

Date:

Dear Member of Parliament,

Last month Jewish people celebrated the festival of Passover. We recalled the story of Exodus, in which the Israelites were liberated from the shackles of slavery. During Passover, we are obligated to imagine ourselves as having personally experienced the enslavement suffered by our ancestors.

As a supporter of René Cassin, the Jewish voice for human rights, I am calling on the government to fulfil a similar commitment: to consider the experiences of victims of modern slavery in its response to the Coronavirus crisis.

The suffering and exploitation of victims of modern slavery will not stop during the Coronavirus crisis and is likely to place them in even greater harm. Victims of modern slavery will face greater risk during self-isolation: trapped in self-isolation with their abusers;¹ living in cramped or shared accommodation; inadequate (outreach support) funding to cover the costs of basic foods and supplies; undocumented victims of human trafficking with no recourse to public funds; and increased potential for triggering traumatic memories and mental health issues. These are some of the examples of the ways in which their victimisation will negatively impact the ability of victims and survivors of modern slavery to withstand Coronavirus.

I support René Cassin in calling for the government to ensure victims and survivors of modern slavery can access the essential services and support they need. The government must establish a contingency plan to support victims and survivors of modern slavery, including: access to suitable safe housing for victims with serious health issues, so they can self-isolate; ensuring weekly subsistence allowances remain accessible and are adequate, to ensure victims can buy basic and essential items; and guarantee that victims of human trafficking, many of whom are undocumented, have access to healthcare, housing and welfare benefits, without the threat of detention or deportation.

Whilst the Coronavirus crisis threatens us all, and the health and safety of those we hold dear, we must not forget our duty to provide for and protect the victims and survivors of modern slavery. We are all affected by this crisis, but we are not all affected equally. The government must consider the devastation Coronavirus is causing to the most vulnerable in our society, and place humanity at the forefront of its response to the Coronavirus crisis.

Sincerely,

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[René Cassin](#), the Jewish voice for human rights, draws upon Jewish values and experience to promote and protect universal human rights.

¹ Britain's independent anti-slavery commissioner, Sara Thornton, has expressed concern for victims of exploitation trapped in self-isolation with their abusers, in 'Suspected slavery surges in the U.K. with a record 10,000 reports in one year' [<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/suspected-slavery-surges-u-k-record-10-000-reports-one-n1175131>]