

Solicitor General welcomes modern slavery conviction

Three people have today been sentenced as part of the UK's largest ever modern slavery prosecution.

Ignacy Brzezinski, 53, Wojciech Nowakowski, 42, and Jan Sadowski, 29 were today convicted of charges relating to multiple counts of human trafficking into and within the UK, forced labour and money laundering at Birmingham Crown Court.

Brzezinski was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment, Nowakowski to 6 and a half years, and Sadowski to 3 years.

The conviction comes following the second trial under Operation Fort, the largest case to go to prosecution under modern slavery legislation in the UK, and one of the largest ever labour exploitation prosecutions in Europe.

Under Operation Fort, 88 alleged victims provided statements, with many others identified as potential victims. Victims were largely vulnerable Polish nationals lured to the UK by an organised crime group with offers of work, free or subsidised accommodation, food and travel.

Upon arrival in the UK, victims were housed in very poor accommodation and given little, sometimes expired, food. They were made to claim benefits, which were siphoned by the group, and forced to work for as little as £10 a week. The group kept the victims' bank cards and Polish identity cards, or copies of them, to prevent them from leaving, and threatened or assaulted those who suggested it.

Following the sentencing, Solicitor General Lucy Frazer QC MP said:

"Eradicating modern slavery in the UK is a government priority and I welcome the conviction of this modern slavery ring which took advantage of vulnerable people for their own gain. The CPS and West Midlands Police must be commended for their commitment to eradicating modern slavery in the UK via the criminal justice system."

Notes to editors

There are 3 trials under Operation Fort. Five defendants have already been convicted on multiple counts of trafficking, forced labour and money laundering following the first trial. The second trial is detailed in this press notice. The third depends on the extradition of 4 more individuals from Poland.