

1st November 2019

117/2019

## THE REFORM ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION

The Archdiocese of Malta, through the Justice & Peace Commission and Caritas Malta, have participated in the presentation of a joint submission to the Maltese Government, on the proposed reform for the legalisation of prostitution and human trafficking.

The joint submission, endorsed by several organisations, speaks of three main goals that are complementary and cannot be enacted separately, essential for the human dignity of the victims to be safeguarded.

1. **To decriminalise those who are prostituted** - Conscious of the fact that most sex workers are caught up in prostitution against their will and are the main victims of a broken system which enslaves them. They should not be criminalised or victimised further for the abuse they endure.
2. **Make buying sex a criminal offence** - Buying sex is not like buying a service. It is an exploitation of other human beings where the human person is reduced to an object to satisfy one's desires. This degrading transaction is a form of abuse in itself and participating in it often aids and abets other forms of criminality such as human trafficking and slavery.
3. **Create exit services** - Many who are caught up in this industry, are not able to leave because of fear, and of the lack of opportunities for rehabilitation. A comprehensive range of legal, health, financial, educational and social services needs to be offered to support those in prostitution, enable them to recover from their abuse and build a life outside it.

This needs to be accompanied with the recognition that prostitution is a form of violence and violence can never be regulated or legalised, it can only be outlawed. The commission insists that this premise needs to light the whole process and that prostitution cannot be considered like any other lucrative industry.

The two Church entities urge the government to hear the concerns enunciated in this document and integrate these proposals in the new legislation being drafted. It is of utmost importance that the state prioritises the human person, in particular those who find themselves in a vulnerable position prone to exploitation and abuse. This principle should come before any possible economic gain or the demands of particular industries.