



# Resource for the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition – August 2024

On the night of 22 to 23 August 1791, in Saint Domingue, today the Republic of Haiti, the beginning of the uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade occurred.

Against this background, the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is commemorated on 23 August each year. It was first celebrated in several countries, particularly Haiti (23 August 1998) and Gorée Island in Senegal (23 August 1999).

The following resource is for congregations seeking to include some reference to the International Day in their service on Sunday 18 August or 25 August.

The International Day is intended to inscribe the tragedy of the slave trade in the memory of all peoples. It should offer an opportunity for collective consideration of the historical causes, the methods and the consequences of the tragedy of slavery and human trafficking.

The colonial legacy of slavery still makes its ripples felt in our world today. Slavery imposed by imperial empires stripped other parts of the world of valuable resources and materially impoverished them. Those countries subject to conquest and abuse for hundreds of years have still not been able to recover. As an egregious example, when Haiti was able to abolish slavery in 1825, the French Government demanded reparations for the loss of the enslaved people as property under threat of military invasion. The Haitian people were compelled to make reparation payments to France until 1950, holding back development in Haiti. Successive governments of Haiti have sought repayment of the reparations from France, which are conservatively estimated to be worth \$50 billion in today's terms. Their pleas have been disregarded.

None of us alive today are responsible for the period of colonisation and enslavement, but we have inherited the benefits that flowed from the exploitation and abuse perpetrated by those who ran the British Empire. Our responsibility is to stand in solidarity with those still suffering from the legacy of the colonial era and seek a socially just world for everyone. We should embrace the opportunity to do so.

## William Wilberforce Day – 24 August



In addition to the International Day, William Wilberforce Day is celebrated on 24 August. William Wilberforce was born on 24 August 1759 in the British city of Hull, in the county of East Riding of Yorkshire. He made his way to the House of Commons at the young age of 21, where he served for 45 years.

William Wilberforce's conversion to evangelical Christianity in 1784 inspired his abolitionist views. He was known for using his remarkable debate and oration skills to highlight the cruelty of slavery. He pioneered the movement to end Britain's slave trade and slave emancipation. Wilberforce also helped form the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, also known as the Anti-Slavery Society, in 1787. He became part of and led a Christian missionary and abolitionist group that worked for his liberal causes.

In 1789, Wilberforce introduced 12 resolutions against the slave trade. However, none of these were successful. He was not disheartened and put forward another motion in 1791, which did not succeed either. He put together a compromise measure in 1792 that allowed the gradual

abolition of the slave trade. Finally, his 1807 legislation made slave trading illegal in Britain. However, it did not free those who were already enslaved.

Wilberforce and Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton started their fight for the immediate emancipation of all enslaved people in 1821. In 1823, Wilberforce helped form the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions and took over as its vice president. On July 26, 1833, three days before his death, the Slavery Abolition Act was passed. This outlawed slavery in the British Empire over a period of time.

## Prayer Resources

Below are possible prayer resources you might use in a service that remembers the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition or William Wilberforce Day.

## Prayer of Gathering

Spirit of God, Holy God, Giver of life...

Anoint us to be a people after your choice  
Yoked to break yokes, sighted to bring sight  
Loved to share your transformative love  
Healed to be agents of healing  
Struggle to bring liberation to those in bondage.

Spirit of God, Holy God, Giver of life...

Enable us to restore the dignity of children and women  
Who are subject to violence against them  
Who are treated as objects rather than human beings  
Whose tears go unseen  
Whose cries go unheard.

## Prayer of Confession

You asked for our hands  
so that you may use them for your purpose.  
We gave them for a moment,  
then withdrew them, for the work was hard.  
Lord, forgive us.

### Lord, forgive us our sins.

You asked for our mouths to speak out against injustice.  
We gave a whisper that we might not be accused.  
Lord, forgive us.

### Lord, forgive us our sins.

You asked for our eyes to see the pain of poverty.  
We closed them because we did not want to see them.  
Lord, forgive us.

### Lord, forgive us our sins.

Lord, forgive our calculated efforts to serve you,  
only when it is convenient for us to do so,  
only in places where it is safe to do so,  
and only with those who make it easy to do so.  
Lord, forgive us.

### Lord, forgive us our sins.

## Declaration of Forgiveness

Our Lord forgives us,

renews us,  
and sends us out  
as a usable instrument  
that we might take seriously  
the meaning of the cross.

### Thanks be to God.

Amen

## Prayer of Affirmation

Lord, we affirm that you have created each of us in your image. We confess that we have allowed this image to be distorted in the lives of many children, women and men who are trafficked both across the borders and within, forced for labour and subject to exploitation, losing the right to live a whole life. A life of dignity.

**Leader:** I have seen the affliction of my people.

I have heard their cry.

I know their suffering,

I have come to deliver them. (Adapted from Exodus 3:7)

**All: We want justice and peace to rule the world.**

**Amen!**

**Leader:** I called aloud, but there is no justice. (Job 19:7b)

Let us all open our eyes to see the injustices inflicted upon the innocent and the vulnerable.

Let us learn that no person is free unless all are free, to be embraced by your freedom.

**All: Lord, make us eager for justice, vanguards for freedom, protectors of dignity.**

**Give us courage.**

**To walk with you,**

**To speak for the voiceless,**

**To stand for the oppressed.**

## Dedication

We dedicate ourselves to your way of justice and kindness as we humbly walk with you, our Lord and our God.

## Responsive Prayer

**Leader:** Lord of all, we claim your justice, mercy, compassion, comfort and freedom for the millions affected by human trafficking in our world today. For the men, women and children enslaved by fear, torture, dependency, entrapment and bonded labour, we ask for you to intervene with righteousness and grace.

**All: God of all that is good, give freedom to the captives and restore justice to your world.**

**Leader:** Lord, for the victims who are lured, trapped and exploited, we pray for comfort for their pain, healing for their hurts, courage to speak out against their oppressors and for restorative hope for those who have been rescued and those yet to be rescued.

**All: Holy Spirit, we ask you to heal and restore 'the victims' with your transforming power.**

**Leader:** God of Justice, we pray for those that enslave: the trafficker and abuser, the enslaver and unjust 'employer'. We ask you to stir them with your voice of justice and conscience of goodness. Speak to them in dreams, thoughts, and words.

**All: Jesus the Redeemer, we pray for the hearts and minds of the oppressors: traffickers and consumers.**

**Leader:** Lord of hope, we claim your light for the darkest situations. Guide and equip those who care and intervene for victims. Give wisdom and insight to those who pursue, prosecute and preside over cases of trafficking and the traffickers.

**All: Living hope, we claim you for all that we need to be and do to stop human trafficking and modern slavery. Help us to be fervent in prayer and action.**

**Leader:** Lord of all, we want to see your kingdom come

and your will be done. We know that trafficking and slavery are against your very nature, and we pray for a real end to this horrific abuse.

**All: God of all that is good, help us to be people of prayer and action and people who speak your truth and justice into the world around us. Help us to use our time, our resources and our energy to overcome, by your power, the evil that is human trafficking and modern slavery.**

**We passionately say AMEN.**

(Prayer by the Salvation Army UK)

## Taking Action

Modern slavery remains a significant global problem, being used in the production of some of the goods that are imported into Australia. Goods produced with modern slavery gain a competitive price advantage over products produced where the people making the goods have decent wages and conditions.

For example, the US-based Outlaw Ocean Project has gathered evidence that Australian retailers and food distributors, including Woolworths, Superior Foods, Oceanic Food, and Coles, are selling seafood products caught or processed by Chinese companies that routinely use forced labour to process seafood.

Forced labor from China's Xinjiang province is being used extensively in the country's seafood industry. The Chinese government has been forcefully transferring thousands of ethnic minorities over 3,000 km across the country to work in Shandong province, the country's most important fishing and seafood processing hub, in factories that supply hundreds of restaurants, grocers, and food service companies in the US, Europe, and Australia.



ABOLISH  
SLAVERY  
EVERY-  
WHERE,  
FOREVER





## What you can do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

Ten large seafood companies in Shandong have received at least 1,300 Uyghurs<sup>1</sup> and other Muslim minorities from forced labour transfer programs out of Xinjiang since 2018.

In 2018, the Australian Parliament passed the Modern Slavery Act. The law requires businesses and other entities with over \$100 million in revenue to produce a report stating their actions to address the risks of modern slavery in the goods and services they purchase. The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania has produced annual reports under the law.

However, there is more the Australian Parliament could do to catch up with other governments' efforts to stamp out modern slavery. For example, Section 307 of the US Tariff Act 1930 prohibits importing goods produced in any foreign country by forced labour. Under the law, the US Customs and Border Protection agency can seize goods at the border to the US and refuse to allow them entry into the US where there is reasonable evidence the goods were produced with forced labour. By using their 'withhold release orders', the US Customs and Border Protection agency has been able to pressure companies to address modern slavery in goods they are producing or purchasing. In the most recent examples, the use of 'withhold release orders' has forced Malaysian factories producing rubber gloves to end the use of forced labour and debt bondage of workers in their factories. It has also forced corporations producing solar panels to stop relying on forced labour in China to produce cheaper panels sold in the US.

The Australian Government could also follow the lead of the US, European and Indian Governments and make customs data transparent. Customs data reveals which businesses are involved in producing goods imported into Australia. Making key data about imported products publicly available would improve Australian stakeholders' capacity to detect where Australian importers are dealing with suppliers where there is modern slavery. Transparency in customs data would have a deterrent impact on the risks Australian importers are willing to take in dealing with suppliers where there is a significant risk of human trafficking or forced labour being present, out of concern of reputational risk

### **The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP**

Attorney General  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

*Salutation: Dear Minister*

### **Senator the Hon. Don Farrell**

Minister for Trade and Tourism  
PO Box 6100  
Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

*Salutation: Dear Minister*

### **Senator the Hon. Penny Wong**

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

*Salutation: Dear Minister*

### **The Hon. Clare O'Neil MP**

Minister for Home Affairs  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

*Salutation: Dear Minister*

Points to make in your letter:

Express deep concern that forced labour is still used to produce goods imported into Australia.

- Thank the Australian Government for the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act and for establishing an Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner. However, given the reports of goods being produced by modern slavery entering Australia, request that the Australian Government take further action.
- Ask that the Australian Government follow the US and introduce a law that will allow the Australian Border Force to seize goods before they enter Australia where there is strong evidence the goods have been produced through modern slavery.
- Ask that the Australian Government set up an investigative body with the Australian Border Force dedicated to investigating likely cases of the importation of goods produced with the involvement of modern slavery. Such a section could be modelled on the Forced Labor Division in the US Customs and Border Protection.
- Ask the Australian Government to take the necessary actions to allow importation data from the Australian Government's Integrated Cargo System (ICS) to be publicly accessible to help identify Australian importers sourcing goods from businesses overseas involved in modern slavery. Point out that the United States, the EU, and India have made such data publicly available with no significant negative impacts on businesses in their jurisdictions operating lawfully.