

In-depth look at the 'Day 46 Campaign'

Background

The right to be free from enslavement is one of the most fundamental human rights and yet slavery continues to exist in modern society. Approximately 13,000 people in the UK are the victims of slavery and trafficking, often working in nail salons, takeaway restaurants or as domestic and agricultural workers.

Although individual cases vary, slavery usually involves being owned or controlled by an 'employer' who coerces victims into working through physical or mental threat. Victims are subsequently dehumanized by being treated as a commodity and may also be physically constrained. Closely linked to slavery is human trafficking, which involves transporting and trading people and often aims to subsequently force people into conditions of slavery.

Slavery and trafficking are illegal in the UK and the Modern Slavery Act of 2015 was pioneering in its attempt to tackle modern slavery. Provisions within the Act include an increase in maximum sentences for trafficking offenders, assured protection of victims and the establishment of the UK's first ever Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. Despite the number of identified victims having risen by 40% and an increase in prosecutions for slavery offences, there is still room for significant improvement in a number of areas.

Post 45 Day Support

Under the current system, potential victims of trafficking are entitled to government funded accommodation and support for a 45 day 'rest and reflection period'. During this time, the Home Office will decide whether the person is a victim of trafficking, referred to as 'conclusive grounds'. Once the Home Office reaches a decision, the victim has 14 days before they must move out of the safe house if a positive conclusive grounds was reached (meaning they are a proven victim of trafficking), or 48 hours if they received a negative conclusive grounds.

There is no reliable data about what happens to people after they have left government accommodation. However, information collected by NGOs such as the Human Trafficking Foundation (HTF) shows that victims of human trafficking find the abrupt removal of support extremely difficult. A report from the HTF published this year also shows that many victims simply disappear



from the system upon leaving the safe house. Changes are therefore required to ensure that human trafficking survivors are being given the support needed to reintegrate into society and to overcome what is, for many, a highly traumatic period.

Theresa May has emphasised her commitment to tackling modern day slavery and upon launching the Modern Slavery Strategy in 2014 she claimed that, “**It puts victims at the heart of everything that we do.**” However, one of the main criticisms levelled against the Modern Slavery Act is that it focuses more upon convicting traffickers than ensuring the wellbeing of victims.

After the initial period of support has ended, the onus is on victims to work things out for themselves and they often find it extremely difficult to secure stable accommodation and employment. This exacerbates the risk of being re-trafficked, as survivors may find themselves in similar, or even worse situations than before they were initially trafficked.

The Government has acknowledged the need to provide support after the initial 45-day period. A 2014 government review of the National Referral Mechanism (the process which deals with human trafficking) highlighted the need for post-safe house support as well as the development of integration services. It is vital that the government follows through with its recommendations to provide a coordinated post-safe house support system for trafficking survivors.

Have a look through our other resources in this pack to read about the other specific areas we are campaigning for change in. We work across Jewish denominations in schools, youth movements and Synagogues to get the Jewish community engaged on this issue and we would love you to join us.

Thank you for taking part in Human Rights Shabbat 5777 – the biggest one that René Cassin has ever run. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions about the resources at info@renecassin.org

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