



21 October 2011

For immediate release

David Cameron welcomes the opportunity to talk to victims of trafficking at Number 10 Downing Street, but only if they're not asylum seekers

The Poppy Project is shocked to reveal that three victims of trafficking had their invitations revoked from speaking to David Cameron at Number 10 Downing Street on Wednesday due to their immigration statuses.

To mark the occasion of Anti-Slavery Week, David Cameron held a reception to meet anti-trafficking professionals and victims in an effort to confirm the Government's commitment to ending modern day slavery.

Four victims of trafficking were invited to meet the Prime Minister but at the eleventh hour Abigail Stepnitz, National Coordinator of the Poppy Project received an e-mail from one of the event organisers to say that 'officials have noticed that three of the four victims have asylum claims pending and it would be an impossible position for the PM to be placed in before the asylum applications are resolved.'

Abigail Stepnitz says, 'This was an opportunity for the Prime Minister to meet victims who have been failed by British public services and a chance for him to hear from victims what the UK should be doing to protect them. The fact that three of the women have pending asylum claims should have been irrelevant because we were there to talk about trafficking, not asylum.'

Although the invitation to meet David Cameron was cancelled, organisers wanted to arrange a pass which would allow the victims into Number 10 but not to talk to the Prime Minister. Monika, one of the service users who was due to meet him said, 'The meeting wasn't about me, it was about stopping trafficking. If I went as a guest instead of a victim I wouldn't get to talk to him and he wouldn't make any changes. The door was closed on us.'

In relation to the women that Poppy supports, about 90% of non-EU nationals that are victims of trafficking simply have to apply for asylum because it is the only viable immigration route which will prevent them from being sent back to the home countries to face possible torture and re-trafficking.

Is this a clear message: asylum seekers are not welcome at Number 10; asylum seekers are not welcome in the UK?

Denis MacShane MP, a leading parliamentary campaigner on trafficking says "Sadly despite good intentions David Cameron really does not understand the trafficking issue. It does involve the most exploited, the most abused, the most vulnerable of girls and women whose paperwork is not in order otherwise they would not be victims. He will meet the victims of abuse and cruelty in Libya but shuts the door of Downing Street to them in Britain".

– 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 020 7840 7132 or at laura.craddock@eaveshousing.co.uk.