

Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF  
United Kingdom

10th October 2022

Dear Home Secretary,

**R.E.: Protecting the rights of modern slavery victims**

We are writing to you to express our concern following your interview on 1st October with The Sun newspaper. In this interview, you talked about plans to restrict the ability of migrants to challenge deportations on the basis that they had been subjected to forced labour or human trafficking. We are extremely worried by restrictions on the ability to challenge deportations for those subjected to modern slavery. Access to the courts and judicial scrutiny are essential if the UK is to ensure justice for individuals and families, including the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society who may be affected by deportation.

On the basis of the evidence available to us and indeed to the Government, we refute the assertions that people are claiming to be victims of trafficking in order to frustrate deportations. Over 90% of cases referred from immigration detention are confirmed as victims of trafficking.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, despite claims in interviews that Albanians are misusing the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the Government's own statistics demonstrate that Albanians are the second highest nationality referred to the Home Office under the Duty to Notify, which had already increased by 47% in 2021. As such, there is clear evidence that many Albanians are not entering the NRM, despite being likely victims of trafficking. Moreover, the Home Office's own statistics find that the majority of Albanian asylum claims succeed.

There are cases in which slavery victims have been subjected to unlawful treatment by the Home Office. In 2019, the department paid £25,000 in damages to a man it unlawfully detained who was identified by the NRM to be a victim of modern slavery<sup>2</sup>. Despite this, the department continued to try and remove him which is symptomatic of its insistence to remove victims and seemingly neglect its duty to protect people from trafficking.

In spite of cases like the one mentioned above, in March 2022, the Government rejected claims by the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner that it was not protecting victims of modern slavery when questioned. If the Government is serious about protecting victims of modern slavery, then its efforts would be better placed on ensuring victims receive the care and protection they deserve.

Protecting victims of slavery should be a priority for this Government, but instead it seems intent on punishing them. The threat of not being able to challenge deportations by those

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<sup>1</sup> [Abuse by the system: Survivors of trafficking in immigration detention. Helen Bamber Foundation. P.5.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Home Office forced to pay £25,000 in damages after unlawfully trying to deport trafficking victim | The Independent](#)

facing labour abuse or human trafficking will lead to a reluctance of victims to come forward and report any abuses. These abuses will go unpunished, and the victims will continue to suffer. This will seriously undermine the Government's plans to crack down on modern slavery, and to hold those responsible for these crimes. We call on you to work with those in the migration and labour exploitation sectors to protect victims. In particular, we urge you to consider the Justice Committee's Pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Victims Bill recommendations<sup>3</sup> which calls for the implementation of safe-reporting for those experiencing exploitation.

For the UK to lead the way in tackling the injustice of modern slavery, it must consolidate its efforts on being victim-centered supporting victims to rebuild their lives.

Yours sincerely,

**Fizza Qureshi**

CEO of the Migrants' Rights Network

**Aké Achi**

Director of Migrants at Work

**Pierre Makhoul**

Legal Director

Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID)

**Lucila Granada**

CEO of Focus On Labour Exploitation (FLEX)

**Naeema Ahmed**

Network Manager

UK BME Anti-Slavery Network (BASNET)

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<sup>3</sup> [Pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Victims Bill](#)