

Press release: First ever convicted cross-border sex-trafficker has sentence increased

The first person to be convicted under the Modern Slavery Act for human trafficking outside the UK has today had her sentence increased after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, personally argued that her sentence was too low in the Court of Appeal.

From her south London home, Josephine Iyamu, now 51, organised the travel of 5 women from Nigeria to Germany for exploitation through prostitution for her own financial gain.

The victims were all vulnerable young women who knew Iyamu could get them into Europe. In return for arranging their travel, Iyamu demanded they repay her up to £35,000 once they began working in Germany, and were told that breaking this promise would result in activation of a voodoo curse.

The victims travelled from Nigeria across the Sahara to Libya, where they boarded overcrowded inflatable boats to Italy, and finally entered Germany using false identification documents. The traumatic journey involved spending days or weeks in "transit houses", the rape of one of the victims, and being rescued from the Mediterranean after their boat broke down.

After Iyamu's arrest in 2017, she plotted to stop the case against her through intimidation of the victims' families. This included arranging the unlawful arrest of one of the victim's sisters remaining in Nigeria.

Iyamu was originally sentenced at Birmingham Crown Court in July, where she was given 14 years imprisonment. Today, the Court of Appeal increased her sentence to 18 years imprisonment.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

"Modern slavery exists in all societies, and respects neither borders nor jurisdictions. It has no place in a civilised society and the UK government is committed to tackling this abhorrent crime wherever it originates, working with our partners across the globe.

The Court of Appeal's decision today helps to show that crimes relating to human trafficking, such as Iyamu's, will not be tolerated – regardless of where they are carried out."