

To the Director of Public Prosecutions, Max Hill QC

We are writing in response to the recent prosecution of Peter Swailes Junior, who was sentenced on 4 February 2022 at Carlisle Crown Court. Despite admitting his involvement in a case, under the Modern Slavery Act, that saw a 59 year old kept in a shed for up to 40 years - Swailes Junior avoided a jail sentence.

Modern slavery charges are all too rare in our country. Despite estimates putting the number of victims at more than 100,000, there are only around 50 successful prosecutions a year. They are by nature complex crimes to investigate.

It is therefore hugely disappointing that in this case Swailes Junior has avoided a prison sentence. It would appear the prosecution and judge have accepted the basis of a plea by the defendant at face value - one that put the principle blame of the survivor's treatment on the father of the defendant, who has now died.

As anti-slavery charities with expertise rooted in survivor care, it seems highly questionable why Swailes Junior's plea, based on his claim that he did not know the living conditions in which the victim was being kept, was accepted. We struggle to understand how this could have happened despite the investigation uncovering Swailes Junior being involved in much of the exploitation - for example, as we understand it, he collected the victim, who was recovering from a broken back, from hospital before he was discharged. Accepting the plea in the face of such evidence baffles us and reinforces the sense that the criminals responsible for modern slavery calculate this as a high reward, low risk crime.

We are therefore writing to you to ask for a casework review panel to be established to consider the circumstances surrounding the prosecution.

In particular, we would like to establish and understand:

- Why was the defendant not charged with any criminality pre-dating the Modern Slavery Act 2015?
- Why was his plea accepted on an extremely narrow basis?
- Whether, had the defendant's father stood trial, it was the prosecution's case that he was criminally responsible for the 40 years of exploitation. If so, under what offence would he have been charged?
- Who, given the publicised vulnerabilities of the victim, did the CPS consult about the grounds on which the written plea was accepted?

We are separately requesting that the Attorney General refer the case to the Court of Appeal to review the sentence as unduly lenient.

cont.

Yours sincerely

Christian Guy, CEO, Justice and Care

Jared Hodgson, CEO, Hope at Homes

Tim Nelson, CEO, Hope for Justice

Garry Smith, CEO, Medaille Trust

Andrew Wallis, CEO, Unseen

Helen Sworn, Executive Director, Chabdai

Major Kathy Betteridge, Territorial Director of Anti-Trafficking & Modern Slavery, Salvation Army

Caroline O'Connor, CEO, Migrant Help

Meg Heath, Co-CEO, Palm Cove Society

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