Press Release – Tuesday 8 October 2013 - Immediate**  
**Attn: Newsdesks, Photodesks and Religious Affairs Correspondents**

**Cardinal Brady's letter to members of the Northern  
Ireland Legislative Assembly concerning the *Human  
Trafficking and Exploitation Bill***

Dear Member of the Legislative Assembly,

Re: The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill.

I am writing to you as chair of the Northern Ireland Catholic Council on Social Affairs (NICCOSA), the council comprising women and men with wide ranging experience in issues of social justice and pastoral care who provide advice and support to the Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland on social issues.

At the most recent meeting of NICCOSA, members gave detailed consideration to the *Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill* sponsored by Lord Morrow of the Democratic Unionist Party which is scheduled for discussion by the Northern Ireland Assembly in coming days.

At this meeting, support for the Bill and its provisions was unanimous. It was also agreed that I would write to you and to all MLA's on behalf of the members of NICCOSA to encourage your support for this Bill.

Human trafficking, in its many forms, is one of the most serious forms of injustice in our society. It is a crime that robs its victims, not only of their basic rights and freedoms, but of their very dignity as persons.

The Private Member's Bill from Lord Morrow, currently before the Northern Ireland Assembly provides you, as one of our elected representatives, with a crucial opportunity to make Northern Ireland a safer place for those vulnerable to, or victims of, the crime of human trafficking. In addition to ensuring adequate support is available to those who have been the victims of trafficking, we believe it is vital that robust legislation tackling the demand for trafficked persons, whether as illegal and poorly treated labour or for sexual exploitation, is essential.

A particular area of concern is addressing the demand for 'sexual services'. The majority of those rescued from situations of human trafficking in Northern Ireland to date have been victims of sexual exploitation. Representatives of the Catholic Church, including those who work voluntarily to provide protection, care and support to those who have been trafficked and exploited, have previously emphasised the need for legislation on prostitution and the purchase of 'sexual services' in both jurisdictions in the island of Ireland. Last year, having listened to those from the Church who work with the victims of prostitution and human trafficking, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a statement in which they pointed out that: "All prostitution, even in cases where the individual has not been a victim of trafficking, reduces the human being to a commodity that can be bought and sold. It is damaging for those affected and for society as a whole. Criminalisation of the purchase of 'sexual services' would ensure that An Garda Síochána and the PSNI are empowered to take action to stop and prevent the exploitation of vulnerable people through prostitution. In addition, cooperation across Government departments is required in order to develop targeted 'exit strategies' to assist and support people wishing to leave prostitution, including access to health care, education and employment."

With the women and men of NICCOSA, the Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland repeat this call and encourage you to give your full support for the Bill sponsored by Lord Morrow and to addressing the heinous and deplorable crime of human trafficking and exploitation.

With every good wish,

Cardinal Seán Brady  
Archbishop of Armagh  
Chair, Northern Ireland Catholic Council on Social Affairs

**ENDS**

#### **Notes to Editors**

- To access the text of the 2012 bishops' statement *Legislation on prostitution and human trafficking in the North and South* please see <http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2012/09/26/autumn-2012-general-meeting-irish-catholic-bishops-conference/>
- The list of members of NICOSSA is available on <http://www.catholicbishops.ie/niccosa/>

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