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**INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION APPLAUDS U.S. HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES FOR PASSAGE OF CRITICAL ANTI-TRAFFICKING
LEGISLATION**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 25, 2014) – Global human rights organization International Justice Mission (IJM) praised the U.S. House of Representatives for passage of the Human Trafficking Prioritization Act (HR 2283) after a series of votes on Wednesday night on a package of bills designed to combat human trafficking.

The bi-partisan legislation, passed without a dissenting voice or vote, would elevate the authority of the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Office (TIP)—a U.S. government agency dedicated to combating human trafficking internationally. Established by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, the office makes grants to NGOs combating slavery globally and issues an annual Trafficking in Persons report, which ranks 188 countries into four tiers based on their efforts to combat human trafficking.

In remarks on the House floor on Wednesday evening, HR 2283 lead sponsor Congressman Chris Smith (NJ-4) praised the efforts of the TIP Office, and highlighted the diplomatic power of the annual TIP report, which he said has motivated more than 100 countries to pass anti-trafficking laws and take other steps to improve their tier rankings. "The tier rankings were meant to be and in large part have become a very powerful tool in the fight against trafficking. We have found a system that works. But tragically, it is sometimes muffled, misguided, and marginalized by unrelated bilateral concerns and by the internal structure of the State Department itself," said Congressman Smith.

Many anti-slavery and faith-based organizations, including the Presidents' Faith-Based Advisory Committee, have called for the TIP Office's upgrade to a Bureau, a cost-free change which creates no additional governmental bureaucracy and will give the TIP Office greater independence and authority to protect the vulnerable people it was created to serve. In June of this year, more than 200 advocates from around the U.S. joined IJM staff in meetings with nearly 250 Congressional offices, urging swift passage of the legislation.

"Even during times of intense political partisanship, one thing that all Americans can agree on is the urgent need to combat modern-day slavery," said Holly Burkhalter, Vice President of Government Relations at IJM. "The State Office Trafficking in Persons Office makes grants that save lives and build international capacity to end human trafficking. The office should be made a full-fledged State Department Bureau, in order to best represent the interests of the most vulnerable people in the world – slaves and trafficking victims."

The legislation now moves to the Senate for consideration. A companion bill in that body, S 1249, has been co-sponsored by 34 Senators, but has not yet been considered by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

About International Justice Mission

International Justice Mission is a global organization that protects the poor from violence throughout the developing world. IJM partners with local authorities to rescue victims of violence, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors, and strengthen justice systems. The largest non-profit organization of its kind, IJM combats slavery, sex trafficking, rape, police brutality, property grabbing and other forms of violence in nearly 20 communities throughout Africa, Latin America, South Asia and Southeast Asia. www.IJM.org

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