

FREEDOM UNITED

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Rebekah Enoch at the Martin Luther King Jr National Historic Site, Atlanta, USA.

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## A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Joanna Ewart-James at the Freedom From Slavery Africa Regional Forum, Kigali

### **A CHALLENGING YEAR**

2023 was, for many of us, challenging, and it has been no different for Freedom United. The cost of living crisis combined with the rise of anti-migrant rhetoric and lack of investment in protection systems has only increased the numbers living in modern slavery, with the internationally recognized estimates now raised to 50 million on any given day. We must speak out, hold society to account, and stop perpetuating modern slavery. I am grateful to the hundreds of thousands of Freedom United supporters who have stuck with us, and together have used their voice to amplify the call to take action worldwide. In this report we highlight the impact that we've achieved in spite of the challenges. This has been a year of uncertainty and insecurity. It is a reminder that we must not lose our focus. Let's end modern slavery together!

*Joanna Ewart-James*

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## OUR VISION IS A WORLD FREE OF MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

We are the world's largest community dedicated to ending human trafficking & all forms of modern slavery.

We equip millions with informed awareness, education & ways to take action that drives real change globally.

By mobilizing the Freedom United community in coordinated campaigns, Freedom United builds momentum behind calls for change, in coordination with partners we power anti-slavery efforts, generating the will for action that helps prevent modern slavery, so building greater resilience.

### Verify us!

You can verify Freedom United with Candid and GreatNonProfits.



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# OUR SUPPORTERS

## Introducing you

Freedom United's power comes from its supporters, without whom we would not be able to secure the impact or change that we do.

Our weekly news digest reaches 600,000 inboxes around the world!



We raise awareness in every country.

In 2023, we reached 70 million with our message to end modern slavery. This map shows where our supporters are engaging with Freedom United from. Whilst around 30% are in the United States, the Freedom United community counts on supporters around the world who come together and power the call to end modern slavery.

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# JANUARY

## For Freedom Awards



Rushan Abbas, holding the 2023 For Freedom Award Impact Award

In the second year of the For Freedom Community Awards, we were delighted to highlight and recognize exceptional work during Human Trafficking Prevention Month.

2023's award winners are:

**Campaigner of the Year** - Jewher Ilham

**For Freedom Digital Activist Award** - Ishaan Shah

**For Freedom Impact Award** - Campaign for Uyghurs

**For Freedom Spotlight Award** - Footprint for Freedom

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# FEBRUARY

## Car companies and modern slavery



Kiki Lindenau outside Volkswagen headquarters to hand-in our petition

With over 100 international manufacturers of automotive parts or cars having some exposure to materials or products made with Uyghur forced labor, practically every car part requires heightened scrutiny to ensure that it is not linked to Uyghur forced labor.

We launched a campaign calling on the world's biggest car companies to cease sourcing all products mined, made, or manufactured, in whole or in part, in the Uyghur Region or with government-supplied laborers from there. During the year we increased our focus on Volkswagen who run a plant in the Uyghur Region.

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# MARCH

## Cocoa and modern slavery



Member of Yrozon community, Côte D'Ivoire, showing a spoilt cocoa pod

I travelled to the far western region of Côte d'Ivoire, close to the Liberian border, to meet with cocoa communities. The objective of the trip was to understand how companies' sustainability programming involves cocoa communities and what benefits they see at the end of the supply chain.

Through meeting with community members and civil society activists, I learnt that awareness of certification schemes was relatively low and that farmers cited fair payment for their crop as a bigger challenge, supporting our campaign calling on companies to pay a living wage.

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# APRIL

## New laws on corporate responsibilities



Joanna Ewart-James (centre, left) with partners at the European Parliament

Freedom United supporters in Europe wrote to their representatives to call for the new Corporate Social Due Diligence Directive (CS3D) to include a requirement on businesses to pay smallholder farmers a living wage and therefore reduce vulnerability to modern slavery. With the new text secured, the European Parliament adopted the CS3D with 374 votes in favor and 235 against. The legislation went back to the European Council where it is slated to be signed off in 2024 before entering into force.



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# MAY

## Shifting the narrative in the movement



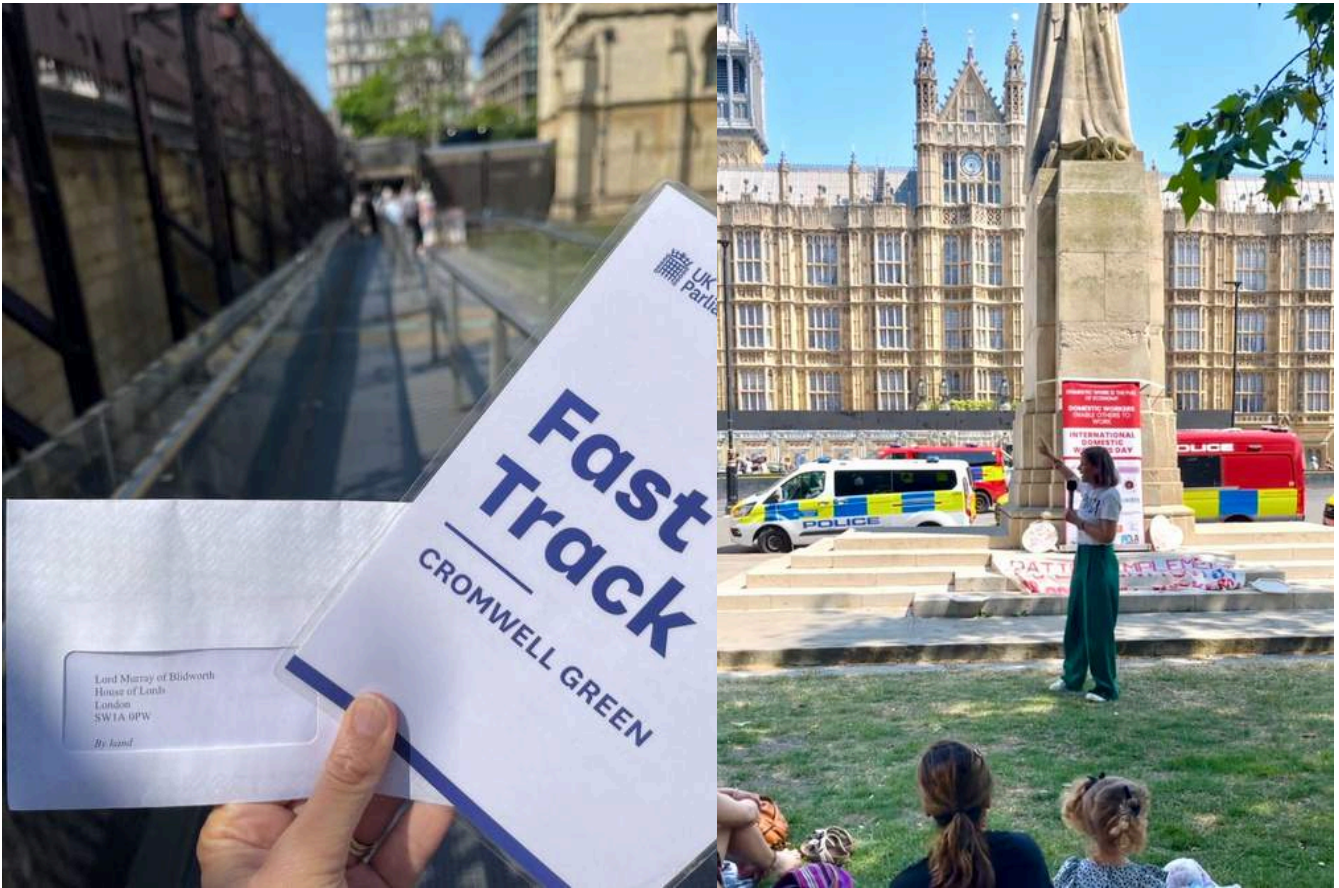
Joanna Ewart-James (second from right) with panel speakers Amy Rahe, Mahendra Pandey, Wade Arvizu, Evelyn Chumbow and Aime Rainfish.

In our ongoing work to create an inclusive and welcoming space for survivor activists in the movement through our My Story, My Dignity campaign, I was asked to Chair an event at the Global Freedom Forum. The panellists drew upon their lived experience to help unpack some of the key terms used in the modern slavery space and how they affect the ways we work to address human trafficking. They also highlighted and mapped out some of the ongoing work around leadership, engagement and inclusion, and imagined what collaboration would look like doing this work together.

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# JUNE

## Petitions and actions at the U.K. parliament



To the Houses of Parliament with a petition to deliver and speaking outside

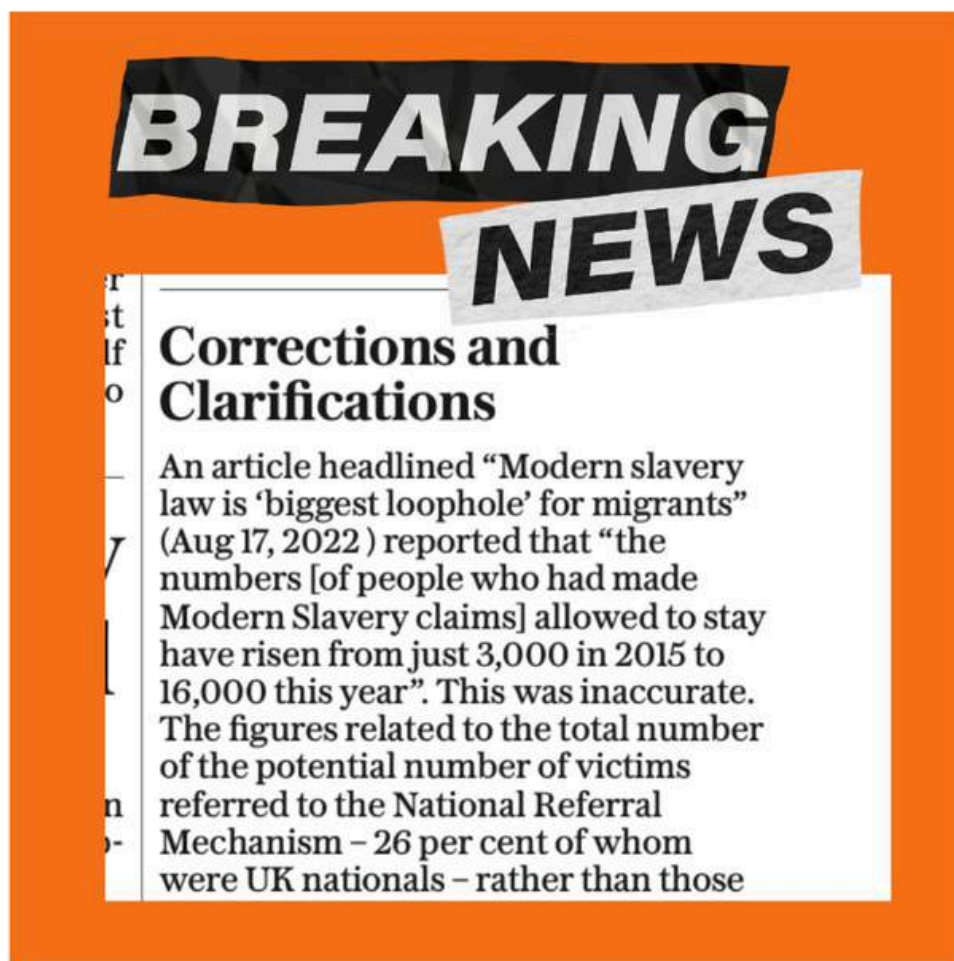
In June I handed in 20,000+ names urging the U.K. to scrap the Illegal Migration Bill, popularly referred to as the Refugee Ban Bill. It is widely recognised for undermining modern slavery protections and increasing risks to all people fleeing persecution.

I also spoke outside Parliament, on International Domestic Workers' Day, at an event to highlight the U.K. government's failure to reenact protections eroded in 2012 that if reinstated, would offer migrant domestic workers better protection from abuse and domestic servitude.

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# JULY

## Win! The Telegraph issues correction after publishing inaccurate modern slavery story



Freedom United supporters, together with After Exploitation and Anti-Slavery International, wrote to the UK’s independent newspaper regulator IPSO requesting a correction be issued – and they listened! As part of our My Story, My Dignity campaign, we are raising the bar on modern slavery reporting to ensure accuracy and to empower survivors.

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# AUGUST

## Welcoming Human Trafficking Search



We were delighted to announce that Human Trafficking Search is now part of the Freedom United family. The two organizations share a goal of bringing timely and informed analysis of all forms of human trafficking issues worldwide. Human Trafficking Search, founded in 2006, is a global resource and database, based in the U.S., like Freedom United.

By joining forces, we are strengthening our ability to address the root causes of modern slavery. Human Trafficking Search's website receives hundreds and thousands of visitors seeking information and accurate insights into human trafficking today. Therefore, through this new alliance, we will reach more people and widen society's understanding of why it continues to persist and what needs to change through providing toolkits and resources on a variety of modern slavery topics.

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# SEPTEMBER

## Stepping up for migrant children



Image taken by labor department inspector, US Dept of Labor

Following the news of Florida becoming the 16th U.S. state to propose rollbacks of workplace protection laws for children, that would remove all work guidelines for 16- and 17-year-olds, eliminating the prohibition to work more than eight hours on school nights and over 30 hours a week throughout the school year, we set up an action for our community to speak out.

Horror stories of migrant children exploited and even killed, in workplaces across the U.S., and an increase in child labor violations reported by the Department of Labor, proved to us that what is needed is a movement standing up and saying now is the time to increase protections, not reduce them thereby instead exposing children, already made vulnerable through the immigration system, to human trafficking for labor exploitation.

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# OCTOBER

## **CAMPAIGN WIN! Plan My Gap Year finally acts**



Plan My Gap Year finally acts and implements a policy to no longer offer placements in orphanages. We have been asking this of voluntourism operator PMGY since 2018. We called on them to join other voluntourism companies who have changed their policies, since we launched our campaign, in order to undermine the business model of orphanage trafficking. Thanks to years of our community's sustained messages, PMGY has finally enacted policies that help protect children from trafficking.

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# NOVEMBER

## The link between consumerism and slavery

Black Friday sales: Are your bargains costing someone else's freedom?

**BLACK FRIDAY SALES:**  
**Are your bargains costing someone else's freedom?**

**Thursday**  
**November 9**  
**12 EST/17 UCT**

Watch on YouTube

**EDOMUNITED**

**Emily Fenves**  
Sustainable Fashion Advocate & Influencer

**Nik Hammer**  
Business Professor & Work Researcher

**Rushan Abbas**  
Founder & ED of Campaign for Uyghurs

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Following the success of our live debate earlier in the year which asked “Are labels like Fairtrade the answer to ending exploitation in supply chains?” we opened a webinar series on consumerism. Ahead of Black Friday, our event posted the question “Are your bargains costing someone else’s freedom?”.

The discussion aimed to unpack the hidden cost behind our bargains. We were joined by three speakers with very different backgrounds who shared their expert knowledge with us and a couple hundred members of the Freedom United community who shared their questions knowing that our purchases in the global supply chain, are the most common link to people being exploited and living in modern slavery.

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# DECEMBER

## We tell the E.U. to act



Activists outside mail order company Shein's pop-up shop in London.

Following our success with stopping the U.S. supporting an economic system underpinned by Uyghur forced labor with the introduction of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act at the end of 2022, the E.U. is increasingly at risk of becoming a dumping ground for goods that cannot be sold to U.S. markets. A university report stated that "A substantial volume of apparel tainted by Uyghur forced labor is moving into the EU without restriction." So we joined with partners in calling for a strong forced labor regulation in the E.U.



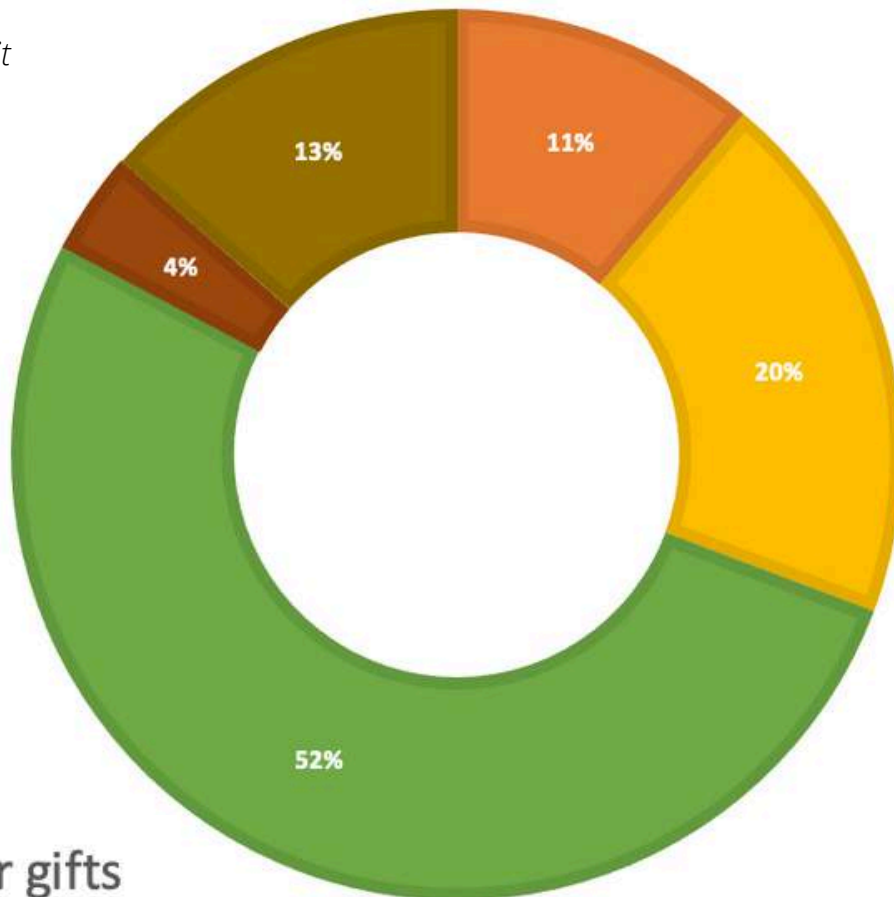
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# OUR FINANCES

## Income

\$508,947

*\*subject to audit*



- Major gifts
- Online giving
- Grants and foundations
- Events
- Patrons

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# THANK YOU



O.L. PATHY FAMILY FOUNDATION

We are grateful to our Patrons, regular monthly donors, foundations, in particular the O.L. Pathy Family Foundation, and all our supporters who donate to Freedom United enabling us to continue our work building power for change.

We are fortunate to benefit from valuable in-kind services as well as substantial grant funds without which we would not be able to continue our work to build a world in which modern slavery no longer thrives.

[Subscribe](#)

*Modern slavery thrives on silence.*

*Stay on top of breaking news and learn how you can help campaign for change.*

*Join the Freedom United Community by subscribing to our emails.*