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For immediate release

Anti-trafficking charity Eaves' Poppy Project calls on Government to stop detaining trafficked people.

Eaves' Poppy Project has launched a campaign to end the detention and punishment of victims of trafficking in the UK.

Every year men, women and children are trafficked into the UK to be exploited and treated like slaves. These individuals are lied to and harmed in the UK, but instead of protecting victims and focusing on prosecuting the traffickers, these exploited individuals are often unfairly put in prisons and detention centres for crimes they were forced to commit by their traffickers. Over 95% of Poppy Project clients in detention or prison lost their freedom because a trafficker gave them a fake passport or stole food to survive – crimes that only happened because they were trafficked here.

Abigail Stepnitz, National Coordinator of the Poppy Project says 'Imprisoning vulnerable victims is unfair and unjust. The traffickers take away their freedom and force them to do unimaginable things and once they escape, if they escape, the UK Government takes away their freedom yet again.'

Some of the vulnerable victims are identified and helped by Government and charities; however, due to a flawed system, an untold number are improperly detained in prisons and detention centres. Releasing victims and assisting them to return to their home countries is often not an option due to the threat of violence, torture or re-trafficking on return. UK law also entitles victims to be released from incarceration and given support to enable them to recover from their experiences; something which the Government is currently failing to do.

We call on the Government to ensure that anyone who may be a victim of trafficking is properly identified and freed from unfair detention or incarceration. We need at least 100,000 signatures to force MPs to debate the issue. <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/18933>

Yemi from Nigeria says, 'The worst thing about being trafficked is being sent to the detention centre. In detention the people in charge forget that you are a human being; the way they treat you, where they make you sleep and what they make you eat; it's not good for you.'

– NOTES TO EDITORS –

The Poppy Project provides vital support and accommodation for women trafficked to the UK for any form of exploitation including sexual exploitation, labour exploitation including domestic servitude, forced illicit activities and organ harvesting.

The Poppy Project is run by Eaves, a women's charity working to combat all aspects of violence against women through accommodation, support services, research, education and lobbying.

For further information about Eaves, contact Eaves' communications officer Laura Craddock on 0207 8407132 or at laura.craddock@eaveshousing.co.uk.

