

**Rape Crisis South London
PO Box 383 Croydon
CR9 2AW**

Rt Hon David Cameron MP
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

7th June 2013

Open letter to the Prime Minister to ban the possession of ‘rape porn’

Dear Prime Minister,

We know that you care about ending rape and sexual violence and that your government has given critical funding for Rape Crisis Centres. We are therefore asking you to urgently close a loophole in the Extreme Pornography legislation in the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 which allows the lawful possession of pornographic images depicting rape which promote sexual abuse of women and girls in England and Wales.

The recent murder convictions of Mark Bridger and Stuart Hazell, involving violent and misogynistic pornography, have been both shocking and distressing. Moreover, the recent report from the Children’s Commissioner about children’s, especially boys’, access to pornography and that it is linked to harmful attitudes and behaviour to women and girls, is extremely worrying.

The law

Currently, it is a criminal offence in England and Wales to possess pornographic material which is grossly offensive, disgusting or otherwise obscene and explicitly and realistically depicts life threatening injury, serious injury to a person’s anus, breasts or genitals, bestiality or necrophilia (sections 63-67 of the CJIA 2008). Most prosecutions are for pornographic images of bestiality.

The vast majority of images depicting rape are lawful to possess, although they are banned in Scotland under its Extreme Pornography legislation.

What kinds of images?

We are talking about sites that explicitly advertise sexually violent content and with titles such as ‘Father Raped Drunk Daughter’ and ‘Incest With Daughter at Family Cabin’.

Research by Rape Crisis South London found that of the top 50 accessible ‘rape porn’ sites found through a Google search, 78% advertise rape content of under 18 year olds (e.g. “schoolgirl rape”) and 67% advertise rape content involving guns or knives.

Sexual violence

Government figures show that every year more than 400,000 women are sexually assaulted and up to 95,000 women are raped in England and Wales. Over a third of rapes involve a victim under the age of 16.

We warmly welcome the Home Office-led *Call to end violence against women and girls strategy* including the ‘ThisisABUSE’ campaign to tackle sexual and physical violence amongst young people.

We believe that allowing the lawful possession of ‘rape porn’ undermines this good work and sends a contradictory message about the seriousness with which sexual violence is taken.

That sexual violence is a form of entertainment causes a huge cultural harm to our society and we urge you to take action to close this loophole.

Yours sincerely

Sue Berelowitz, Deputy Children’s Commissioner
Professor Liz Kelly CBE, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit
Professor Clare McGlynn, University of Durham
Professor Erika Rackley, University of Durham

Professor Nicole Westmarland, Durham Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse
Fiona Elvines, Rape Crisis South London
Dr Maddy Coy, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit
Dr Miranda Horvath, Middlesex University
Lee Eggleston OBE, Rape Crisis England and Wales
Holly Dustin, End Violence Against Women Coalition
Janice Langley, National Federation of Women's Institutes
Professor Simon Hackett, Durham Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse
Gill Frances OBE, independent consultant
Dr. Ruth Barley, Sheffield Hallam University
Heather Harvey, Eaves for Women
Polly Neate, Women's Aid
Professor Jill Radford
Vivienne Hayes, Women's Resource Centre
Dr Afroditi Pina, University of Kent
South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre
Professor Joanna R Adler, Middlesex University
North London Rape Crisis
Solace Women's Aid
Suffolk Rape Crisis
Dr Jessica Woodhams, University of Birmingham
Linda Durrant
Cath Elliott
Fiona Johnson
Kay Heslop
Dr Peter Wass, Imperial College
Stephanie Futter-Orel, Latin American Women's Aid
Kirklees Survivors Counselling Project
SAVANA
National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI)
Gloucestershire Rape Crisis Centre
East Kent Rape Line

Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre
Survivors' Network
Devon Rape Crisis Service
Rape and Sexual Abuse Support centre (Cheshire and Merseyside)
Support after Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds
Campaign to End Rape
West Cumbria Rape Crisis
Justice for Women
North London Rape Crisis
Trafford Rape Crisis
Bristol Rape Crisis
Manchester Rape Crisis
Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre (Darlington & Co Durham Rape Crisis)
Northamptonshire Rape & Incest Crisis Centre
RASA (Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre) Merseyside
ARCH North East
Cllr Moira Macdonald, Exeter City Council
Linda M Regan MBE
Clíodhna Devlin
Julie Nyanyo
Jacqueline Seaman
Debbie Galton
Helen Lomax, Manchester
Lauren Hart Lamey
Ashley Edhouse
Allison Loblely
Trish Moran
Valeska Matziol
Josephine Wood MBE
Kay Bastin
Dilys Davy
Lois Arch
Maureen O'Hara, Salford Law School

Jane Williams
Donna Randles
Dorothy Irving
Emma Raymode, RASASC Cheshire and Merseyside
Beth Speake, Sheffield
Sarah Heslop, Carlisle
Dionne Cantwell
Ruth Richardson, Bristol
Karen Rowe
Janet Hodgson
Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland
Carol Hilwyn, Herefordshire Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre
Leanne Hogg
Carol Swainson
Helen Lomax, Northamptonshire Rape & Incest Crisis Centre
Jennifer Lumsden , Gordon Therapeutic Lead Sandwell Women's Aid
Katie Russell, Support After Rape & Sexual Violence Leeds
Sylvie Maguire, CRASAC
A K Evans
Laura Heslop, West Cumbria Rape Crisis
Carol Tindall, West Cumbria Rape Crisis
Frances and Stephen Dryden, Cumbria
J.Pagan
D.Birkbeck
Elaine Hutton, Bristol
Fiona Tootill
Katherine Butler
Jane Gambles, West Cumbria Rape Crisis
Alison Robertson
Amy Masson
Judy Parfett
Ginny Ellis
Morag Borszcz