



MODERN SLAVERY BILL

Calling the Church to Action

In August 2013, the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) published its Strategic Assessment on the Nature and Scale of Human Trafficking in 2012. It encountered 2,255 potential victims of human trafficking being exploited in communities throughout our country. 549 of these victims were children. However, as acknowledged by the UKHTC, there are many other victims who are not identified or who do not want to be recorded. Frank Field MP's evidence review suggests there could be as many 10,000 victims.

President Barack Obama recently described human trafficking as a “debasement of our common humanity that tears at the social fabric of our communities – its true name being modern slavery.” In April this year the Prime Minister David Cameron said we must “call it what it is: slavery”. This was also the conclusion of a two-year enquiry undertaken by the Centre for Social Justice: ‘modern slavery exists in the UK and destroys lives’¹.

The Government have responded by publishing a draft Modern Slavery Bill. As organisations tackling this heinous injustice at the grassroots, relating directly with survivors and working for change, we welcome this proposal for new legislation. We are diverse organisations making a wide variety of policy recommendations extending beyond those stated below. But together we have identified three key areas the new legislation must address. For the bill to have an impact on reducing or removing the scourge of modern slavery it must be strengthened.

1. **Focus on victims:** ensure victims are properly identified, that they are able to receive immediate support and assistance and that the circumstances of their victimisation are fully investigated. That they are not prosecuted for crimes they may have committed whilst under duress and the control of another. While mentioned in the bill and in the Home Secretary's announcement, the bill does not do enough in this area.

2. **A strong and independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner:** the bill takes up this proposal, but the appointment must be accountable to Parliament, able to speak across all parties and able to give voice to victims. It must provide strategic leadership to combat modern slavery and, when necessary, launch inquiries and publish findings to collectively tackle the issue and hold all persons working in this arena accountable.
3. **Engage with businesses:** bring greater transparency in supply chain legislation, which will require businesses to annually disclose measures taken to eradicate modern slavery from their supply chains and business practices, and to share this information publicly. The voluntary system continued under the current proposals is not enough.

The transatlantic slave trade was banned in 1807 and slavery was abolished across the British Empire in 1834, yet it is still with us today. Children are sold into slavery to pay family debts; people pay for passage, only to be trafficked over borders and find forced labour conditions rather than freedom. Across the world children are made to fight, men and women are forced to work under inhumane conditions and sexual exploitation is a weapon of repression.

This must end. The Government must act to give slavery no corner to hide in the UK. And the Church must use its experience of care and its passion for justice to press for a law that banishes slavery for good.

1. It Happens Here: equipping the United Kingdom to fight modern slavery, The Centre for Social Justice, 2013

What can you do?

Engage through prayer

Form a prayer group in your church or hold specific prayer meetings to bring these issues before our God. To resource your prayer times use passages from Scripture that show God's passion for ending oppression and reclaiming his children.

Engage through the Word

Encourage your church to include a sermon on the God of Justice and why fighting injustice is an important task for a Christian. Or invite a speaker from one of the justice organisations below to your church. Why not contact one of our organisations and ask for resources for youth groups, small groups, and Bible studies?

Engage politically

1. Meet with your local MP. Together with other Christians passionate about seeing change, why don't you ask to meet with your local MP to discuss the issue and press for a strong and effective bill raising the points above, or see if they might come to a public meeting to discuss trafficking and slavery?
2. Write to your local MP and to the Home Secretary Theresa May. Encourage the government that their prioritisation of addressing human trafficking is highly worthwhile. Ask the government to continue tackling this issue by addressing the three key areas outlined above.
3. Explore the nature of local and international injustices. Speak to your local police and local anti-trafficking organisations about how they are tackling slavery. Find out what barriers stand in the way of victims seeking redress in your area.

'He has shown you, O man, what is good. What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to show mercy and to walk humbly with you God.' (Micah 6:8)



Together we call for the bill to be strengthened in these three ways and for the Church to take action to this end. We are diverse organisations working on a range of issues from different perspectives, united around this call. Each organisation has their own priorities and those in this paper are not the only issues of concern.