Introduction
Modern slavery exists in many forms – including forced labour, forced marriage and human trafficking. Although it is illegal in most countries where it is practised, there are more enslaved people in the world today than at any point in history. The Home Office estimates that 13,000 people in the UK are victims of slavery or trafficking. The number estimated by civil society organisations is close to 100,000.

As a result of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the number of identified victims has risen by 40% and there have been more prosecutions for slavery related offences. However, the first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Kevin Hyland stated that there are still “too many gaps in the system for victims to fall through”.

Slavery and trafficking are unavoidably connected to Jewish experience. As stated by the Chief Rabbi, “speaking out against the flagrant violations of human dignity implicit in this crime, should be in our [the Jewish community’s] DNA”.

Today’s Westminster hall debate on Tackling Modern Slavery is a chance for Parliamentarians to take a proactive stand against modern slavery and challenge the government to do more to address what Prime Minister Theresa May described as the “great human rights issue of our time”.

About René Cassin
René Cassin is a human rights organisation that promotes and protects universal human rights, drawing on Jewish experience and values. We campaign and inform on issues such as discrimination, asylum, modern day slavery and human trafficking, and general human rights protections.

The organisation is named in honour of Monsieur René Cassin, a French Jew and Nobel Laureate who was one of the principal co-drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In a recent submission to the Home Affairs inquiry into modern slavery, René Cassin highlighted three principle issues concerning modern slavery in the UK:

1. Guidance in the Modern Slavery Act on the treatment of victims of modern slavery or human trafficking carries less weight than immigration regulations. This undermines protections for victims who are apprehended in criminal exploitation settings.

2. Due to immigration status, unidentified victims of modern slavery or human trafficking risk being detained indefinitely in Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs).

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1 According to the 2018 Global Slavery Index by Walk Free Foundation, Britain may be home to as many as 136,000 slaves. See https://rightsinfo.org/britain-failing-modern-slavery/
3. The Modern Slavery Act does not go far enough in ensuring businesses with an annual turnover of over £36m annually publish a slavery and human trafficking statement to address modern slavery in their supply chains, nor does it encourage smaller businesses to also publish a statement.

The Impact of Immigration Regulations on Victims

1. The level of support available to victims depends on immigration status and nationality. A victim of trafficking is four times less likely to be identified as such in the UK if they are non-European.2

2. Recognition as a victim of slavery or trafficking does not confer right to remain in the UK, this depends on existing immigration status.3

3. Increasingly restrictive migration policies in the UK increase vulnerability to coercion by traffickers.4 Sections 34-42 of the Immigration Act cover not only the offence of illegal working, but also the prevention of people unlawfully present from renting a house legally in the UK; both are likely to increase victims’ dependency on their exploiter5.

4. The University of the West of England (UWE) and Unseen6 have identified an “overemphasis on immigration status” for victims of trafficking from outside Europe at the Home Office.7 Police officers found to treat potential victims as immigration offenders first and foremost, as a result of Home Office emphasis on immigration status8.

Detention of Victims

1. For victims of modern slavery and human trafficking, the detrimental impact of their immigration status is most notable when this results in their detention in an Immigration Removal Centre.

2. The Home Office’s Guidance on Adults at Risk in Immigration Detention states that victims of trafficking should not be detained.9 However, the Independent

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2 Human Trafficking Foundation, What the NRM reforms mean for children
3 Ibid
4 Ibid
5 Immigration Act 2016
6 https://www.unseenuk.org/
Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration found that potential victims are not being identified, released or offered the appropriate advice and support\(^\text{10}\).

3. If detained, victims of trafficking are often unable to disclose their experiences, partly due to the environment and the lack of specific expertise of staff inside IRCs.\(^\text{11}\) This is exacerbated by the effects of indefinite detention on mental and physical health, and the subsequent increased loss of trust in national authorities.

5. That the Home Office is responsible both for identifying and protecting victims of trafficking and for identifying and deporting undocumented migrants is a conflict of interest. The UWE/Unseen findings makes it clear that the latter interest is dominant.\(^\text{12}\)

**Modern Slavery in Supply Chains**

1. Section 54 of the UK Modern Slavery Act requires businesses with an annual turnover of over £36m to annually publish a slavery and human trafficking statement. However, there are no ramifications for failing to do so.

2. Of the statements uploaded on the Modern Slavery Registry\(^\text{13}\), only 14% of these statements comply with the legal requirements and most provide little information on the six areas listed in section 54(5) that the Act suggests companies may wish to report on\(^\text{14}\).

3. The Modern Slavery (Transparency in Supply Chains) Bill [HL] 2017-19, which is currently in its initial stages in the House of Lords, would make providing the information listed under section 54(5) mandatory and it is hoped that the Bill will get government support.

4. Small and Medium Sized Businesses (SMEs) are not required by law to publish a modern slavery statement. However, given that forced and slave labour typically occur in the operations of SMEs, there should be legislation in place requiring businesses with an annual turnover of under £36m to publish a revised modern slavery statement. Given that SMEs have significantly less resources and capacity than that of larger businesses, the government should provide increased support and guidance to SMEs on publishing a statement.


\(^{11}\)Ibid

\(^{12}\)The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2017, 2: A strong and united union in a changing world, Reforming Asylum, [https://www.conservatives.com/manifesto](https://www.conservatives.com/manifesto) [accessed 03 February 2018] p. 40 If we are referring instead to the UWE/Unseen report, shall we delete this reference?\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{13}\)[http://www.modernslaveryregistry.org/](http://www.modernslaveryregistry.org/)