

AN INSIGHT INTO MODERN SLAVERY – ON A STREET NEAR YOU?

“No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.” [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948]

If you thought that slavery was a thing of the past, think again. The modern trade in people is big business. It isn't usually called slavery, but goes under many names: people trafficking, forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and more. The people trapped in modern slavery may be men or women, or children; they are bought and sold across countries and continents; they are exploited by criminal gangs in the drugs trade, and by respectable merchants in the garment industry. There may be people living in servitude in a street near you.

There are many different characteristics that distinguish slavery from other human rights violations, but only one of these needs to be present for slavery to exist. Someone is in slavery if they are:

- forced to work - through mental or physical threat;
- owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse;
- dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property';
- physically constrained or with restrictions placed on their freedom of movement.

“The 22-year old eastern European woman had come to the UK on the promise of ‘a good job’ in a hotel and an income she could send back to her impoverished grandparents. Instead, in circumstances typical for many trafficked women, she was locked in a basement and told that her family back home would be killed unless she worked as a prostitute, receiving up to 40 clients a day. This woman had to earn her captors £300 a day to pay off the debt of £20,000 she had allegedly incurred in the journey to Britain. She was subjected to a fine if she refused to have anal or unprotected sex, or if a client did not find her attractive... She was regularly gang raped and beaten to prevent her from escaping.”

[The Medaille Trust]

People in servitude in the UK and other developed countries have often been trafficked from places where poverty is endemic, and people see no way to a better life for themselves and their children than the option offered by the traffickers of 'good jobs' in a country far away. Separated from their families and communities, in strange surroundings where they don't speak the language or understand the culture, their passports and travel documents confiscated by the traffickers, living in fear of being identified as 'illegals' and deported or imprisoned, people in this situation are very vulnerable, fearful, and defenceless.

“The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offence against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights”. Pope St John Paul II

Some of the forms that slavery takes today, and that we may encounter here in the UK are:

Forced labour

Gangmasters provide workers to UK businesses that need seasonal or unskilled labour. Workers may come from abroad, from Eastern Europe or further afield. Most Gangmasters work within the law, but some do not, and these may keep workers in quasi-slave conditions, with unreasonable deductions from wages ensuring that the worker is never free from debt, or able to move on.

Slavery in the supply chains

Products that we buy may have been produced by people who are slaves at some point in the supply chain: the Thai fishing industry, the Uzbek cotton industry, child slavery in the chocolate industry, and quasi-slave conditions in the hospitality sector are examples to be aware of.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires larger businesses to make an annual statement to confirm that the organisation has taken steps during that financial year to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains and in any part of its own business.

Domestic servitude

Domestic workers – mostly women and girls - perform a range of tasks in private homes. Some domestic workers also live in their employers' homes and are often considered 'on call' to undertake work for their employer 24 hours per day. Pay is often very low, with wage payments frequently delayed. In many countries, domestic workers are not considered 'workers' but rather as informal 'help' and are excluded from national labour regulations. In the UK domestic workers who are immigrants may not be free to change employers.

Criminal exploitation

Children and adults are trafficked across Europe and forced to beg in towns and cities and made to commit crimes such as pickpocketing, ATM theft, metal theft and cannabis cultivation by their traffickers. Trafficking for forced criminal activities and forced begging are increasingly significant phenomena, but have only recently been formally recognised. People trafficked into criminal activity may be treated as criminals and find themselves imprisoned far from home.

Sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs.



The Modern Slavery Act

The Government has recognised that there are people in the UK living in conditions of slavery and in 2015 passed the Modern Slavery Act to criminalise trafficking in human beings and offer a degree of protection to those liberated from slavery. An Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner has been appointed to oversee the working of the Act and implement the Government's anti-slavery strategy.

What we can do

Hard as it is to believe, people may be living in conditions of slavery on a street near you. There are signs to look for, and be aware of.

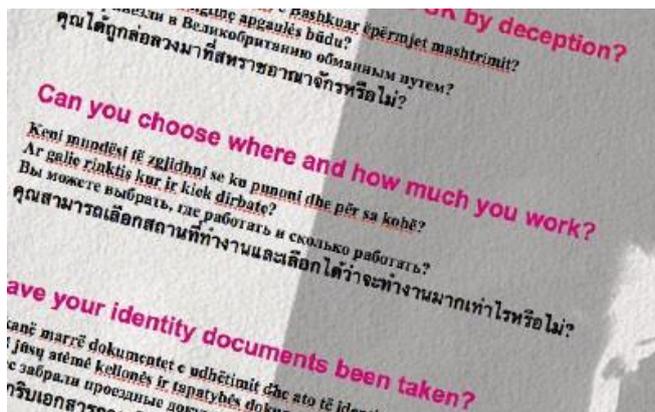
If there are people living in a house that seems to be overcrowded, and run down; if there are people who are in poor physical shape, very thin, dirty, without warm clothes; if there are people who are collected early in the morning, returned after dark, and never otherwise leave the house; if there are people who have few personal possessions, no money, who never speak to anyone; if ... you know of a situation like this, it may be that these people are in some kind of slavery.

If you think slavery is happening, do not attempt to let the victim know that you have reported it or confront the traffickers. You need to ensure their safety and yours.

The helpline number to call is: **Helpline 0800 0121 700***

Stop the Traffik is a UK charity that works globally to challenge trafficking and forced labour. Stop the Traffik encourages us to form local groups to raise awareness of trafficking and modern slavery, to campaign on these issues, and to fundraise to support victims of trafficking and exploitation and help them to recover. The Stop the Traffik website has lots of ideas to help us get involved in putting a stop to modern slavery in our communities.

For example:



Often victims of trafficking are not able to leave the house or property where they are being enslaved. There are a few key places within a community where they might be able to go, for example, in some cases of domestic servitude women have only been able to leave the house to do the family shop.

Map the places in your community where a poster (designed by you) might be seen by someone who is vulnerable or has been trafficked. It could be: the doctor's surgery; an A&E or walk in clinic; the library; a supermarket or local shop; a laundrette.

Ask them to display the poster in a prominent place.

The Church responds

Pope Francis has called human trafficking and the trade in human beings, in human lives, 'an open wound on the body of contemporary society'.

The Bakhita Initiative is the response of the Church to the challenge of modern slavery.

Through the witness of many organisations and individuals, especially women religious, the Church plays a significant role in helping those afflicted by this invisible and iniquitous trade.

The Bakhita Initiative is a resource which is intended:

- to offer direct assistance and protection to victims via the pastoral care available through the parish network
- to seek rigorous enforcement by the criminal justice system for those who are the main perpetrators of this illegal trade
- to encourage greater international solidarity and closer working practices, for example, agreeing signposting and victim referral protocols
- to work towards prevention via a sound and sympathetic migration policy
- to provide specialist training and make awareness-raising available to law enforcement agencies, local authority professionals, frontline volunteers in the parishes, teachers and schoolchildren
- to maintain a venue serving England and Wales and with services accessible to all police forces and law enforcement agencies

Bakhita House in London opened in June 2015 as a safe house for victims of trafficking.

Women at The Well is an initiative of the Mercy Sisters

It's a women-only drop-in centre in Kings Cross dedicated to supporting women with a complex range of needs relating to: street based prostitution; offending & anti-social behaviour; problematic drug and alcohol abuse; rough sleeping; trafficking

The Medaille Trust

The Medaille Trust was founded in 2006 by a number of religious congregations in response to the plight of thousands of people who are being trafficked into the UK each year. The Trust was established as a charity and opened its first safe house in January 2007. A major part of the Trust's work is to raise awareness of the plight of those who are enslaved and exploited in the trafficking industry – the modern slave trade - and campaign on their behalf.



Sisters lead the campaign against human trafficking in the Philippines.

Prayer for the end of human trafficking

God of freedom, beauty and truth we believe that your deepest desire is that all creation might know abundant life.

We raise our voices in anguished prayer for our sisters and brothers, women and girls, men and boys, who are modern day slaves; they are your beloved daughters and sons, exploited sexually or forced to work because of human violence and greed.

Fill us with your holy anger and your sacred passion that those who are trafficked might know healing and justice; that traffickers will come to repentance and conversion; that all of us might live in such a way that others are not made to pay the price for our comfort and convenience.

Hasten the coming of the day when all people and our precious Earth itself will be treated, not as a commodity, but as radiant images of your freedom, beauty and truth.

Amen. May it be so.

(As shared by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, Convent Station, N.J.)



ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA,
pray for victims and survivors
of human trafficking and slavery

Resources

ECPAT

Campaigning against child trafficking and transnational child exploitation

www.ecpat.org.uk

Stop the Traffik

STOP THE TRAFFIK is a global movement of activists from all sectors of society. We look to disrupt and prevent human trafficking, its harm and abuse to human beings. We campaign for a traffik-free world! At the heart of our work is our desire to stop the abuse and harm which is caused by human trafficking.

<http://www.stophetraffik.org/uk>

Anti-Slavery International

Anti-Slavery International works at local, national and international levels to eliminate all forms of slavery around the world.

<http://www.antislavery.org/english/>

Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner

The IASC is an independent monitoring body of the Home Office

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-anti-slavery-commissioner>

Gangmasters' Licensing Authority

The GLA works in partnership to protect vulnerable and exploited workers.

<http://www.gla.gov.uk/>

The Bakhita Initiative

The Bakhita Initiative embodies the union of the Roman Catholic Church in its local, national and universal dimensions in communion with Pope Francis and expresses the Church's commitment to support those who have experienced human trafficking.

<http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Departments/International-Affairs/The-Catholic-Church-and-Human-Trafficking/Bakhita-Initiative>