



## 2022 TIP Report Underscores that Extensive Work is Needed to Improve Global Efforts to Protect People from Human Traffickers

WASHINGTON – The 2022 U.S. State Department’s annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, which reviews responses by governments to combat human trafficking and forced labor worldwide, reveals that significant increases in political will and funding are needed to meaningfully improve global efforts to end forced labor and sex trafficking.

The 2022 report chronicles important successes: 30 countries meet minimum standards for governmental action established by the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act, receiving Tier I rankings. These standards include steps to effectively prevent trafficking, prosecute traffickers, and protect survivors. This adds two countries to the top tier.

However, most countries were found to not meet minimum benchmark standards: 99 countries received Tier 2 rankings, indicating they are trying to meet minimum standards but fall short; 35 received Tier 2 Watchlist rankings, indicating they do not meet minimum standards and risk being downgraded to a lower tier; and 22 countries received Tier 3 rankings, indicating they are not even trying to meet minimum standards.

The report presents a “mixed picture of progress,” U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during the report’s release. He noted that 21 countries were upgraded to a higher tier and 18 were downgraded to a lower tier.

The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST) applauds the many examples of effective anti-trafficking efforts outlined in the 2022 TIP report. Progress is being made, and each year hundreds of thousands of lives are positively impacted by anti-trafficking programs worldwide.

At the same time, ATEST calls on policymakers to recognize that much more needs to be done to substantially and sustainably reduce trafficking prevalence. The TIP report is an authoritative reference of global anti-trafficking efforts and action steps for the future, including many country-by-country recommendations for improvements.

ATEST recommends that several factors affecting human trafficking require special attention:

- **Protection of refugees and those fleeing conflict:** The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as other conflicts, have forced millions to flee. Traffickers target people on the move with phony offers of jobs and safety. ATEST calls on all nations to welcome refugees regardless of race or religion and to take steps to protect them from opportunistic traffickers. Several countries that are receiving large numbers of refugees, such as Poland, Romania, and Moldova, are noted in the TIP report as struggling to address human

trafficking. The U.S. government must do more to support these governments by continuing to provide humanitarian assistance, while ensuring that refugee and worker rights are protected to reduce vulnerability to forced labor and sex trafficking.

- **Fair and safe migration:** El Salvador has been downgraded to Tier 2 Watchlist. This comes as the U.S. government expands exploitative, temporary, “guest” worker migration programs to the U.S. from countries in Central America, including El Salvador, without ensuring increased worker protections in the origin countries and upon arrival in the U.S. The lack of decent work options, worker rights protections, and shrinking civic space in El Salvador create vulnerabilities to trafficking. The lack of freedom of association protections, inability to leave exploitative employers due to visas that tie them to their employer, and rampant wage theft from migrant workers in the “guest” worker programs in the U.S. increase the vulnerability of Central Americans and other migrants to trafficking, especially forced labor, while working in the U.S. The U.S. government must institute and enforce strong, meaningful worker protections, including engaging workers rights organizations in origin countries to support fair recruitment; ensuring that temporary visa workers can access basic rights like organizing and collective bargaining and the ability to leave abusive jobs through visa portability; and holding employers, contractors, and recruiters jointly liable for violations. Expansion of these temporary work visa programs should not be used in place of humanitarian programs, such as asylum or temporary protected status.
- **COVID-19 pandemic:** The impact of the pandemic is far from over both inside the U.S. and around the world. Calls to the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline are up by double digits. The costs of providing shelter and services to the increased number of trafficking survivors is up by triple digits. Many survivors are also requesting unprecedented levels of mental health support through free or low cost counseling options. Internationally, the pandemic has been extremely disruptive for millions of migrants around the world whose livelihoods have been endangered and their ability to travel for work or to return home have been disrupted, putting this highly vulnerable population under greater risk of trafficking. ATEST urges Congress to appropriate adequate funding to meet this surge in need.
- **Increasing emphasis on forced labor/labor trafficking:** Prosecution statistics in the TIP Report indicate that a discouraging trend is continuing. The number of global prosecutions of human traffickers is again unacceptably low (only 10,572 globally). Cases that do go to court are disproportionately focused on sex trafficking, leaving forced labor victims unprotected and labor traffickers unaccountable. For example, of the 10,572 prosecutions globally only 13% (1,379) of these were forced labor cases. The U.S. numbers are even more disappointing with only 228 federal human trafficking prosecutions, with an abysmal 7 forced labor prosecutions. That’s seven forced labor cases *total* for the entire U.S. ATEST urges the U.S. Justice Department to provide greater emphasis on the prosecution of labor traffickers, and use a whole of government approach to holding corporations accountable for forced labor in their supply chains. The U.S. State Department should also promote initiatives to support governments to strengthen enforcement of their laws against forced labor and other forms of severe labor exploitation.

There must be economic consequences and an economic impact for employers and corporations who benefit from forced labor.

- **Survivor engagement:** ATEST applauds the State Department’s decision to showcase the meaningful and sustained involvement of those with lived experience in this year’s report. The anti-trafficking movement needs to better recognize and include the expertise of survivors, and ensure their guidance and leadership are central to anti-trafficking work at all levels in a substantive, compensated way. At the report’s release, U.S. Office to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking Senior Official Kari Johnstone noted that the governments of 34 countries – including the U.S. – now include survivors in their anti-traffic efforts, where that number was only seven one year ago. The global anti-trafficking movement will not fully realize the critical goal of empowering those with lived experience into leadership positions until every country government evaluated in the TIP Report prioritizes this.
- **Corporate accountability:** A new promising practice has continued to unfold in the U.S. over the past year: an assumption that products produced overseas in a region with exceptionally high prevalence of forced labor are tainted and cannot be imported into the U.S. unless proven otherwise. The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which applies to imports from a specific region in China, is a groundbreaking declaration that trafficking is an unfair trade practice that allows human rights violators to undercut law-abiding businesses that pay their workers. Corporate accountability for forced labor in product supply chains is not an explicit standard in the TIP Report’s national evaluations, but ATEST urges the State Department to consider discussion of this prevention strategy in future national evaluation narratives.
- **U.S. ranking:** The report ranks the United States as a Tier 1 nation, but there is still significant work needed to improve U.S. policies and practices. As the report notes:
  - “There was a continued lack of progress to comprehensively address labor trafficking in the United States, including in efforts to identify victims, provide them specialized services, and hold labor traffickers, including contractors and recruiters, accountable. The government continued not to mandate human trafficking screening for all foreign national adults in immigration detention or custody and did not screen for trafficking indicators among the people it removed. Advocates continued to report concerns that trafficking survivors were held in immigration detention and that the government’s policy to return to Mexico certain individuals from the Western Hemisphere, while their U.S. removal proceedings were pending, exacerbated their vulnerability to human trafficking.”

We are pleased that in the past year, the U.S. has completed important revisions to the U.S. National Action Plan and USAID C-TIP Policy; increased Withhold Release Orders and passed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act to keep products tainted by trafficking out of the U.S. marketplace; passed the Debt Bondage Repair Act to allow survivors to clean up their credit reports; and implemented immigration procedures to prevent survivors with a case pending against a trafficker from being deported. However, there remains a substantial lack of shelter beds and housing for survivors; inadequate access to health care services, including mental

health care, for survivors; a lack of enforcement of laws against labor traffickers; an exploitative temporary worker visa program that causes human trafficking; harmful immigration policies that turn away trafficking victims seeking asylum and cause long waits for those seeking trafficking victim visas; and a failure to create a victim-centered protocol for law enforcement to safeguard survivors, as mandated by law.

- **Addressing systemic barriers:** While human trafficking is an issue that can impact any individual, data from service providers show the vast majority of survivor clients are Black, Indigenous or people of color (BIPOC). As the U.S. government continues efforts to strengthen race equity in anti-trafficking legislation, policies, and programs, it must recognize the heightened risk factors that BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities face, including structural racism. BIPOC communities are disproportionately impacted by the criminal legal system, including disenfranchisement and disqualification from public housing, welfare benefits, job training, employment and immigration relief. The denial of these basic necessities for survival creates vulnerabilities to human trafficking. BIPOC survivors are also targeted by immigration enforcement. Traffickers use the threat of deportation to intimidate survivors who are foreign nationals into staying in their trafficking situations. Increased immigration enforcement prevents foreign national survivors from seeking services out of fear of detention and deportation.
- **Advance prevention strategies:** The United States has an opportunity to be a leader in advancing targeted prevention strategies to address those most at risk of sex and labor trafficking. This must include providing easy access to developmentally appropriate services and housing options for youth experiencing homelessness, runaway youth, and systems-involved youth. There is a need for broad public awareness targeted to those most at-risk as well as anti-poverty programs.

There is no shortage of successful strategies to effectively prevent and combat human trafficking. Over the past 22 years, since the Trafficking Victims Protection Act was passed and the annual TIP Report has been published, the anti-trafficking movement has developed a wide range of successful programs. But there is a shortage of resources for these strategies to be implemented at a scale commensurate with the scope of the problem.

The annual TIP Report is not only a moment to reflect on the status of efforts to end trafficking worldwide. It is also a moment to call for action to redouble efforts around the globe to get the job done.

*ATEST is a U.S.-based coalition that advocates for solutions to prevent and end all forms of human trafficking and modern slavery around the world. We advocate for lasting solutions to prevent forced labor and sex trafficking, hold perpetrators accountable, ensure justice for victims and empower survivors with tools for recovery. Our collective experience implementing programs at home and abroad provides our coalition an unparalleled breadth and depth of expertise.*

*ATEST member organizations include: Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST), Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), Covenant House, Free the Slaves, HEAL Trafficking, Human Trafficking Institute, Human Trafficking Legal Center, Humanity United Action (HUA), McCain Institute for International Leadership, National Network for Youth (NN4Y), Polaris, Safe Horizon, Solidarity Center,*

*T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, United Way Worldwide, Verité, and Vital Voices Global Partnership.*

Media Contact: ATEST Director Terry FitzPatrick | [terry.fitzpatrick@ATEST-US.org](mailto:terry.fitzpatrick@ATEST-US.org) | 571-282-9913