



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Shared Hope International calls for prosecution of buyers following FBI sex trafficking sting**

**Washington, D.C. – February 24, 2009** – Leading experts from Shared Hope International, an organization dedicated to the eradication of sex trafficking, are calling for prosecution and tougher penalties for buyers of sex from minors in response to the FBI's announcement Monday of the rescue of 45 child sex trafficking victims and arrests of over 50 traffickers and some buyers.

Shared Hope International Founder and President Linda Smith comments, "We applaud the FBI and local law enforcement for the arrest and prosecution of the traffickers in Operation Cross Country I and II, and now Cross Country III. For over a decade Shared Hope International has investigated child sex trafficking all over the world, including the U.S. We have found that a man buying a child for sex is rarely arrested, and when arrested rarely is he sentenced to the tough penalties deserving of a child rapist. Those who purchase sex with a minor are rarely arrested and never has there been a conviction of a 'john' for buying sex with minors under the 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). Operation Cross Country III is different in that they didn't just bring in the trafficker. They didn't just bring in the trafficked girl. They actually brought in those who solicited sex with the children rescued from prostitution. This is an encouraging signal from the FBI and the local jurisdictions that were involved in Operation Cross Country III and we hope law enforcement will vigorously work together to go on to prosecute those that attempt to purchase children for sex."

On February 3, 2009, John F. Wood, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri obtained federal grand jury indictments in three separate cases charging buyers who attempted to solicit sex with children. While those who sell sex with children have been prosecuted vigorously with success over the last few years, these new indictments against three men who solicited sex with minors are the first in the nation under the TVPA to charge a defendant with attempting to pay for sex with a child under the theory that they attempted to "recruit, entice, transport or OBTAIN" the children for commercial sex acts.

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The federal statutes mandate tough prison sentences for both buyers and sellers who victimize children making federal prosecution a greater deterrent to solicitation than many state laws.

“To decrease demand for sex with children we must prosecute the buyers. As long as the prostituted child brings in her pimp quota of \$500-1000 each night, someone will always be recruiting at the malls, middle school playgrounds, and preying on the Internet for our children. To stop trafficking we must stop buyers from buying,” Linda Smith emphasized.

Shared Hope International has worked since 2005 in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Justice to research the situation of American children recruited and exploited through commercial sex. The national report will be released in April.

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**About Shared Hope International**

Shared Hope International exists to prevent, rescue and restore women and children in crisis. For a decade, Shared Hope International has worked around the world in partnership with local groups to prevent trafficking and to rescue and restore the victims of sexual slavery. Shared Hope International was supported by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to conduct field research in 10 U.S. locations aligned with DOJ-funded Human Trafficking Task Forces and issue assessment reports which examine two critical areas: the identification of U.S. children trafficked within the U.S. and the service delivery to this population. The assessments are serving as a springboard for action in each local community. Visit [www.sharedhope.org](http://www.sharedhope.org)

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