

Trafficking In Persons Report
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January 13,2018

Secretary of State Tillerson said in the Trafficking In Persons Report for June 2017 that the focus was on the responsibility of governments to criminalize human trafficking and hold offenders accountable. The following comments and facts are taken from that report. This gives a State Department overview of Trafficking in Humans by explanation of a few highlights.

The theme of the Trafficking in Persons Report is increasing criminal accountability of human traffickers and addressing challenges in prosecution – an essential component of the paradigm of prosecution, protection and prevention, which Susan Coppedge, Ambassador at Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, stresses.

One aspect that we Americans often don't think about is that those who enforce the law are not above the law. Around the world official complicity is a problem that plagues many criminal justice systems. Some police officials work when they are off duty as security guards at brothels or other establishments where sex trafficking victims are exploited. At times, prompted by bribes or pressure from suspected traffickers or complicit officials, some law enforcement officials intentionally delay investigative efforts. Yet, publicly prosecuting corruption builds trust in government in general and law enforcement in particular, and it can encourage victims and witnesses to report human trafficking cases.

Today the face of modern slavery is grouped into 7 categories:

1. Sex trafficking
2. Child Sex Trafficking
3. Forced Labor
4. Bonded Labor or Debt Bondage (Some workers inherit debt: for example, in South Asia it is estimated that there are millions of trafficking victims working to pay off their ancestors' debts.)
5. Domestic Servitude (When the employee of a domestic worker has diplomatic status and enjoys immunity from civil and/or criminal jurisdiction, the vulnerability to domestic servitude is enhanced.) Examples are found in the DC area embassies.
6. Unlawful Recruitment of Use of Child Soldiers.

It is important to understand the Methodology of how the Department of State prepares its yearly report. After gathering information from many sources, it places all countries into Tiers.

Tier 1 countries fully meet minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Examples of a few Tier 1 countries are United States, Chile, France, Netherlands, Spain, Ireland, and many more.

Tier 2 countries do not fully meet minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance. Examples are Afghanistan, Cambodia, Kenya, Mexico, Uganda, Vietnam, and many more.

Tier 2 Watch List countries do not fully meet minimum standards, but are making significantly efforts to bring themselves into compliance and for which a) the absolute number of victims is very significant or is significantly increasing, or b) there is no evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe trafficking or c) the country committed to take additional steps over the next year. Examples are Bangladesh, Cuba, Guatemala, Iraq, Moldova, Pakistan, Thailand, and many more.

Tier 3 countries do not fully meet minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so. Examples are Belize, China, Iran, North Korea, Russia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan, Venezuela, and others.

Countries on the Tier 3 list may be subject to certain restrictions on assistance, whereby the President may determine not to provide U.S. government nonhumanitarian, nontrade related foreign assistance and may restrict certain monetary assistance. The Secretary of State is authorized to waive the automatic downgrade of a Tier 2 Watch List country based on credible evidence that a waiver is justified. While we in the United States may not be aware or even care about what Tier a foreign country is placed, the Tier placement is quite important for the countries.

Belize is now a Tier 3 because the government decreased efforts to protect trafficking victims. In tourist regions, child sex tourists, primarily from the United States, exploit child sex trafficking victims.

Burma (Myanmar) is a Tier 2 Watch List country. It is recommended that Burma strengthen efforts to prosecute and convict individuals complicit in forced labor and child soldiering offenses, and to cease recruitment of children into the armed forces.

Iran is a Tier 3 country and it is recommended that the country cease coercing individuals into combat in Syria and cease support for armed militias that recruit and use children to fight in Iraq. Iranian girls between the ages of 13 and 17 are targeted by traffickers for sale abroad; younger girls may be forced into domestic service until their traffickers consider them old enough to be subjected to child sex trafficking.

The United States is a Tier 1 country. However, reports by NGOs are that trafficked victims are still being prosecuted for activity related to their trafficking, notwithstanding "Safe Harbor" laws in some states. Among other recommendations are increasing investigation and prosecution of labor trafficking cases and cases involving nonviolent forms of coercion.

In November 2017 Reuters reported that Secretary Tillerson excluded Iraq, Myanmar (Burma), and Afghanistan from a list of offenders in the use of child soldiers. While Tillerson can do this, he was at odds with some officials within the State Department who felt he breached the Child

Soldiers Prevention act. (Iraq and Afghanistan are close allies in the fight against Islamist militants and Myanmar is an emerging ally to offset China's influence in Southeast Asia.)

This very brief overview hopefully will encourage everyone to follow the Trafficking issue more fully, whether it is personally helping victims in your community, or reading about Trafficking and further educating yourself and others about the issues, or understanding the politics of Trafficking in the larger arena of the world.

The above information is taken from the Trafficking in Persons Report June 2017 published by the Department of State and the Reuters article by Jason Szep and Matt Spetalnick published on November 21, 2017.