

Girl smuggled into Britain to have her 'organs harvested'

The first case of a child being trafficked to Britain in order to have their organs harvested has been uncovered.



Organ transplantation Photo: ALAMY

By Steven Swinford, Senior Political Correspondent

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The unnamed girl was brought to the UK from Somalia with the intention of removing her organs and selling them on to those desperate for a transplant.

Child protection charities warned that the case was unlikely to be an isolated incident as traffickers were likely to have smuggled a group of children into the country.

The case emerged in a government report which showed that the number of human trafficking victims in the UK has risen by more than 50 per cent last year and reached record levels.

A total of 371 children were exploited, with the majority of them being used as slaves or sexually abused. They included 95 children from Vietnam, 67 from Nigeria and 25 from China. Others hailed

from Romania and Bangladesh.

The figures also detail how 20 British girls have been victims of human trafficking. It comes after a series of court cases in which British girls were raped and exploited by gangs of Asian men.

Child protection charities warned last night that criminal gangs were attempting to exploit the demand for organ transplants in Britain.

Bharti Patel, the chief executive of Ecpat UK, the child protection charity, said: "Traffickers are exploiting the demand for organs and the vulnerability of children. It's unlikely that a trafficker is going to take this risk and bring just one child into the UK. It is likely there was a group."

According to the World Health Organisation as many as 7,000 kidneys are illegally obtained by traffickers each year around the world.

While there is a black market for organs such as hearts, lungs and livers, kidneys are the most sought after organs because one can be removed from a patient without any ill effects.

The process involves a number of people including the recruiter who identifies the victim, the person who arranges their transport, the medical professionals who perform the operation and the salesman who trades the organ.

The government's report also found that there has been a rise in the number of adults trafficked to the UK, with the number of women rising by 12 per cent to 786 and the number of men by almost a third to 400. They include growing numbers of British men are being exploited for "paving or ground works" in this country or abroad.

Details of the scale of human trafficking in Britain were published as the government announced plans to give modern day slave drivers a maximum sentence.

Under the proposals, offenders who already have a conviction for a serious sexual or violent offence will receive an automatic life sentence. The current maximum custodial sentence for trafficking is 14 years.

James Brokenshire, crime and security minister, said: "Modern slavery is an appalling evil in our midst."

"All this is a good start, but we need everyone to play a part - government, law enforcement, business,

charities - if we are to consign slavery to the history books where it belongs."

The Bill, which will be published this year in draft form for pre-legislative scrutiny, will pull together into a single act the offences used to prosecute slave drivers.

It will also introduce Trafficking Prevention Orders to restrict the activity and movement of convicted traffickers and stop them from committing further offences

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