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Press Release – For immediate release

Sarah Champion
Member for Rotherham
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Press Release

Sarah Champion MP calls for action to prevent blacklisting of workers

Sarah Champion is calling for action to stop the blacklisting of workers and for a full investigation of blacklisting allegations, including in relation to major public projects such as Crossrail and the Olympic Park.

Secret files on thousands of workers in the construction sector resulted in people being denied employment and their livelihoods after raising legitimate health and safety concerns or exercising their human right to belong to a trade union, and were used by more than 40 of the UK's largest construction firms. Last week, construction firm Balfour Beatty confirmed that it conducted blacklisting checks on individuals seeking work on construction of Olympic venues.

Many of those affected still have no idea that they were included on the secret construction blacklist which was uncovered by the Information Commissioner's Office in a raid in 2009. Questions remain on why the ICO did not seize other documents found at the scene. In the debate, Labour called for the Information Commissioner to adopt a proactive process for informing individual victims of blacklisting so that they can seek compensation.

Recent evidence which has emerged as part of a Scottish Affairs Committee Parliamentary inquiry into blacklisting has brought forward allegations of widespread use of blacklists in relation to major public sector construction projects and that intelligence used to compile blacklists came from police officers and the security services, as well as revealing the existence of a further blacklist of environmental activists.

Speaking in a House of Commons opposition day debate called by Labour this week, Sarah Champion demanded that the government examine whether further changes are needed to ensure that appropriate, effective sanctions are in place to tackle and prevent blacklisting.

Sarah Champion MP said...

"Many constituents have contacted me about Blacklisting. It is outrageous that thousands of workers have been denied employment and their lives destroyed because their names were on a secret list because they were a member of a union, reported a Health and Safety issues or just didn't get on with their boss. The shocking thing is, we still don't know the extent to which blacklisting has taken place on major public sector construction project or if it is still going on."

"That's why this week in the House of Commons I urged ministers to take action on this issue. It is crucial that the government fully investigates blacklisting as well as preventing this cruel practice ever happening again."

As there is much suspicion that Blacklisting is still occurring on Crossrail, the Secretary of State needs to make very clear that this is not allowed to happen when High Speed 2 comes to the region."

Commenting, Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna MP said:

“Blacklisting is a national scandal. Workers have had their livelihoods destroyed, their reputations tarnished and in some cases their families torn apart just because they raised health and safety concerns or were a member of a trade union. And the further tragedy is that many of those affected have no idea that they have been blacklisted.

“As well as investigating blacklisting allegations in full, including those relating to public construction projects, Ministers need to look again at what changes need to be made to ensure blacklisting is prevented and that this scandal is never repeated again.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. Labour's opposition day debate on blacklisting took place on Wednesday 23 January. The text of Labour's motion is as follows:

That this House notes that in 2009 the Information Commissioner's Office raided the Consultation Association which revealed a 'blacklist' and files on more than 3,000 individuals they have compiled which had been used by more than 40 construction companies to vet individuals and deny people employment for reasons including being a member of a trade union or having raised health and safety concerns and that extensive personal information on individuals and their families was held; recognises that the majority of individuals have still not been informed that they were on the blacklist nor given the opportunity to seek redress, despite recent confirmation that blacklisting checks took place on Olympic construction sites and allegations that the practice took place on public projects including Ministry of Defence sites, Portcullis House and Crossrail; further notes that at recent Scottish Affairs Select Committee hearings into blacklisting the Information Commissioner Investigations Manager raised concerns that there may have been collusion by police officers and security services in the compilation of blacklists, and in addition it was also alleged at the hearings that a blacklist of environmental activists was compiled; and calls on the Government to immediately begin an investigation into the extent blacklisting took place and may be taking place, including on public sector projects, and to ensure that appropriate and effective sanctions are in place to tackle and prevent blacklisting.

2. Coverage of the blacklisting scandal:

Building magazine, 18 January 2013, *'Balfour Beatty admits to Olympics blacklist checks'*
<http://www.building.co.uk/news/balfour-beatty-admits-to-olympics-blacklist-checks/5048788.article>

Observer, 13 January 2013, *'McAlpine denies high court claim it had major role in 'blacklist scandal''*
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2013/jan/12/mcalpine-blacklist-court-claim?INTCMP=SRCH>

Observer, 3 December 2012, *'Crossrail project dragged into blacklist scandal'*
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/dec/02/crossrail-blacklisting-scandal>

Sunday People, 2 December 2012, *'Thousands of construction workers were denied jobs as they were put on a sinister blacklist'*
<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/blacklist-thousands-of-construction-workers-denied-1469233>

Financial Times, 27 November 2012, *'Building group faces blacklist claim'*
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e2173024-38c7-11e2-981c-00144feabdc0.html>

Observer, 3 March 2012, *'Police are linked to blacklist of construction workers'*
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/mar/03/police-blacklist-link-construction-workers>

3. Evidence from the ongoing Scottish Affairs Committee inquiry into blacklisting in employment is here:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/scottish-affairs-committee/Publications1/>