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January 23, 2018

The Right Hon. Justine Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

RE: The United Church of Canada stands in solidarity with African partners to condemn the slave trade of Africans in Libya

Dear Prime Minister,

I write today to urge Canada to do more to address the criminal and inhuman trade of Africans in Libya.

The dehumanizing treatment and sale of fellow human beings in Libya who are seeking a better life is a desecration of people's humanity and must be loudly and vociferously condemned. The United Church urges you to make public and vigorously enact Canada's plan as declared in your November 26, 2017 statement, that "Canada will continue its work to eradicate human trafficking and support all international efforts to bring those who prey on vulnerable people to justice."

The UN Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, "Making Migration Work for All", dated December 12, 2017, calls on Member States to "outline, and make specific commitments to support a strategy on migrants in vulnerable situations." The plight of migrants in Libya would constitute such a situation. Specifically, The United Church urges Canada to commit to the following principles in the report: "a) reduce immediate suffering and deaths; (b) reduce uncertainties about the status of migrants in vulnerable situations; (c) reassure the members of the public in Member States that their Governments have decisive responses to these events; and (d) prevent these migrants from becoming permanently stranded." As the report notes, "these measures should not be viewed as an encouragement to irregular migrants to undertake perilous journeys in the expectations of ultimately positive outcomes. Rather large movements of migrants are triggered by environmental, social and other pressures that make people take desperate measures — not by the nature of the global response."

As one of the strongest supporters of the NATO-led invasion of Libya in 2011, Canada has a responsibility now to address the instability in Libya and the region, which has enabled this abhorrent exploitation of human beings to thrive.

The United Church is committed to working with partners around the world to protect, promote and support the rights of migrant workers who are vulnerable to human trafficking and other abuses. This includes the pan continental All Africa Conference of Churches which has, among other measures, called on the government of Libya to stop immediately the auctioning of human beings by their citizens.

Be assured of my prayers for you as Canada addresses this issue, and for a world and human hearts transformed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordan Cantwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell
Moderator/Modératrice
The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

c.c. The Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister for Foreign Affairs
The Hon. Ahmed D. Hussen, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
The Hon. Erin O'Toole, Foreign Affairs Critic, Conservative Party
Bob Saroya, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Critic, Conservative Party
Hélène Laverdière, Foreign Affairs Critic, New Democratic Party
Jenny Kwan, Multiculturalism, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Critic, New Democratic Party
Luc Thériault, Foreign Affairs Critic, Bloc Québécois
Mario Beaulieu, Immigration Critic, Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, Green Party

Christie Neufeldt, Program Coordinator, Advocacy and Public Witness, UCC