

Beat: Health

UK police rescue 3 women allegedly held as house slaves for 30 years

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USPA News - Three women allegedly held as house slaves for up to 30 years at a London residence were rescued last month after one of them called a British charity, officials revealed on Thursday, saying the women were "highly traumatized." Two people have been arrested.

The case came to light on October 18 when a 57-year-old Irish woman called Freedom Charity and stated that she and two others had been held against their will at a house in London for more than 30 years. She explained she had found the courage to contact the helpline after seeing a documentary about forced marriages on the BBC. The charity immediately contacted police, but detectives first needed to carry out further investigations as little information had been given in relation to the whereabouts of the women. With the help of Freedom Charity, police were able to arrange to meet with them at an agreed location on October 25. A spokesman for the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), which is better known as Scotland Yard, said the Irish woman and a 30-year-old British woman met with charity workers and police officers on that day. They identified the location where they had been held and police were able to rescue the third victim, a 69-year-old Malaysian woman. "All three were taken to a place of safety that same day, they are all highly traumatized and remain in the care of professionals," the spokesman said. Police said a man and a woman were arrested at the house on Thursday after officers had established the facts and were satisfied the victims were aware of police intentions. "This is the very early stages of a complicated and sensitive investigation," said Detective Inspector Kevin Hyland. "These women are highly traumatized, having been held in servitude for at least 30 years with no real exposure to the outside world, and, trying to find out exactly what has happened over three decades will understandably take some time." Hyland said the Met's Human Trafficking Unit deals with many cases every year but had never unearthed "such a staggering example" of people held against their will. "What is important now is that our investigation continues, that we achieve the best possible evidence and aim to bring those responsible to justice," he explained. The two suspects, who are both 67 years old and are not British nationals, were arrested on suspicion of being involved in forced labor and domestic servitude, contrary to Section 71 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. They were released on bail on early Friday and ordered to return in January as the investigation continues. The victims, who are not related to each other, appear to have had "limited freedom" during their captivity and there is no evidence the women were sexually assaulted, police said. "We will continue to speak to the victims to ascertain what this ascertained," a Scotland Yard spokesman said, giving no other details about the circumstances. It was also not immediately clear if the youngest victim was born inside the house, which is located in the London Borough of Lambeth. "We are not sure where she was born but she appears to have been in servitude for her entire life," the spokesman said. "We continue to work closely with the victims to gather further information." Aneeta Prem, a spokesperson for Freedom Charity, said the organization takes each call seriously. "Freedom Charity, hearing about the situation of the women, took immediate action in planning their safe rescue," Prem said. "Facilitating their escape was achieved using utmost sensitivity and secrecy and with the safety of the women as our primary concern."

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