



Rep. Tom Emmer on House Committee Hearing

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****COMMITTEE CHAIR:**

** recognize Mr. Emmer.

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** Thank you Mr. Chair and also Ranking Member Bass for holding this important hearing. I can think of no better place than this subcommittee when it comes to highlighting the atrocious crime of human trafficking. You should both be commended for your leadership on this issue. When Boko Haram terrorists kidnapped hundreds of teenage girls with the intent of selling them off into slavery, the offense sparked international outrage and inspired action here in the halls of Congress. I want to thank the Ranking Member and Robin Kelly from this committee as well as Congresswoman Jackson Lee and Wilson for their persistence and leadership on that front. Unfortunately, not all trafficking cases make the international news. Every day children across the world are taken from their family, from their homes, and sold and enslaved. Forced into labor and prostitution against their will. As a father of seven children myself, I cannot begin to fathom the agony their families must be experiencing. The United States, to our collective shame, is not immune to this tragedy. In America alone, hundreds of thousands are trafficked in by transnational drug cartels and criminal organizations. The Justice Department estimates that there are more than 200,000 children across the U.S. that are, quote, at risk of trafficking. Human trafficking is nearly a \$30 billion per year criminal enterprise with thousands of innocent children trafficked annually. I'm pleased that Congress, in coordination with the Obama administration, has made great strides in combating trafficking. But there's still much work to be done to help victims improve prosecutions and prevent men, women, and children from being targeted by terrorists. This body must do everything within its power and authority to stay one step ahead of those involved in these crimes against humanity. As a Congress, we must prioritize funding to support NGOs such as the ones before us today, nonprofits, and state and federal prosecutors to see the best practices and methods of prevention, protection, and prosecution. One way we can combat trafficking is through safe harbor laws that have been instituted across the country, including in my home state of Minnesota. By protecting victims and assisting prosecutors, by pursuing safe harbor laws at the national level, we can better respond to this national crisis. The words spoken here today cannot be merely symbolic gestures. They must be followed by action and constant vigilance. Our children deserve nothing less. I want to thank our witnesses and the concerned citizens in attendance for your continued efforts in this fight, and with that I yield back Mr. Chair.

****COMMITTEE CHAIR:**

** Thank you very much Mr. Hammer.



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