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ATEST Commends State Department for Holding Bad Actors Accountable in Latest Human Trafficking Report

Russia, China, Uzbekistan Receive Lowest Rankings, Face U.S. Sanctions

Washington, D.C. -- The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST) praised Secretary of State John F. Kerry for calling to account countries that have continually failed to show improvement in fighting human trafficking in the [State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons \(TIP\) Report](#), released today.

The TIP Report ranks governments worldwide, including the United States, on their efforts to combat and prevent human trafficking and modern day slavery. This year for the first time, the State Department was required by statute to move six countries off the Tier 2 Watch List; Azerbaijan, Congo-Brazzaville and Iraq were promoted to Tier 2, while China, Russia and Uzbekistan were downgraded to Tier 3 and now face possible sanctions. Other sensitive countries, such as Malaysia and Thailand, remained on the Tier 2 Watch List and face automatic downgrade next year if their record does not improve.

"The TIP Report is only as good as it is honest, and we commend the State Department for using fact-based analysis – not concern for sensitive geopolitical relationships – when it assigned Tier 3 rankings to Russia, Uzbekistan and China," said David Abramowitz, director of [The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking](#) (ATEST), a coalition of 12 U.S.-based human rights organizations. "China, Russia, Uzbekistan and other countries that have largely turned a blind eye to modern slavery deserve the condemnation of the United States and the international community. We hope that all nations Secretary Kerry has found to have serious problems will take this assessment seriously and begin immediately to develop and implement effective strategies to combat and prevent human trafficking within and across their borders."

Since 2001, the State Department has used its TIP Report as an effective diplomatic tool in the fight against human trafficking -- many countries have improved anti-trafficking efforts to avoid the report's lowest Tier 3 ranking and the accompanying threat of U.S. sanctions. The TIP report ranks countries into one of three tiers based on their level of compliance with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking as outlined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) [View [methodology](#).]

The United States was added to the TIP report three years ago with a Tier 1 ranking. President Obama has announced several new initiatives to combat modern slavery and proposed increased anti-trafficking funding in his 2014 budget. "In addition to necessary steps to move the international community forward in eliminating human trafficking, there is still work to be done at home," said Abramowitz. "President Obama and Congress must ensure that final 2014 funding bills reflect the Administration's call for additional anti-trafficking funding that allows for new protections for human trafficking victims and better tools to help prosecutors go after traffickers who exploit the most vulnerable members of society."

Several ATEST members weighed in on the release of the 2013 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report in the following statements:

Kay Buck, CEO & Executive Director, Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST):

"The Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST) applauds the administration's recent focus on modern-day slavery. President Obama has announced several new Administration initiatives to tackle human trafficking here and abroad, including a Strategic Action Plan to Strengthen Services for Trafficking Victims. Most important, the President's FY14 budget included welcome increases in funding for anti-trafficking programs. CAST has seen an unprecedented 49% increase in breaking cases this year, and currently we have 9 victims on our waiting list. To help direct service providers, like CAST, support new clients, the president and the U.S. Congress must now follow through with leadership required to pass the appropriations bill that fund anti-trafficking programs- this bill will be considered this summer."

Holly Burkhalter, Vice President of Government Relations and Advocacy at International Justice Mission (IJM):

"Secretary Kerry's decision to downgrade Uzbekistan, China, and Russia notwithstanding other policy considerations, is a welcome course correction for State Department drift towards 'grade inflation.' The TIP tier rankings are a precious diplomatic tool, but only if assessments are scrupulously based on reality."

David Batstone, Co-Founder and President, Not For Sale:

"We commend the TIP Report for fulfilling its original intention and mission to rank countries on their progress in addressing human trafficking. We hope any decisions made by Secretary of State John Kerry take into consideration the importance and utility of the ranking system and its findings."

Bradley Myles, CEO, Polaris Project:

"The 2013 Trafficking in Persons report again spotlights the appallingly high rate of human trafficking around the globe, including here in the United States. The report rightly condemns those governments who have failed to take effective measures to curb this human rights abuse, while celebrating the progress made in many countries. We strongly support the recommendations offered for the United States, and agree that increasing funding for services for all victims of human trafficking should be a top priority."

Dan Viederman, CEO, Verité:

“Verité welcomes the TIP report’s clear articulation of the extent to which all of us – as consumers or business leaders – are deeply connected to human trafficking. The scope of the problem in nearly all types of global supply chains – from factories to farms, from mines to construction sites – is evident in country report after country report. For companies and others with leverage over how business is conducted, there is no excuse for not knowing the nature and extent of your link to these abuses; it is time for action.

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The Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking (ATEST) is a diverse alliance of U.S.-based human rights organizations acting in unity to end modern-day slavery and human trafficking, both at home and abroad. ATEST was founded by Humanity United in 2007. For more information, visit www.EndSlaveryandTrafficking.org.