**The Trafficking of Human Beings: fighting slavery in the new millennium**

*Saturday 25 October, Museo dell’Ara Pacis – Sala Convegni - Lungotevere in Augusta*

**Mirta Da Prà** of Gruppo Abele introduced some key words (poverty, debt, threat, trip...) concerning human trafficking. She highlighted that it pivots around the exploitation of the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children coming from countries in structural crisis, with weak economic and political systems. In Italy alone, 61 different nationalities exist. Exploiters (individuals or criminal groups) used to be nationals of the victims, with contacts in the crossed and target countries' crime groups. They still have connections with the origin country, where they easily control the trafficking victims' families. In fact, threats of retaliation against family members can boost the violent victim-exploiter relationship. In many cases, such relationship becomes ambiguous, as victims do not perceive themselves as such and, instead, they almost feel thankful to those who allowed them to reach a country where they have found a job to feed their faraway families.

When women fall in the trafficking webs, they are often sexually exploited and forced into prostitution. Young men are employed in heavy jobs, often under unstable living and working conditions; children and disabled people (sometimes mutilated by the exploiters on purpose) are forced to beg or to be involved in the trafficking of human organs. Children are often sold on the black adoption market.

Among the proposals for a more effective fight against Human Trafficking: a higher presence by those associations that deal with victim assistance and a multilateral involvement by many ministries (Education, Economy, Labour), as prevention and tackling crime bosses’ actions should become our priority.

**Glynn Ranking**, Anti-Human Trafficking Specialist, describes an even broader picture of traffickers and the objectives of Human Trafficking. He adds domestic servitude, the use of children as soldiers, and the use of migrants in drug trafficking (the so-called *mulas*) or in the black market (illegal hiring, constructions, fisheries) to the diverse forms of exploitation of human trafficking victims by organised crime groups now acting at the transnational level. The border-crossing dimension of human trafficking and smuggling requires international cooperation and a review of the legal framework by those countries that did not adopt *ad-hoc* domestic laws. Moreover, the decrease in the demand for a low-cost workforce would help reducing the illegal flow of migrants, a very threat-prone category.

**Rev. Giancarlo Perego**, director of Migrantes, underlines that cheating and debt feature migrations. The illegal status of migrants, during their journey and everyday life, is the basis of their exploitation. We need to respond to new forms of slavery with new forms of protection. Here a few proposals: disseminating information on the issue, harmonising local actions with round tables and MoUs, focusing any activity to tackle this phenomenon on the preservation of human life and dignity, {creating prevention pathways that not only consider assistance}, increasing collaboration among the Police, the Courts and the Civil Society, also focusing on the individual story of migrants.

Some participants to this seminar reported many examples of activities related to the fight against the trafficking of human beings and providing support to victims. Among them, Napoli Nord Court Prosecutor Diana Russo, who deals with trafficking, marginalisation and violence involving minors. Children are usually treated as goods and they don't perceive themselves as victims. For them, it is crucial to create a support network calling upon school and family.

**Filippo Carchedi**, FLAI CGIL, centered his speech on the monitoring of illegal hiring and agro-mafias in rural Italy. These phenomena are most common not only in Southern Italy. We must pay special attention to them to better fight exploitation and slavery that affect workers.

**Alessandro Cobianchi**, ARCI, shared his travel memories from a trip to Romania and collaboration with the Parada association. He underlines the importance of {living one's neighbourhood} to make everyone feel part of a community that cares about its members, to prevent the exploitation of those who are forced to migrate, often becoming a victim of trafficking. His proposal for a better countering of the issue focuses on the training of policemen, public servants, and association members.

Finally, the Eritrean expert **Alganesc Fessaha** of Gandhi NGO, told us, with images, the work done by her association. For the last 7 years, it has been fighting for the liberation of migrants forced to stay in unwelcoming areas such as the Sinai desert, where they are kept, maltreated and tortured by the Bedouins. The Bedouins traffic human beings to blackmail their families in Eritrea, or to sell them as slaves. The Ghandi Association has been denouncing for years the role of traffickers and their complicity in what seems to be one of the most flourishing human organ (kidneys and corneas) markets of the present age. Starting from the Sinai desert, this trafficking allows international organised crime to collect more wealth and rich organ buyers to achieve a new life at the expense of young migrants (mainly from Erithrea, but also from other places) fleeing from their countries.