



Human trafficking: Modern day slavery?

Newsreader

“A jury has been told that at least 21 Chinese cockle pickers drowned because of the gross negligence of their gang master.”

Newsreader

“The Home Office Minister Beverly Hughes said she suspected people trafficking was behind the tragedy. We are talking about...”

Newsreader

“From Lithuania to London, our special investigation into the mo...”

Jacqui Smith

“It’s serious crime. It’s trading people at a profit, it’s wrong and Pentameter 2 is about catching the traffickers and rescuing those who’ve suffered from this trade.”

Commentary:

The images of victims of trafficking ... so compelling, so shocking, so gripping....

They tell tales of modern slavery which have led to calls for action.

Jacqui Smith:

“This is a situation where there are victims and criminals involved ... it’s something that has been I think for too long, hidden. And where, if you’re going to tackle it, people need to understand the scale and the nature and their responsibilities to help to identify it.”

Commentary

The UK, like many other states, has tightened border controls and brought in new legislation on migrant labour to shut down human trafficking routes.

David Blunkett:

“We had to work with other countries on this in order to be able to identify the trafficking lines, the people who were involved in it and to try and get back the home countries where this initial promise was being made, that if they coughed up the money, or their families did then eventually they would have a good life.”

Jacqui Smith:

“I’m very clear that people would not be trafficked if there was not demand for them, either employers who were willing to employ people illegally and to use forced labour in the area or in the area of people that are trafficked for sexual exploitation, people who are willing to buy sex with somebody who’s been coerced into it, which is the reason for introducing what is now Section 14 of the Police And Crime Act which criminalises the demand for sex with somebody who has been controlled for gain”.

Commentary:

Yet do these measures really make people less vulnerable to exploitation?

Parosha Chandran

“In one case I represented a young girl who had actually been trying to escape the United Kingdom to France because her trafficker had brought her into the UK, had subjected her to sexual exploitation and she was trying to run away from him. She had no chance but to use a false document to get on a bus at Dover Docks. And she was arrested on the bus and she

was prosecuted for the use of false documents and she was sentenced to 9 months imprisonment.”

Commentary:

New vulnerabilities are created by some anti trafficking policies.

Parosha Chandran:

“The Border Agency’s primary role is for the enforcement of border control. And so this is an agency that generally deals with illegal entrance and makes decisions to return them to their countries of origin, on the basis that their claims for protection are not credible.

The same agency is now responsible for identifying victims of trafficking.”

David Blunkett:

“I fear that the bigger the clamp down on legal migration, the greater the emphasis will be on clandestine entry and exploitation of those who have no rights and therefore have no appeal for us to protect them.”

Commentary:

Yet, are people who have been trafficked always asking for protection or are they demanding rights? What if the language of protection and the very idea of victim hood are not part of the solution but part of the problem?