



Read the Archbishop's speech as delivered:

My Lords, I rise to introduce Amendment 139C, tabled in my name, and Amendment 144A, which is consequential to it. I thank the noble Lords, Lord Blunkett, Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate and Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, for co-signing it.

The amendment requires the Secretary of State to prepare a 10-year strategy for tackling human trafficking, in collaboration with international partners on this issue. A statement of policies for implementing the strategy must be presented to Parliament within a year of the Bill becoming law and every following year. Each time that a statement is made, an opportunity must be given for both Houses to debate and vote on it via a Motion for resolution.

The amendment, and my second amendment, relating to a 10-year strategy for an international refugee policy, are far from wrecking or negative amendments in the Bill but seek to improve it, as is our duty and right in this House. As I said at Second Reading, we need a Bill to reform migration and we need to stop the boats, but this Bill does not contain within it a sense of the long term and global nature of the challenges that we face. In order to deal with global challenges, we need to engage in international collaboration towards global solutions.

My Lords, the trade in people is one such global challenge. In 2022, in the UK, there were 16,938 potential victims of modern slavery referred to the Home Office via the NRM - a 33% increase compared to the preceding year and the highest annual number since the NRM began in 2009. The real number of victims in the UK may be much higher. Walk Free's global slavery index believes that there could be over 100,000 victims living in slavery in the UK. However, that same index found that, globally, 50 million people were living in modern slavery in the world on any given day in 2021 - a 10 million increase since the 2018 index.

Not all forms of slavery counted in this number will involve people trafficking, but a significant number will have been trafficked at some point in their story of exploitation. In the UK, we are often dealing with the very end of what is a global supply chain. If we want, truly, to have an impact on the root of the problem, we need to follow the supply chain of trafficking back to its source and target the traffickers there and at every step along the way to people eventually arriving here. A cross-border trade requires cross-border solutions. We have long agreed that when it comes to drugs.

The Anglican Communion has a helpful perspective here, as it is present in 165 countries around the world. There are Anglicans and other people of faith present in both source and destination countries for migration and trafficking. Since 2014, the Anglican Alliance has been working on these issues in partnership with the Salvation Army, Caritas International and the Clewer Initiative, among others, convening global and regional consultations, developing toolkits to equip churches, and establishing regional and interregional communities of practice. The global reach and connectedness of the Anglican Communion allows us to connect up work that is going on upstream and downstream in the supply

chain, to help to ensure that migration happens safely and to prevent trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

The Clewer Initiative, the Church of England's national work to combat modern slavery, has also been working since 2020 with the World Council of Churches to challenge issues of modern slavery. One part of the focus is to facilitate networking between churches and partners in countries of origin and those in countries of arrival to enable collaboration and broader strategy. Ending human trafficking was mentioned explicitly in the targets of the UN sustainable development goals 5, 8 and 16, to be achieved by 2030. However, progress has been slow, and as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime has highlighted, national responses, particularly in developing states, appear to be deteriorating. Detection rates fell by 11% in 2020 and convictions by 27%, which it says illustrates "a worldwide slowdown in the criminal justice response to trafficking".

I am sure my Lords that all in this Committee agree that our target should be the total eradication of this evil, and that part of the 10-year strategy being proposed here should be plans for collaboration with international partners to set up an international anti-trafficking force, funded by Governments and mandated with the authority to target and arrest human traffickers wherever they might be found. That would be taking action upstream, focusing on the traffickers rather than their victims - an incidental effect of this Bill - and getting us closer to addressing the root of the issue. We did something similar with 17th-century piracy and 19th-century slave-trading, where we led the world. This is an equally serious crime, and we must go after the perpetrators with speed and accuracy and the full force of international law.

As the examples I gave of the Anglican Communion show, this cannot be done in one country alone. It requires collaboration in a series of practical areas, such as security and intelligence-sharing, between international partners. Developing global solutions and approaches inevitably takes time, and a longer-term strategy than the short-term election cycles of UK politics is often required.

That is why this amendment calls for a strategy that would continue, regardless of specific Home Secretaries or Governments. The Minister may say the Government already have longer-term strategies - he was kind enough to make time for a meeting with him a few weeks back to discuss this - and that this Bill is not the place for long-term strategies. If that is so, I ask him to tell us clearly what is the place and where there is a commitment in law that these strategies will be maintained and worked upon.

We have sadly learned that a promise from a Minister on the Floor of this House has not always been sufficient for us to be sure that something will happen - Governments and Ministers change, and there are changes of policy. Support of this amendment might go some way to assuaging doubts that the UK is reneging on its promises and abandoning existing commitments to work internationally under the ECAT and other international treaties.

Human trafficking is an evil practice, and one which violates the dignity and value of its victims. This amendment seeks to encourage development of a longer-term strategy, within which this Bill would be a part, that will go after the perpetrators of the crime, not the victims, and give the United Kingdom the opportunity to lead in seeing decisive and effective international action. We led the way remarkably under a recent

Conservative Prime Minister with the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Now we should do the same in an international crackdown on perpetrators.

6 min read

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