

# Mata Amritanandamayi, Pope Francis among 11 faith leaders take vow to end slavery by 2020

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India's Mata Amritanandamayi and Pope Francis on Tuesday joined 10 other religious leaders from across the globe to sign on a Vatican initiative to eradicate modern-day slavery, including human trafficking and prostitution, by 2020.

Amritanandamayi, popularly known as Amma, was the sole representative of the Hindu religion at the meet, which signed a joint declaration against modern slavery in a [ceremony](#) here.

The declaration, an initiative of the Global Freedom Network, launched with backing from [Archbishop of Canterbury](#) Justin Welby and Pope Francis in March this year, states that modern slavery in terms of human trafficking, forced labour and prostitution, organ trafficking, is a crime against humanity and must be recognised by all nations. Amma termed human trafficking an "open wound on the body of humanity."

"Human trafficking is one of the worst curses plaguing humanity since the beginning of time. The more we try to eradicate slavery and forced labour it seems to rebound with strength. Like an evil curse it keeps haunting us," she said in her address before the signing of the pledge.

Calling for increased awareness among the young, she said there was need to "provide the new generation with practical [education](#) to create greater awareness within them." "Today a child can be purchased for slavery for a pathetic sum of 10 to 20 dollars. We need to awaken the latent courage and self confidence of children. They need to realise that they are not helpless and vulnerable like kittens but are mighty and courageous as lions. We have to help them elevate their minds," Amma said.

She also called on governments to "establish laws without loopholes so that the guilty cannot escape" and for global [collaboration](#) to work on a multi-level response to end slavery.

Other religious leaders who signed the declaration included Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh from Vietnam, Rabbi Abraham Skorka from Argentina, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew from Greece, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi al-Modarresi from Iraq, and the [Archbishop](#) of Canterbury from the UK.

Pope Francis said, "Inspired by our faiths, we have gathered together today because of one historical initiative and one concrete action: to declare that we will work together to eradicate the terrible scourge of modern slavery in all its forms."

"The physical, economical, sexual and physiological exploitation of men, women, boys and girls is currently linking millions of people to dehumanisation and humiliation.

Every human being -- man, woman, boy and girl -- is an image of God," he said.

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