



PRESS RELEASE

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Global Association of Human Trafficking Scholars Calls on the Trump Administration to Reverse Policies Harmful to Counter-Trafficking Efforts

In an [open letter to the Trump administration](#), the Global Association of Human Trafficking Scholars (GAHTS) called on the administration to reverse recent policies which are harming human trafficking survivors, undermining counter-trafficking law enforcement, and damaging the anti-trafficking community at large.

Problematic policy actions include withdrawal of federal funding for survivor services—both domestically and abroad, the disruption of critical research projects, undermining anti-corruption efforts, and the expansion of deportations. GAHTS is especially alarmed because the administration no longer appears concerned that anti-trafficking efforts be informed by experts and survivors.

Over the past two months, the federal government has taken various steps that weaken protections for trafficking survivors and marginalized communities, including:

- **Defunding community organizations** that provide essential services to trafficking survivors, victims of violence, and marginalized groups.
- **Destabilizing research initiatives** that aim to combat human trafficking, labor exploitation, and other forms of structural violence.
- **Erasing records and research** that highlight the disproportionate impact of trafficking on racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, disabled individuals, and LGBTQ+ communities.
- **Undermining anti-corruption efforts** that seek to detect money laundering which enriches traffickers and criminal networks.
- **Expanding deportation policies and ending protected status for certain asylum-seekers** that further endanger migrant workers and immigrant communities vulnerable to trafficking and labor exploitation.

Additionally, recent anti-Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives have targeted organizations and researchers who use terminology such as “**advocacy**,” “**activist**,” “**trauma**,” and “**victim**,” effectively **suppressing** the work of anti-trafficking researchers and organizations supporting local communities and survivors of violence.

In the open letter GAHTS firmly calls upon the Trump administration to reverse these harmful policies. GAHTS stands in solidarity with survivors, service providers, and research institutions affected by these changes, emphasizing that **community-based organizations are vital service providers and essential voices in holding the government accountable** for protecting its people. Weakening these efforts **jeopardizes public safety** and directly harms those most vulnerable to exploitation.

In support of the open letter, GAHTS Scholar Members had the following to say: **Dr. Celia Williamson**, prominent 30-year anti-trafficking researcher, stated "I stand resolutely against policies that undermine the work of anti-trafficking community-based organizations. These organizations are not only vital service providers but also essential allies in the fight to protect vulnerable populations. Any attempt to weaken their ability to serve will compromise public safety and deepen the risks faced by those most at risk of exploitation." **Dr. Amanda Knapp**, Chair of the Miami Beach Human Rights Committee, said "I recognize the long-term harm these policies will inflict on survivors and marginalized groups. We call on policymakers, activists, and the public to demand change and work together to protect victims of trafficking and exploitation." **Dr. Glenn Harden**, professor at Asbury University and member of the Kentucky Human Trafficking Task Force, added "In order to improve our work against human trafficking, we must be transparent and self-critical. I am grateful to those in government who are dedicated to ending trafficking, but I fear that some in the Trump administration are closing their ears to the well-earned expertise within the anti-trafficking community." **Tatiana Rothchild**, a human trafficking researcher at Northeastern University, remarked, "The Trump administration is certainly not the first to deport migrants or close their ears to trafficking survivors, but the recent policy changes mark a shift in approach: more directly targeting minority communities and loudly undermining advocacy groups that our communities rely on. The harms of these changes are already visible and will only become more severe if Congress and the courts allow them to continue."

GAHTS members are actively working to expand alternative funding sources for researchers and community organizations impacted by these policy changes. GAHTS is inviting policymakers and advocates to collaborate with them on initiatives aimed at protecting trafficking survivors, promoting public safety, and preserving essential research and services.

Additionally, GAHTS is gathering testimony from those directly affected by these federal actions, and invites those impacted to share their experiences [here](#).

For more information on how to support trafficking survivors, combat these harmful policies, or request expert guidance on policy solutions, please contact GAHTS [here](#).

The **Global Association of Human Trafficking Scholars (GAHTS)** is a network of researchers, scientists, and advocates from diverse disciplines who are committed to the study and prevention of human trafficking and exploitation. Through research, policy analysis, and advocacy, GAHTS addresses structural harms and protects the rights of the most vulnerable communities worldwide. To learn more about GAHTS, visit www.gahts.com.