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**IJM**

## **IJM Sounds Alarm: *Violence*, a Serious Threat in the Fight Against Poverty**

- Calling on 100,000 to sign new UN petition to prioritize justice reform in 2015 Millennium Development Goals
- 4 billion people unprotected by justice systems vulnerable to criminal activity including rape, sex trafficking & forced labor
- Dysfunctional justice systems significantly undermining economic development efforts combatting global poverty

(February 3, 2014) *Washington, DC* – With more than 4 billion people identified as vulnerable to criminal activity by living outside the protection of law, International Justice Mission (IJM) is sounding the alarm to “everyday violence” and calling for support in petitioning the United Nations to prioritize justice reform in the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals form a global blueprint for ending poverty, however addressing violence was not included when the goals were originally drafted in 2000.

“Criminal activity is so pervasive in communities throughout the developing world that fear of violence has become just as much a part of what it means to be poor as being hungry, sick, homeless or jobless,” says Gary Haugen, president and CEO of IJM.

IJM says global studies reveal troubling trends showing “everyday violence” –acts of violence that are already against the law, including rape, forced labor, sex trafficking, land grabbing and police brutality –not only threaten the safety of billions of people worldwide but significantly undermine development efforts aimed at ending poverty.

“Everyday violence is a hidden cause of poverty. When we think of poverty in the developing world, issues such as health, education, access to clean water and economic empowerment are top of mind,” says Haugen. “What we have failed to recognize is that endemic to being poor is an overwhelming vulnerability to violence.”

IJM points to further global studies revealing 30 million men, women and children are held in slavery today (Global Slavery Index), including 2 million children exploited in the sex trade. (UNICEF) In addition, only 1% of aid from USAID and World Bank has historically been designated to help improve justice systems to protect poor people from everyday violence.

“If the world continues to ignore violence as a significant threat to the poor and refuses to invest in repairing broken justice systems, criminal activity will only continue to destroy the lives of the poorest – while undermining hard work being done to end poverty today worldwide,” says Haugen.

IJM aims to secure **100,000 signatures** through a new online petition urging the United Nations to make protecting the poor from everyday violence a global priority. As the U.N drafts its post-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the petition specifically calls for the inclusion of targets to secure accessible justice institutions that are independent, well-resourced and respect due-process rights for everyone.

This call to action coincides with the release of *The Locust Effect*, authored by Gary Haugen and Victor Boutros. The book is a culmination of two decades of work in some of the poorest communities in the developing world and exposes a hidden link between everyday violence, poverty and broken justice systems that the authors say *plagues* many impoverished communities worldwide. The authors draw from their experience on the ground fighting for justice for the poor to show that ground-up efforts to reform legal and public justice systems can generate real, positive results.

“Somehow we have imagined that poor communities can move forward without basic law enforcement systems. Justice systems – from law enforcement to the courts – must protect the poor,” said Victor Boutros. “Without criminal justice systems that ensure accountability and consequences, violence against the poor will continue to undermine global efforts to end poverty and ensure human rights for all.”

The authors point to progress fighting for justice reform in developing countries. In Guatemala, for example, IJM helped local authorities adopt mandatory best practices for investigating and prosecuting child sexual assault cases. The governments of Brazil and the nation of Georgia have dramatically improved the justice system response to slavery and police corruption, respectively, and NGO-government partnerships from Peru to the Democratic Republic of the Congo are demonstrating that it is possible for criminal justice systems to protect the poor.

“In many impoverished communities, if you want to be safe, you pay to be safe. And if you cannot pay, you are not safe. It’s time to change that,” says Haugen.

All author royalties from sales of the book go toward fighting violence against the poor. To sign IJM’s online petition or learn about how you can help visit [www.thelocusteffect.org](http://www.thelocusteffect.org).

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### **About International Justice Mission**

*International Justice Mission is a human rights agency that secures justice for victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression. IJM lawyers, investigators and aftercare professionals work with local officials in 18 communities throughout Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa and Latin America to secure immediate victim rescue and aftercare, to prosecute perpetrators and to ensure that public justice systems – police, courts and laws – effectively protect the poor. Learn more about IJM at [www.IJM.org](http://www.IJM.org)*