

## Prayer for July 30, 2025 – World Day Against Trafficking in Persons \*



**Leader:** The theme of this 2025 UN Day is ***“Human trafficking is Organized Crime – End the Exploitation”***. This year’s campaign highlights the vital role of law enforcement and the criminal justice system in dismantling organized trafficking networks while ensuring a victim-centred approach.

We come as individuals and in community to pray, because we believe and know that exploitation is a crime and must end. We believe and know that our God desires that ***all*** may have life and have it to the full.

*Let us pause for a moment to be in touch with our God and God’s desire that all my have LIFE!*

**Reader One: Let us pray together:** God of life, we come with open hearts and join with you in the desire that human trafficking ends. We keep before us in this time of prayer, the faces and the stories of survivors and pray that our hearts are stirred again, to reach out in love with a renewed commitment to action. We ask this in the name of the One who is Life! Amen.

**Leader:** So much has been done to legislate and to prosecute, but there is still a very long way in many countries and globally to bring justice and stop exploitation. The whole situation involves human beings – from the ones who exploit to the survivor to the law enforcers. Today we will take time to listen to words of a prosecutor, Filistas Shikerete, Deputy Prosecutor General in Namibia. As you listen to some of her experience, be in touch with how you are reacting and feeling....



**Reader Two:**

Filistas says: “Someone has to do it”: the dangerous mission of prosecuting traffickers and smugglers. She was referring to the threats she had encountered in her 16 years of work prosecuting cases of human trafficking and migrant smuggling and confronting transnational criminal networks. How it all began “I ended up working on trafficking and smuggling because of the passion I had – the realization that I can make a difference for others.” This realization came during a trial early in Shikerete’s career, which involved rape and murder. Working closely with the victim’s grieving family, she saw how the conviction of the perpetrator brought them a sense of closure and peace of mind. “The words they said to me stuck with me for life. They referred to our unit as angels on Earth.” “You can handle these crimes for years, but one day, a case hits you so hard.” Shikerete recounted prosecuting a migrant smuggler, a woman from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2018-2019. The woman settled down in Namibia

and soon found a job as an occasional court interpreter, which enabled her to befriend police officers and people from the local community and establish herself as a trusted figure. “Everybody knew who she was, and they just adored her.” Before long, the woman was leveraging this trust to run a migrant smuggling ring, deceiving desperate individuals from the DRC with promises of a better life abroad, including in Canada. The smuggler even claimed to work for the United Nations. “She would send them pictures of her posing between police officers at court, so they trusted her.” One witness in the smuggler’s case described enduring brutal violence by rebels in the DRC before seeking refuge through the smuggling network: eight months pregnant, she was raped and stabbed in the stomach. Others experienced similar atrocities. Some of the migrants sold their last possessions to pay for the journey to Namibia, only to find that the voyage to Canada would never materialize. The smuggler denied receiving any money.

The police initially hesitated to investigate because of the woman’s respected status. The witnesses were terrified of her, convinced that she was a powerful person. These beliefs were reinforced after several people, including two witnesses and the wife of the investigating officer, died of natural causes during the trial. But people thought the woman’s criminal organization was killing off the witnesses. “She once remarked in court that anyone testifying against her would die one by one.” The smuggler was eventually convicted, but the emotional toll on Shikerete remained. “During the trial, I received threats.” One day, the police discovered a petrol-soaked cloth near the prosecutor’s car tyres. Security was increased, but Shikerete did not feel safe. She had to use her family and relatives’ cars, stay in their homes for several weeks and change her route to work every day. “I had nightmares. I dreamt of my relatives being attacked.” Even after the smuggler’s sentencing, Shikerete remained wary of potential retaliation, as this was not the first time she was threatened.

***Pause to reflect.....***

**Reader Three:** Let us listen to more of Shikerete’s words: “Trafficking victims and smuggled migrants are not everyday victims. In the worst cases, these people are truly broken, shattered, destroyed,” “What is significant about prosecuting human trafficking and migrant smuggling is that you step in as the voice for the voiceless, helping them regain what has been taken from them.” Prosecutors like Shikerete work beyond the courtroom, collaborating with police, social workers, and other relevant actors to support victims, defend their rights and prevent re-traumatization. “As a prosecutor, you are in such a powerful position. You can have a big impact if you just make use of that platform that you have been given.” “When you deal with these crimes daily, they can become routine. But we must remind ourselves that it’s not just another case – it’s someone’s life, dignity and future.” Speaking about UNODC’s efforts, Shikerete noted that “training and capacity-building are particularly essential. Prosecutors must learn how to support victims and avoid their re-traumatization, but also how to deal with the psychological strain themselves.” (for the whole story visit: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/endht/index.html> )

***Pause to reflect.....what is stirring in me?***

**Leader:** Holding Shikerete, and all those who carry out similar work, in our hearts and minds, I invite anyone who wishes to share from their own heart, to do so....remembering it is a sharing and not a discussion.....

*(The leader holds the sharing space and brings to a close when ready.....)*

**We join in prayer, praying this song:** [The Cry of the Poor](#) © J. Foley 1978 (or one of your choice.)

**Leader:** United as one across our planet, we join in prayer responding with: God of freedom hear our prayer.

**Reader 4:** We pray for all those whose work is to prosecute. Bless them with wisdom and rich sustenance for their hearts. We pray.....

**Reader 5:** We pray that those who organise criminal action that destroys lives and futures. May the light of God's desire for Life, penetrate their hearts. We pray.....

**Reader 4:** We pray that legislators listen to the voices of victims and ensure safely and restoration. We pray.....

**Reader 5:** We stand in solidarity with victims and pray that God's healing love sustains their journey to freedom. We pray.....

**Reader 4:** We pray for those, who out of poverty and need, are driven to crime. May our world live more simply so that others can live. We pray.....

**Reader 5:** We pray for ourselves that we may steadfastly hold together with hope. We pray.....

**Leader:** if anyone would like to add their own prayer, please do so.....

The leader draws this time to closure and invites everyone to pray this closing prayer:

**All:** Bless us God of Life and Hope

With lasting passion to confront this evil.

With voices that speak truth to power.

With hearts of hope and peace.

With the gift of solidarity that is steadfast and spreads to all in need.

Amen.



Image by [Gerd Altmann](#) from [Pixabay](#)

\* Prepared for the Talitha Kum Oceania Region, July 2025. Please use/adapt this prayer as you wish. Prepare an appropriate space/setting and arrange for different readers etc.