

Speakers included:

- Patsy Sorensen MEP, the European Parliament's specialist in EU Human Trafficking policy
- Assistant Commissioner Tarique Ghaffur, UK's Metropolitan Police Service
- Rob Coster, Dutch Police Department's National Co-ordinator on prostitution and trafficking
- Denise Marshall, Director, EAVES Housing for Trafficked Women
- Carron Somerset, ECPAT UK
- Anni Marjoram, the Mayor's Advisor on Women's Issues
- Speaker from the Home Office Immigration Service



"These victims have no voice of their own."

Conference Chairs

"There is a need for political will. Not all EU countries are willing to co-ordinate and prefer to follow a national agenda, even on this global issue."

Patsy Sorensen MEP



"Trafficking is a crime against the state, against the person and against human rights."

Rob Coster

Presentations are available to download from www.jeanlambertmep.org.uk

Organisations

The conference was widely advertised and attended by many individuals and organisations.

The latter included:

AFRUCA
AGLOW
Akina Mama Wa Afrika
Amnesty International, Hillingdon Group
Anti Slavery International
Ashiana Project
Black Women & Europe Network
Change
CHASTE
Children Asylum Team
Czech Embassy
Ealing Women's Aid
ECPAT UK
Embassy of Albania
Embassy of Bosnia
Embassy of Georgia
FCO
FORWARD
London Assembly
Green Party England and Wales
Hillingdon Social Services
Barnados
Lambeth Green Party
League of Jewish Women
London Probation
Metropolitan Police Authority
Middlesex University
MSNBC

POPPY project management
Refugee Action
Refugee Council
Researchers in contemporary slavery Goldsmiths College
RWRP Asylum Aid
Street Matters NSPCC
The Bail Circle
The Children's Society
Unicef UK
Women's Aid
Women's Design Service
YWCA

SILENT SLAVERY

Stop the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation in London

A CONFERENCE AT CITY HALL, LONDON – 20 June 2003



The trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation is a high-profit, low-risk trade dominated by organised criminals. It results in women and children being exploited in slavery-like conditions in the UK's – but chiefly London's – sex industry, for the use and abuse of British men. This slavery is happening just yards away from where you live and work.

This conference was held at City Hall in London. It was open to all individuals and groups who believe we should work together to stamp out this slavery.

The UK Government's Sex Offences Bill promises to introduce more comprehensive offences for trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation, but will they work?

Do they consider the gross violation of human rights that is occurring?

Do they meet the standards of best practice in the European Union?

Do they offer appropriate support to victims?

How will London be addressing the issue?

These questions need answers.

The purpose of the conference was for those with experience and interest in this area to share their expertise: European experts, NGOs, police officers, immigration officers, women's and children's campaign groups and organizations. We also welcomed the views of elected leaders, sex-workers' support groups, health and welfare officers. Together we are calling on the Government for tougher action. We also look to this conference to help inform a better strategy for London.



CO-HOSTED BY JENNY JONES (TOP) – DEPUTY MAYOR AND GREEN PARTY MEMBER, LONDON ASSEMBLY AND JEAN LAMBERT (BOTTOM) – GREEN MEP FOR LONDON

For further information contact the the Office of Jean Lambert MEP

Suite 58, The Hop Exchange, 24 Southwark Street, London SE1 1TY Tel: 020 7407 6269 Fax: 020 7234 0183

Email: jeanlambert@greenmeps.org.uk



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LONDON ASSEMBLY
Green Group

SILENT SLAVERY

CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT

The Government should recognise that trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation is a violation of human rights and not an immigration problem. The victims of this crime – their needs and recognition of their vulnerability – should be at the heart of UK law and Government policy. The Government should ensure that practitioners working with the victims have the necessary resources to offer the highest standards of support and protection.

Human trafficking is an organised crime. It is global, recognising no boundaries or nationalities. It is not an issue of migration. It is therefore inappropriate for immigration officers to be the first point of contact to represent options to the victims, once they have been identified. Women and children who have been trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation are victims of crime and should therefore be informed of their rights by police officers trained in the options available.

Support should be supplied by a partnership of police, social services and NGOs with the immigration service playing an advisory role. There should be clear judicial division between illegal immigration and human trafficking throughout law, policy and practice. That is why opting into the EU Directive on Short Term residents permits should be seen only as a first step to bringing the UK in line with European Union best practice.

In order to do so, this Conference recommends that the following actions be taken:

- 1** The Government, as a first step, should opt-in to the EU Directive COM(2002)0071: Illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings – short term residence permit issued to victims.
This will mean that victims of human trafficking are offered, at a minimum:
 - a 30-day reflection period in which to decide whether or not to testify, during which time victims should receive aid such as housing and medical care;
 - temporary residence permits for those prepared to co-operate against those suspected of committing the crimes in question;
 - the opportunity to apply for protection under the asylum procedure of the Member State.
- 2** In addition to adopting the EU Directive, the Government should offer victims at least a 90-day reflection period in which to decide whether or not to cooperate against the perpetrators, during which time victims should receive aid such as housing and medical care. The UK should learn from the experience of the Dutch Police who have evidence that a 30-day period is not long enough.
- 3** Identified victims of trafficking should also be granted this reflection period so that they are not forced to make an asylum application in order to avoid immediate deportation. They should be referred to a support agency so that they can be given independent legal advice to enable them to consider whether they wish to make an application for leave to remain on humanitarian grounds.
- 4** Offering protection to victims of trafficking for sexual purposes should not be conditional upon giving evidence against those suspected of committing the crimes. The experiences of the Dutch Police force show that intelligence gained from victims can be as valuable as their agreeing to give evidence in criminal proceedings.
- 5** The Government should fund support for, and assist victims of trafficking for sexual purposes. This should be subject to independent evaluation.

- 6** The Home Office Pilot Project in Lambeth, administered by EAVES Housing for Women, is the only organisation in the UK which focuses on the plight of women who are victims of trafficking. projects such as this should be permanently funded and the model rolled out across the UK. The criteria used to decide whether a victim is eligible should be more flexible and constructed with the agreement of NGOs, fieldworkers and police officers who are best equipped at identifying victims of trafficking. This flexibility should be implemented immediately for the EAVES project.
 - Victims who have already claimed asylum should have access to such projects.
 - Victims who decide to claim asylum whilst at the project should be allowed to stay in the project.
 - Once a victim has chosen to leave the project they should be allowed re-entry should their position change.
- 7** Criminal assets confiscated from human traffickers should be invested in the investigation of trafficking and related crimes and a substantial proportion invested in the protection, support and compensation of its victims.
- 8** Key indicators should be set for Chief Constables in measuring awareness of and response to human trafficking. These should include:
 - Training of staff (in recognising victims of trafficking etc.)
 - Number of investigations
 - Number of victims identified

The Criminal Justice Board should also consider local priorities.

- 9** Children victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation should have access to specialist Government funded protection and support services that recognise their special needs. This is in addition to the protection offered by the Children's Act 1989
- 10** The Government should take preventative measures to stop unaccompanied minors and child asylum seekers becoming victims of trafficking for sexual purposes once in the UK. Such children should continue to be treated inclusively, within services provided under the Children's Act, up to the age of eighteen years. NGOs are increasingly concerned that sixteen year old asylum seekers are not being offered appropriate services to prevent them from slipping into the world of human trafficking. The Government should work with Local Authorities across the UK to ensure that that all support services provided under the Children Act are available for minors up to eighteen.
- 11** Local Authority Social Services have identified that, once an asylum seeker turns eighteen, they drop outside the Children Act framework and are no longer offered the protection this offers. The Government should consider funding transition safe houses for eighteen year old asylum-seekers whilst their application is being considered. These houses should be administered by NGOs in cooperation with Local Authority Social Services.
There is concern about children brought in to the country by adults other than parents, although no specific recommendation was noted on this point.
- 12** Police, Immigration Officers and Social Services workers should be trained in the realities of human trafficking, and the options available to victims. This should be integrated into all standard training programmes.
- 13** There should be a contact desk, possibly within the Immigration Service, for Social Services and the voluntary sector to turn to for information and advice.
- 14** Independent Support options – both financial and advisory – should be made available to victims who voluntarily wish to return to their home country. These options should be sensitive to the victim's culture and to the culture of the country of return.
- 15** The Government should consider extending these rights and these support mechanisms to all victims of human trafficking as defined by the UN Convention.

These recommendations have been sent to the Home Office. If your organisation would like to add its voice in support then please write to the Home Secretary at 50, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT