**At least 10,000 refugee children have 'vanished into sex work and slavery trade' after arriving in Europe**

January 31, 2016

By Lydia Willgress

Daily Mail

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3425073/At-10-000-refugee-children-vanished-sex-work-slavery-trade-arriving-Europe.html#ixzz3yptlOWxj

At least 10,000 refugee children have vanished after arriving in Europe with many being forced into sex work and slavery, officials believe.

Thousands of young migrants have been targeted by criminals and are now missing, according to the European Union's law enforcement agency Europol.

The news emerged as charity Save the Children estimated that around 26,000 children were forced to travel into Europe alone last year.

Brain Donald, Europol's chief of staff, told Mark Townsend at the **Observer**: 'It is not unreasonable to say that we are looking at 10,000-plus children.

'We just don't know where they are, what they are doing and whom they are with.'

He said there was evidence some were being sexually exploited by gangs also linked to human trafficking, but stressed not all children would have been linked to criminal activity.

Mr Donald added that the abuse was not happened 'in the middle of forests' but in towns and built-up areas.

He said: 'These kids are in the community, if they're being abused it's in the community.'

The figures emerged after the Home Office announced it would work towards accepting a higher number of 'unaccompanied' migrant children.

The vulnerable children, which will be identified by the Home Office in relation to the UN refugee agency UNHCR, will be in addition to the 20,000 Syrian refugees the Government has already pledged to take in by 2020.

James Brokenshire, immigration minister, said: 'The crisis in Syria and events in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond have separated a large number of refugee children from their families.

'We have asked the UNHCR to identify the exceptional cases where a child's best interests are served by resettlement to the UK and help us to bring them here.'

Aid agencies welcomed the announcement.

A spokesman for Unicef said: 'The UK has a responsibility to protect vulnerable children, it is absolutely right that the government is committed to resettle unaccompanied children from conflict regions.'

Tanya Barron, CEO of children's charity Plan UK, added: 'Any and all help for children who have been separated from their families by the war in Syria should be encouraged.'