

# Nordic Model Now! Presentation at CAT Meeting with NGOs, 66th Session, 6 May 2019

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Our report to the Committee explains that the Modern Slavery Act mangles the definition of the forms of human trafficking that women and girls are most likely to be victims of, incorrectly centring the definition on the victim's travel.

The Government's so-called 'independent' [review](#)<sup>1</sup> into the Modern Slavery Act has recently published its [findings](#).<sup>2</sup> These acknowledge that the definition doesn't conform to the Palermo Protocol but recommend no immediate action to change it. Instead they say the Government should develop the Home Office's '[typology](#)<sup>3</sup> of modern slavery.' But the typologies of human trafficking for sexual exploitation use the term 'forced sex work' – even when the victim is a child – which implies that prostitution is regular labour.

Once prostitution is accepted as work, poor women are expected to turn to it to support themselves and their children – and the welfare system is exonerated from making systematic provision for them. This is what we are seeing in the UK.

The reviewers didn't consider the discriminatory implications of the Act and that consequently most sex trafficking is unrecognised, its victims unsupported and its perpetrators let off the hook. One of the recommendations would move the definition even further from the Palermo Protocol's.

A survivor of prostitution in our group sends you this message:

*“In my experience, prostitution is a form of torture. My 'clients' weren't paying me to play-act; they were paying me to genuinely submit. One 'client' beat me with paddles, belts, shoes, canes and batons. Subsequent 'clients' were aroused by my bruises, cuts and scars.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-review-of-the-modern-slavery-act>

<sup>2</sup> <http://nordicmodelnow.org/2019/05/01/the-independent-review-of-the-modern-slavery-act-ignores-womens-human-rights/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-typology-of-modern-slavery-offences-in-the-uk>

*I was spat at, beaten, and raped over and over and, worse, was forced to look like I enjoyed it – or risk him not paying and I end up homeless.”*

This is what countless women in the UK are enduring to keep a roof over their heads, with the full complicity of the Government.

New [police guidance](#)<sup>4</sup> sees prostitution as a necessary part of society and not inherently harmful. This is not surprising because it was developed in consultation with an organisation that campaigns **against** understanding prostitution as a form of gender-based violence. The guidance doesn't mention obligations to crack down on men's demand, it explicitly advises **against** encouraging women to exit prostitution, and generally discourages enforcement of pimping and brothel keeping legislation.

The UK is behaving like a rogue state. It ratifies treaties and then fails to implement their terms, and is abjectly failing to uphold women and girls' human rights to equality, dignity and freedom from violence.

Our recommendations include:

1. The Modern Slavery Act is amended to conform to the Palermo Protocol.
2. The Government must accept that prostitution is a form of gender-based violence that is an obstacle to women's human right to equality with men.
3. The welfare system is amended so that women are not coerced into prostitution under the duress of extreme poverty.
4. Police guidance is updated to prioritise the enforcement of the pimping and brothel keeping legislation.
5. Introduction of a network of high-quality services for women involved in prostitution to include long-term psychosocial support, and genuine routes out and alternatives.
6. Measures to address men's demand for prostitution, including the introduction of legislation against purchasing sexual services.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://nordicmodelnow.org/2019/04/29/a-sexist-prism-national-police-guidance-on-policing-prostitution/>