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NEWS

UK punters face prosecution

Minister for Women Harriet Harman



Punters in the UK could face prosecution, with new laws being mooted that would make buying sex illegal and put an end to criminalising women in prostitution.

Senior government members are considering following the route Sweden took eight years ago in criminalising punters rather than women, partly because of the growth in sex trafficking. According to the government, 85% of women in brothels come from outside the UK.

Ministers such as Minister for Women Harriet Harman and ex-Minister Fiona Mactaggart are supporting the proposal.

The UK is not alone in considering this action. In July, Norway announced that, under proposed legislation, men who buy sex could face up to six months in jail. The legislation is currently under consultation but is certain to be adopted because all three coalition parties support it.

"We want to send a clear message to men that

buying sex is unacceptable and part of an international crime," said Norwegian Justice Minister Knut Storberget.

He added that criminalising the buying of sex will make it more difficult for traffickers to organise themselves because they will no longer be able to find clients on the street.

A government official announced in August that India also is considering decriminalising women instead pursuing traffickers, pimps, brothel owners and clients.

The new amendments to the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 are currently with the cabinet and should then go to parliament.

"We hope the amendments will be passed in this session of parliament," said Ministry of Women official Nandita Mishra.

Egypt bans FGM after death of girl, 12

Egypt has announced that it is imposing a complete ban on female genital mutilation after the death of a young girl during an operation in Upper Egypt.

A ban was introduced nearly ten years ago, but it allowed the use of FGM in "exceptional circumstances" and by qualified doctors. In reality, the practice has continued and is still routine in some areas of the country.

However, the child's death promoted an international outcry, with members of the Egyptian public and human rights groups both calling on Egypt's government and the medical profession to put an outright ban on the practice.

A health ministry spokesman said that from now on, no member of the medical profession would be allowed to perform the operation in public or private establishments.

Those who broke the law would be punished, and the doctor who carried out



Egypt First Lady Suzanne Mubarak campaigned against the practice

the operation on the 12-year-old girl has been arrested, the spokesman said.

Egypt First Lady Suzanne Mubarak has spoken out strongly against female genital mutilation, saying that it is a "flagrant example of continued physical and psychological violence against children, which must stop."

The country's top religious authorities also expressed unequivocal support for the ban, saying that FGM had no basis either in the Koran or in the Bible.

Israel newspapers 'advertise trafficking'

The Task Force on Human Trafficking (TFHT) held a protest at the offices of daily Israel newspaper *Ha'aretz* in Tel Aviv last month (August), amid claims that the paper publishes adverts encouraging human trafficking.

The protest was also against other dailies *Yediot Aharonot* and *Ma'ariv*.

The advertisements call for women to work in prostitution in Israel or abroad, and, according to TFHT head Roni Sedovnik, are likely to be funded by wealthy organised crime gangs.

Sedovnik added that although all three papers would cite freedom of expression as "excuses" to continue publishing the adverts, freedom of expression should not negate a person's right not to be enslaved and that the ads make the paper complicit in the trafficking crime.

The legal adviser for *Yediot Aharonot* has said the paper will continue to publish ads advocating prostitution services.

Amos Schocken, owner of Ha'aretz



Ireland major route for child traffickers

An official assessment conducted for the Welsh Assembly Government has explicitly named Ireland as a route for child smuggling, a conclusion that directly contradicts the stance taken by an Irish Government which insists that people trafficking is not a major problem.

A recent BBC documentary also highlighted Ireland as a child trafficking route, with one suspect admitting to smuggling children through Rosslare Port.

Job Centre Plus offers escort jobs

Job Centre Plus – the government's job agency, run by the Department for Work and Pensions – has come under fire for accepting adverts from escort agencies on its website.

The jobs offer up to £100 an hour for "providing clients with a personal escort service in an unsupervised environment". Some of the advertised jobs link to websites where women can be paid up to £1,000 a night.

Following a ruling last year, when sex shop chain Ann Summers successfully took Job Centre Plus to the High Court for refusing to advertise its jobs, the government agency claims its hands are tied and that it is legally obliged to advertise these jobs.

Eaves research and development manager Frances Brodrick said she was shocked that the Job Centre Plus was advertising these jobs, adding that it was "very likely" that after taking such a job, young women would end up being coerced into situations they felt unable to cope with.

"The escort business is a grey area," she said. "It's not illegal to be an escort; in the true sense it's merely a hired companion to attend a party or function. What is illegal is selling sex as an addition to the package.

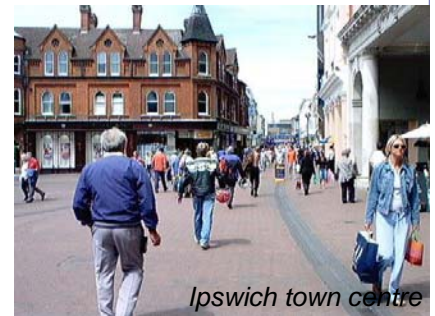
"Through Eaves' research and experience of working with victims of sexual exploitation, we know that there are clear links between prostitution and these other roles within the sex industry, like escorting and lap dancing."

Ipswich looks to exit strategies as a way of ending street prostitution

Police in Ipswich, Suffolk – where five women working in prostitution were found murdered last December – are to help women out of prostitution instead of prosecuting them in a bid to end street prostitution in the city within five years.

As well as offering women the chance to exit prostitution, the scheme will also see men arrested for kerb crawling. To date, more than 80 kerb crawlers have been arrested since March.

"We need to challenge the view that street prostitution is here to stay," said Supt Alan Caton, talking to BBC Newsnight. "These women are incredibly vulnerable. They lead chaotic lifestyles and are subject to violence and rape. These are women who are often marginalised in society, so there is a real need to actually intervene and help them choose a different lifestyle."



Ipswich town centre

Update on Sigma Huda imprisonment

After a period of house arrest earlier this year (as reported in *EavesNews* June 2007), the lawyer and Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Sigma Huda has been sentenced to three years imprisonment for aiding and abetting extortion found to have been committed by her husband.

Concerns have been raised about the sentence after Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Leandro Despouy, received information indicating that her right to legal representation and the independence of the court were severely affected during her trial.

According to reports, defence lawyers felt pressured and had no opportunity to visit her in prison. They also had difficulties accessing the case files and other relevant information. The atmosphere during the trial was reportedly intimidating, with military and police presence both outside and inside the courtroom.

Honour-based violence: the facts



A rise in cases of honour-based violence in the UK, including the high-profile case of Banaz Mahmod, is starting to change people's perceptions of this form of violence against women, says **Helen Atkins**

Criminals in the name of so-called honour – or 'honour' killings – are examples of gender-based violence specific to certain cultures and/or religions. Honour-based violence (HBV) occurs in over 50 countries worldwide and in the past has mostly occurred in the Middle East, but is now increasingly seen in Western countries via immigrant populations.

A rising number of girls and young women living in the UK have become victims of HBV. There is a clash of perceptions of morality; between countries of origin, where HBV may be tolerated or even legal (for example legislation in Jordan, Syria, Morocco and Haiti allows pre-meditated murder of 'adulterous' female relatives by men) in contrast to behaviour considered to be 'modern' or 'Westernised'.

Increased awareness

HBV is a highly contentious issue that has recently been afforded significant media attention. Technology has brought HBV to a new, international audience numbering many millions. In April 2007, Iraqi teenager Du'a Khalil Aswad was stoned to death by a group of local men for falling in love with the 'wrong' man.

Du'a's brutal murder was uploaded onto YouTube and viewed around the world, provoking global condemnation of the practice. She has become the public face of HBV, representing the 5,000 killings estimated to take place each year, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). In the first

quarter of 2007, at least 40 honour killings were recorded in Kurdistan alone.

UK scene

In 2002 it was estimated that 12 'honour' killings took place in Britain, but that was believed to be a serious under-representation of true figures. Exact numbers are unknown; due to the clandestine and ethnic-specific nature of HBV it is often concealed within close-knit communities. However, several high-profile cases have contributed to an evolution of understanding about this particularly pernicious form of femicide. As a result, in June it emerged that UK authorities have reopened investigations into 2,000

deaths dating back 11 years to 1996.

Health matters

There remains a lack of specialised healthcare for victims, which must take into account faith and culture as well as patient confidentiality. On 1 July 2007, the Forced Marriage Unit (established by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in January 2005) ordered that healthcare professionals must intervene if they suspect Asian girls and young women are at risk, using indicators such as depression and self-harm.

Jasvinder Sanghera, survivor of HBV and founder of support group charity Karma Nirvana, believes it is no coincidence that young Asian women between the ages of 16-24 are three times

more likely to commit suicide than the national average.

Getting the balance right

The crux of the difficulty in tackling HBV is the need to promote community cohesion, while rigorously pursuing and deterring HBV. An outcome of Banaz Mahmud's murder (see box below) is to secure commitment from authorities to recognise ethnic familial abuse and act upon it in accordance with human rights and the law. Prior to this case, criminal justice was, at times, sidelined, because law enforcers fell prey to misplaced notions of cultural sensitivity, condoning brutality in the name of distorted interpretations of shame and honour.

What can we do?

Diana Nammi, chair of the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation,

made the following recommendations in April 2007 for addressing HBV :

- Develop mandatory training for frontline workers
- Always show sensitivity and appreciate seriousness
- Do not dismiss fears; never return victim to family; do not attempt mediation
- Avoid perceived cultural differences and racist attitudes
- Conduct a tailored risk assessment
- Establish a dedicated, statutory HBV unit
- Create a national advisory group
- Provide long-term resources and support for survivors.

For more information visit the International Campaign Against Honour Killings at

www.stophonourkillings.com

Banaz Mahmud

In January 2006, 20-year-old Banaz Mahmud was raped, tortured and murdered by her father, uncle and accomplices in a two-hour ordeal. In June 2007, the perpetrators were convicted for life, setting a precedent to dispel police fears of accusations of racism or persecution. Instead, police were condemned for failing Banaz, as she had repeatedly pleaded for protection over the course of several weeks prior to her killing.

Posthumous justice for Banaz, however, does not necessarily mean justice or even protection for future victims. Despite the judge's refusal to mitigate sentences, as in previous cases, in acknowledgement that HBV formed part of the defendants' native culture, several facts emerged throughout the trial which could discourage those at risk from contacting authorities:

- Banaz told police four times that her family were trying to kill her. They did not listen.
- Police officers twice informed her family of the allegations, contravening police guidelines.
- One officer is in line for promotion, despite rejecting Banaz's terror as "melodramatic" and seeking to arrest her for criminal damage (after she escaped an attack by breaking a window).



Banaz Mahmud was murdered by her father

“Designer vaginas”

The pressure on women to have perfect bodies has now spread to their genitalia, and procedures such as labiaplasty – cutting the vaginal lips – are increasingly common. But how can this be culturally acceptable while FGM is not?

By Janet Bowstead and Cat Whitehouse

The term ‘female genital mutilation’ is usually used to highlight the seriousness of the gynaecological surgery carried out on girls or young women who do not choose to undergo such procedures. It is against UK law and also illegal for any UK resident to take young women out of the UK for FGM.

However, it is not illegal for surgeons in this country to carry out labiaplasty and vaginal and vulvar cosmetic augmentation or reduction procedures on adult women choosing to have such surgery, prompting critics to say that “female genital surgery” is the fastest-growing area of plastic surgery. Private clinics advertise such procedures in the context of “alleviating pelvic floor disorders”; however, much of the promotional material offers women vaginal rejuvenation for the

“enhancement of sexual gratification”. Some even offer hoodectomy (removal of the prepuce or vaginal hood), which constitutes Type I FGM, and illegal – even with consent – although they get around this by framing it as “corrective” surgery.

While clinics claim that women desire aesthetically enhanced and “youthful” labia, and are concerned about whether the inner or outer lips project sufficiently or too much, it is clear that they are offering medically unnecessary procedures, based on perceived norms of female genitalia dictated by the increasing availability of pornography.

It is surely time to question whose desires are being catered for by this surgery. The clinics sometimes acknowledge that women seeking such procedures may be low in confidence about their image or appearance, and that decisions should not be hurried. However, clinics clearly have no reason to acknowledge the pressures and expectations on women’s sexuality and appearance which might lead them to seek such drastic “solutions”, and have no reason to offer any alternative support or advice. They simply claim that the surgery will lead to better sex – i.e. better and longer orgasm – as if a positive sex life is only related to “the amount of frictional forces generated”.

Links between corrective genital surgery and FGM

Procedure	What it actually involves	FGM categorisation
Vaginoplasty	Cutting off parts of the vaginal lips and stitching the vaginal opening	Type III “...narrowing or stitching of the vaginal opening...”
Piercing	Pushing a needle through labia, clitoris or clitoral hood for insertion of decorative metal bar or ring	Type IV pricking, piercing, cutting into the clitoris and/or labia, cauterisation or branding of the genital area, tightening or narrowing the vagina, scraping of the erectile tissue surrounding the vaginal opening, inserting substances into the vagina to cause bleeding. All other non-medically required procedures which are carried out upon the genital organs.
Labiaplasty or labia minora reduction	Cutting off parts of the vaginal lips or implanting fat from other parts of the body to increase their size	
G-Spot augmentation	Inserting substances behind the pubic bone.	
Clitoropexy	Changing the position of the clitoris by pulling the surrounding tissue	

Policy: women in government

By Helen Atkins and Sarah Stephen-Smith



L-R Jacqui Smith, UK; Luisa Diogo, Mozambique; Tzipi Livni, Israel; Pratibha Patil, India; Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Liberia; Angela Merkel, Germany

Michelle Bachelet, Chile. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Liberia. Angela Merkel, Germany. Luisa Diogo, Mozambique. Tarja Halonen, Finland. Helen Clark, New Zealand. Tzipi Livni, Israel. Pratibha Patil, India. These women may not be the first to lead their country, but they all have one thing in common: promoting women's issues and concerns from inside the world's legislatures.

However, in most countries women MPs still represent an extreme minority. This is profoundly problematic; the rights and interests of women cannot be adequately represented by men.

Erroneous claims have surfaced in the UK recently that positive gender discrimination penalises men. Prompted partly by the Gender Equality Duty, some are manipulating its purpose in order to realign gender-specific policies, at the expense of the protection of women's rights. Parliament, at the centre of law- and policy-making, must strive for genuine gender equality and defend women's rights robustly. But before this can happen in the UK, we need gender parity in government. Britain has a long way to go...

Women in and around the new Cabinet

When Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced his Cabinet at the end of June, the number of women in the Cabinet fell from 8/23 under Tony Blair (35%) to only 5/22 (23%) under Brown. However, the new Cabinet includes Britain's first ever woman Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith. Harriet Har-

Women in world politics: the facts

Despite notable female rulers throughout time, women did not officially enter government until after the First World War • **Denmark Minister of Education Nina Bang was the world's first full female cabinet minister (1924)** • Sirivamo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka was the world's first female elected Prime Minister (1960) • **Isabel Perón of Argentina was the first woman President (1974)** • out of the G8 countries, USA, Japan and Italy have never had a woman leading their country • **Monaco and Saudi Arabia have never had any women in government** • out of 194 countries, only 9% (18 states) have women leaders. This includes seven Presidents, five Prime Ministers, three Governor-Generals and three Queens.

man returns to the Cabinet after almost a decade as elected Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Party Chairman and Minister for Women, and other women Cabinet members include Baroness Ashton (Leader of the Lords) and Hazel Blears (Communities).

These, plus existing Cabinet members (including Attorney-General Baroness Scotland, the second black woman Cabinet member and the only ethnic minority), raise women members of Brown's inner circle to almost one-third (32%), an improvement on the proportion of women MPs overall, which stands at 19%. Nonetheless, the ratio of women in Parliament is significantly below that of the general population, where women outnumber men 51%–49%.

Harriet Harman, Minister for Women

By Alice Sachrajda and Dovile Mitkute

Harriet Harman has a long history of campaigning for women's rights and has been described as Labour's 'in-house feminist' for her stance on women in society and in politics.

Since the 1970s, she has campaigned for increased women's representation in the Labour Party and after joining Parliament in 1982, she set up the first Parliamentary Labour Party Women's Group.

Ms Harman has since campaigned to provide increased aid for families, particularly for working mothers, through after-school programmes and flexible working hours for families with children.

In 1998 she established the National Childcare Strategy and from the backbenches has campaigned for longer maternity leave and higher maternity pay.

In 2001, she was appointed Solicitor General. She led a drive within Government to make tackling domestic violence a priority and the successful campaign led to a new law - the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act - the introduction of a new team of specialist prosecutors to ensure more effective prosecutions for domestic violence, and a new network of 60 specialist domestic violence courts.

In 2001 Ms Harman chaired the Childcare Commission which proposed a £150 payment for new mothers. In 2004 a maternity payment of £102.80 and an increase in maternity leave to nine months was announced in the Budget.

In July 2007 she set out her priorities as Minister for Women, aiming to 'support and empower' women in Britain. These focus on three issues – providing better sup-

port for family carers, tackling violence towards women and human trafficking, and empowering black and minority ethnic women to build community cohesion.

The Women's National Commission will take forward consultation on these priorities and will feed back the views of its members by the end of September 2007.

Harriet Harman's current roles include:

Labour MP for Camberwell and Peckham

Deputy Leader of the Labour Party

Chair of the Labour Party

Leader of the House of Commons

Minister for Women

Lord Privy Seal

An extract from Harriet Harman's speech at the Future of Feminism series, held by the Fawcett Society on 24 January 2006

"We have the new laws on domestic violence but we still need greater protection for women in practice. That means good, practical, local support for women trapped in violent relationships and it means court processes that protect them as they give their evidence. And it means looking to new threats to women such as the new phenomenon of human trafficking. And it means being clear about ensuring that the focus is not just on the traffickers and the pimps but also about the men, the British men, who fuel the demand for enslavement of women by paying pimps for sex with trafficked victims."



Harriet Harman

New projects at Eaves

Lilith has begun a pilot project known as the Amina Scheme to partner recent victims of rape or sexual violence with specially trained women volunteers who have also suffered similar experiences in the past. The first round of volunteers are still undergoing training and will be paired with women later in the year.

On Monday 24 September Eaves will launch a major poster campaign on the London Underground aimed at raising awareness and alerting trafficked women to Eaves' services. The campaign will run for three weeks at several major stations, including Victoria and Waterloo, and on seven different tube lines.

Eaves in the media

Over the past three months Eaves has appeared in a number of articles and news items. These include:

- Lilith and POPPY R&D manager **Frances Brodrick** commenting in a **Channel 4** report into the Job Centre Plus advertising escort jobs in August
- An interview with POPPY Project team leader **Anna Johansson** on **BBC Radio Cambridgeshire** in August regarding the Cambridgeshire police's anti-trafficking Operation Radium
- An interview with chief executive Denise Marshall on **More 4 News** on 17 September about the Govern-

ment's proposals to prosecute men who buy sex

- POPPY case studies in the magazine **New Internationalist's** sex trafficking issue (September)

Appointments at Eaves

Frances Brodrick has been appointed manager of the Lilith and POPPY research and development team, replacing **Gill Herd**.

The new post of exiting prostitution development officer has been filled by **Helen Atkins**. The new role includes establishing evidence on the causes and effects of prostitution, and creating social change by promoting the reality of prostitution.

Vacancies at Eaves

New Initiatives BMER Officer for the Lilith Project

We are looking for a dynamic individual to take the lead on developing new initiatives pertaining to issues of VAW (violence against women) and BMER (black/minority/ethnic/refugee) women.

Closing date 5 October; interviews 17 October

Lilith Project – Research and Good Practice Officer SP30 – 35 - £27,054-£30,594

We are looking for a dynamic individual to take the lead on research and good practice pertaining to issues of VAW (violence against women).

Closing date: 12 October; interviews 31 October

If you have a thorough understanding of VAW and BMER issues within the statutory and voluntary sectors, and the ability to develop capacity and promote good practice in this area, then call 020 7840 7124 for an application pack.

Emma Thompson launches sex traffick exhibition

To commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in 2007, actress Emma Thompson and Coco de Mer owner Sam Roddick have partnered to launch *Journey*, an art installation of seven individually designed transport containers, each charting a stage in the journey of a trafficked woman. The exhibition runs in Trafalgar Square for eight days from 21 September and is based on the story of a former POPPY service user. It aims to highlight the work of the Helen Bamber Foundation, of which Emma Thompson is patron.