**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

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| **‘The more vulnerable you are as a victim, the less able our criminal justice system is to protect you’****Former Director of Public Prosecutions, Keir Starmer, Dec 2013** |

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Our five areas of concern are

* **Modern Day Slavery and the Sex Trade**A bill dealing with modern day slavery is currently before Parliament, but the petitioners call on the Government to provide speedy and effective guidance to ensure it is rigorously applied, once the Bill becomes law.
* **Forced Marriage and Honour Killings**Forced marriage is now an offence, but guidelines need to be more rigorously applied.
* **Female Genital Mutilation**Although female genital mutilation has been an offence since 1985, no prosecutions have been brought in the UK. In France there have been over 200 prosecutions. Female genital mutilation should be treated in the same way as any other child abuse, and child protection laws applied.
* **Elder Abuse**Current systems and law are insufficient to deter abuse and the protection of vulnerable adults needs to be a higher priority.
* **Domestic Abuse**Women are still being murdered at the rate of two a week by a current or former male partner. One in four women, in their lifetime, are subject to abuse again by a current or former male partner, causing serious harm. Vulnerable victims find the court process an ordeal, and frequently give up.

**This petition will be submitted to No. 10 Downing St on 6 March 2014 by Soroptimist International of Stafford, with the support of Jeremy Lefroy MP.**

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| **‘I have been working with the victims of sex offences in Staffordshire for the last 18 months, and I have only just had the first successful prosecution’****Independent Sexual Violence Adviser, Jan 2014** |

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