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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

EU too slow to stop modern slave traders, warns report

The Centre for Social Justice has today published its second report on Modern Slavery, written by Fiona Cunningham, a former adviser to the Home Secretary, Theresa May.

'A Modern Response to Modern Slavery' – a Europe-wide report - looks at how Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) move men, women and children across EU borders and into enslavement.

The report argues that a concerted pan-European drive by national governments and law enforcement is urgently needed to disrupt and defeat the gangs of international criminals making multi-million pound profits from trafficking human beings into a life of slavery.

It warns that the pace of progress in the fight against modern slavery across the EU has been too slow, and that far more needs to be done by law enforcement across Europe to curb the appalling trade in human lives masterminded by OCGs. Existing agencies are often relentless in their pursuit of drug traffickers, but accord human trafficking much lower priority.

Its 40 recommendations centre on building greater international coordination and include a call for every EU state to bring forward a Modern Slavery Act. Like the recently passed UK Act, the report says these laws must include the threat of life imprisonment, immunity from prosecution for trafficking victims, and the appointment of anti-slavery commissioners in all 28 member countries.

The report spells out the scale and cruelty of modern slavery in which tens of thousands of vulnerable men, women and children, are traded across borders. Victims – seen as profitable commodities by organised criminals - are

compelled to enter into sham marriages, sex work, slave labour, benefit fraud or petty crime.

OCGs, funding lavish lifestyles for their criminal bosses, lie behind much of the trade yet prosecution rates are comparatively low. Sophisticated use of the internet by slave traders and ease of movement between EU states, work against law enforcement and prosecutions.

The report details a variety of investigations into modern slavery, including Operation Joust in the North West of England which began in 2013. It started with an investigation into a network of bogus colleges cashing in on illegal immigration. But this allegedly turned out to be only part of the operation with the OCG network also involved in trafficking women from Eastern Europe for sham marriages with Asian men, the movement of criminal money to Pakistan and tax evasion.

The report also reveals the case of housing built in Slovakia, unwittingly funded by the UK taxpayer. Slovaks refer to the houses as 'smarties' because they are painted in bright colours. They are built on the proceeds of benefit fraud orchestrated by an OCG network which duped families looking for work into travelling to the UK by coach. On arrival, the traffickers seized their documents, forced them to claim benefits then kept the money.

'A Modern Response to Modern Slavery' highlights the following:

- The European Parliament is yet to reach an agreement on including modern slavery and organised crime in the scope of its negotiations on EU Passenger Name Records (PNR). This is a vital investigative tool for law enforcement and a safeguard to mitigate the unintended consequences of Free Movement. We already share PNR outside the EU, so not sharing within is illogical
- Free movement has made it tougher for police to spot victims of modern slavery from the EU as they arrive in destination countries legally. Police interviewed for the report agreed that free movement may have increased the number of modern slavery victims
- OCGs prey upon the vulnerable and impoverished for profit. Children can be sold for up to 40,000 euros then trafficked across Europe. OCGs trafficking children for forced begging specifically target children in orphanages, young adults with disabilities or single mothers with children because OCGs believe they will generate higher profit
- OCGs use complicit illegal money lenders to push vulnerable families into debt with extremely high interest rates, forcing them into exploitation for a debt criminals will never let them pay off

- Just as any FTSE 100 company has a supply chain and sophisticated business model, the same is true of some OCGs. There is evidence of modern slavery cartels
- An explosion of adverts buying and selling humans for exploitation has made trafficking easier for OCGs and difficult for law enforcement to investigate as the internet is cross-jurisdiction. Modern slavery crime is low risk and high profit for OCGs trading online. The report calls it 'cyber slavery'. OCGs are using technology to keep surveillance on their victims
- The same tools and tactics used by law enforcement for drug trafficking investigations are not used routinely in modern slavery cases and the intelligence picture on OCGs involved in the modern slave trade is incomplete
- There is an urgent need for more academic research and evidence gathering by EU policy makers on labour exploitation
- OCGs operate in more than one country and they often operate in more than two so law enforcement need to be involved in more multilateral investigations than is currently the case.

Fiona Cunningham, author of 'A Modern Response to Modern Slavery' and Associate Director at the Centre for Social Justice said:

"Modern slavery crime must end. Victims are hidden away from the public eye and they have no voice. Under the tight control of a slave trader, victims are unable to tell anyone of their enslavement and the repeated violence and rape that is so often a feature of it. We must be their voice.

"Modern slavery is a high harm, high threat crime. Its international reach requires police to work more closely with law enforcement in other countries. Our EU borders are less defined and the internet provides opportunities for Organised Crime Groups, yet challenges and hurdles for law enforcement investigations.

"Criminals of the sort that exist in the world of organised crime respect money over humanity. Organised Crime Groups think they can play by their own rules. Politicians, police and policy makers across Europe must leave them in no doubt that they are wrong and as a society, exploiting vulnerable people for profit will no longer be tolerated."

Director of the Centre for Social Justice, Christian Guy, added:

"We commit at the CSJ to help to make change happen. All over the continent others need to do the same. Slavery is not inevitable and leaders have the power to end it. This report lights the path they must take to do so."

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For media inquiries, please contact Lucy Kinder at the CSJ on 07786 260699 or lucy.kinder@centreforsocialjustice.org.uk

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A copy of the full report is attached to this email. Copies also available on request from the CSJ or MIP

Notes to editors

The CSJ report 'It Happens Here' led to the Home Secretary bringing forward a Modern Slavery Act. The author of this report worked with the Home Secretary on the Modern Slavery Bill before joining the CSJ and writing this second report 'A Modern Response to Modern Slavery'.

A link to the report:

About the Centre for Social Justice

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is an independent think tank established in 2004 to put social justice at the heart of British politics. In June 2013, the CSJ was awarded UK Social Policy Think Tank of the Year at Prospect magazine's Think Tank Awards.

Last year the CSJ published Breakthrough Britain 2015, which set out almost 200 evidence-based policy recommendations to tackle poverty in the UK. This included solutions to worklessness, educational failure, addiction, family breakdown and problem debt.

The current Home Secretary Theresa May said the CSJ was the "catalyst" for the Government's Modern Slavery Bill. This legislation, which will help Britain lead a global fight against modern slavery, was a key recommendation in the CSJ's landmark 2013 report, It Happens Here.

The CSJ has published dozens of seminal papers which have shaped government policies, including Dynamic Benefits, which has led the Coalition's welfare reforms. Further to this, the CSJ manages an Alliance of over 300 of the most effective grass roots, poverty-fighting organisations. The CSJ is able to draw upon the expertise and experience of Alliance charities for research work and media inquiries. Journalists wishing to conduct grass-roots research into social problems can be put in touch with front-line charity directors and staff.