

## NEW STATISTICS ON MODERN DAY SLAVERY – 45.8 MILLION LIVING IN SLAVERY

New statistics show that 11,700 people may be enslaved in the UK. [The Global Slavery Index](#), compiled by the Walk Free Foundation, came out last week, finding that 45.8 million people could be living in slavery around the world

On the day the statistics were released, René Cassin went to speak to the congregants of Barnet United Synagogue on the topic of Modern Day Slavery. To Jewish people, 'slavery' conjures up imagery of the Israelites in Egypt or, more recently, labour camps during the Holocaust. It is a prominent part of Jewish memory and experience, but unfortunately slavery isn't history – in fact, there are more people enslaved today than at any point in history.

So what kinds of slavery exist in the UK?

Many people fall into multiple categories of slavery. Lam, for example, is a victim of forced labour and criminal exploitation. Child trafficking, debt bondage, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude are also witnessed in the UK.

Kevin Hyland, the [UK's first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner](#), says that many people are "*hidden in plain sight, working in nail bars, construction or on farms. It's up to the authorities and communities to dig a little deeper to see the bigger picture, but often people don't know where to look or what the signs are.*" Victims of slavery could be people we come into contact with every day.

Slavery and trafficking have always been a problem, but there are now fears that the [current refugee crisis is exacerbating the issue](#), with exploiters taking advantage of the increased movement of people to traffic victims.

Last year, René Cassin contributed to and welcomed the [Modern Slavery Act](#), but there is always more to be done to ensure that the lives and basic freedoms of those in slavery on our own soil are returned to them.

Lam came to the UK from Vietnam at the age of 16. He hoped to be able to work and send money home to his family but was forced to work in a cannabis factory.

I was there for five weeks by myself. Someone would call to check up on me and sometimes visit to make sure I was doing a good job," he said.

"I slept on the floor in a corridor and lived on food parcels that were delivered every two weeks."

"I remember asking the man who took me there if I could leave because I didn't like it but he threatened to beat me or starve me to death."

Police raided the house after five weeks and Lam was arrested, charged with drug offenses and sentenced to 18 Months in a young offenders' institute. Eventually, he was helped by the NSPCC.

"I was worried about my mum, but couldn't contact or help her from prison. The entire time was really scary and confusing."