

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE DELEGATES OF THE INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF PENAL LAW**

Hall of Popes

23 October 2014

[Link](#)

[...] a) Regarding the crime of human trafficking

Enslaving people, human trafficking and war crimes are recognized as crimes against humanity, both by international law and by many national laws. It is a crime against humanity. And since it is not possible to commit so complex a crime as human trafficking without the complicity, by action or omission, of States, it is evident that, when efforts to prevent and combat this phenomenon are insufficient, we are again facing a crime against humanity. Moreover, should it happen that person who is appointed to protect people and guarantee their freedom, instead becomes an accomplice of those who trade in human beings, then, in such cases, the States are responsible before their citizens and before the International Community.

Figures state that a billion people are trapped in absolute poverty. One-and-a-half billion people do not have access to sanitation services, to potable water, to electricity, to elementary education or to the healthcare system, and must endure economic hardship inconsistent with a dignified life (2014 Human Development Report, UNPD). Although the total number of people in this situation has decreased in recent years, their vulnerability has increased, due to the increased difficulties they have to face in order to emerge from that situation. This is the result of the ever growing number of people living in war stricken countries. In 2012 alone, 45 million people were forced to flee due to situations of violence or persecution; of these, 15 million are refugees, the highest figure in 18 years. Seventy percent of these people are women. Additionally, it is estimated that, worldwide, seven out of ten who die of starvation are women and children (United Nations Fund for Women, UNIFEM).[...]