



## Press Release

18 February 2010

**For immediate Release**

### **AFRUCA Raises Concern Over the Growth in the Trafficking of Persons from Africa to the UK**

**AFRUCA** -Africans Unite Against Child Abuse has expressed a major concern over the growing spate of human trafficking from Africa to the UK and is calling for urgent action to address the problem.

Recently released figures by the UK Human Trafficking Centre show that between April and December 2009 alone, over 200 Africans were referred to the agency by charities and others as victims of human trafficking. Most of them, including children, are from Nigeria which had 89 victims, Sierra Leone with 13 victims, Kenya with 5 victims, Ghana with 3 victims, Zimbabwe with 16 victims, Eritrea with 5 victims, Uganda with 14 victims, Somalia with 5 victims, and Sudan with 1 victim. Most of the victims had been exploited as sex slaves, for domestic servitude or used to claim government benefits.

Of great concern is the growing number of victims who are made to undertake oath rituals as a cruel form of coercion and subjugation by traffickers. Many victims are compelled to take oaths of allegiance, secrecy and confidentiality to bind them to their traffickers, ensure compliance and guarantee the repayment of the huge sums of money claimed to be owed for transporting them to Europe and for their upkeep. Victims, fearful of the repercussions of the oath taken are compelled to endure their suffering in silence without recourse to help and support. The fear of Juju makes it extremely difficult for agencies to support victims and for UK authorities to investigate, prosecute and bring suspected traffickers to justice.

“The figure released by the UK Human Trafficking Centre reveals just the tip of the iceberg. We are certain that many more victims are trapped in exploitative and abusive situations and have no access to help so they can escape from their traffickers and seek justice”, said Debbie Ariyo, AFRUCA Director.

Cherifa Atoussi, Anti Child Trafficking Officer at AFRUCA said: “Most victims are trafficked by fellow Africans, in many cases by people they know, sometimes by their own relatives. They are exploited, abused and brutalised by fellow Africans in what is a multibillion dollar transnational criminal enterprise. Despite the preponderance of such occurrences, the UK African community remains largely ignorant of the reality and severity of this issue”.

As an immediate response, AFRUCA is hosting a community meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2010 at the House of Commons, London. Chaired by the MP Emily Thornberry, the event aims to generate awareness through getting the African community to engage in open debate and discussion on their role as a part of the solution to this problem.

“Working on the premise that ‘awareness is half the battle’, we want the community to take a united stand against trafficking so that there will be no place for traffickers to operate and hide. That is why we are launching a new Facebook campaign: “One Million Africans Against Human Trafficking” at the event”, Cherifa Atoussi said.

“While Africans in the UK tighten relationships in and between communities to guard against such occurrences, it is necessary that Africans living in source countries increase their personal efforts and campaign tirelessly for their governments to increase effort on a national scale to combat the scourge of human trafficking. It is only through impassioned commitment and cooperation at both ends, the UK and Africa, that we will achieve such results”, she added.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. AFRUCA – Africans Unite Against Child Abuse is the premier charity promoting the rights and welfare of African children in the UK and working exclusively with victims of child trafficking from Africa.
2. The UK Human Trafficking Centre is the UK government’s multi-agency centre that provides a central point for the development of expertise and cooperation in relation to the trafficking of human beings.
3. The “Trafficking of African Children to the UK: The New Slavery” event will hold at 6:00pm on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February at the House of Commons, Portcullis House. The event will chaired by Emily Thornberry, MP for Islington and Finsbury, and will feature speakers including Nick Kinsella, Chief Executive of the UK Human Trafficking Centre, Debbie Ariyo, Executive Director of AFRUCA, Priscilla Nyathi, Executive Director of Girl Child International and Andy Desmond, Detective at the Metropolitan Police Service Human Trafficking Team.
4. For further information about AFRUCA and its work with children, please visit our website at [www.afruca.org](http://www.afruca.org)
5. For further information about AFRUCA’s event on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February and the Facebook “One Million Africans Against Human Trafficking” campaign, please contact Cherifa Atoussi on 0844 6608611 or email [cherifa@afruca.org](mailto:cherifa@afruca.org).