

*Report on Human Trafficking Issues  
to the Standing Committee of the  
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**by**

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Mr. President, fellow parliamentarians, please accept the following report on my activities since the 2021 Annual Session as the Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues for the OSCE PA.

### **High Level Meetings and Speaking Events**

I continue to take every opportunity to raise human trafficking concerns and discuss best practices with high-level officials. In addition, human trafficking concerns resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the enormous number of Ukrainian refugees it caused has recently become a major focus of meetings and events.

On June 9, I held a press conference with Congresswoman Karen Bass, prominent anti-trafficking NGOs, and survivor-leaders on human trafficking to highlight the need for anti-trafficking legislation to reauthorize the billions of dollars of funding needed to combat this ever-growing crime, both domestically and abroad.

On May 17, I hosted a Thai delegation of 12, including representatives from the Royal Thai Police, Labor Ministry, Social Development Ministry, and an NGO to discuss their efforts since our last meeting to address internet crimes against children, labor trafficking, government accountability, and police investigations.

I also included anti-trafficking funding requests for domestic and international efforts through our U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations process.

On April 28, I received a briefing from NGOs on the current situation on the ground in the Ukrainian refugee crisis and the pressing human trafficking situation surrounding Ukrainian women and girls, including efforts in Romania with the EU Coordinator for THB Diane Schmidt, head of OSCE for THB Valiant Richey, and the heads of anti-organized crime in Romania.

On April 27, I gave remarks during the OSCE/ODIHR Conference on Addressing Human Trafficking and All Forms of Sexual Exploitation: Measures to Strengthen Responses of Destination Countries.

On April 21, I attended a high-level meeting with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal at the U.S. Capitol and raised the need to indict and prosecute Vladimir Putin for war crimes now and resolve the dire humanitarian situation unfolding in Europe—including and especially the escalating risk of human trafficking—as Putin continues to wage the largest and most lethal attack in Europe since World War II.

On April 7, I participated in a Helsinki Commission hearing on “Protecting Ukrainian Refugees from Human Trafficking.” The hearing was chaired by Helsinki Commission

Chairman Senator Ben Cardin. Witnesses included Dr Kari Johnstone, the State Department Senior Advisor, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons; Ms. Tatiana Kotlyarenko, Anti-Trafficking Advisor, OSCE Office for Democratic Institution and Human Rights (ODIHR); Mr. Mykola Kuleba, Director of Save Ukraine and former Presidential Commissioner for Human Rights; and Mr. Nic McKinley, Founder and CEO, DeliverFund. They discussed efforts by frontline states, the international community, NGOs, and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to prevent refugees from becoming victims of human traffickers by raising awareness, vetting those working with refugees and those providing housing and employment, and countering online solicitation. They also discussed the need to safely transport vulnerable populations, particularly children, safely out of warzones and properly register them to ensure that they do not go missing or become trafficking victims.

On April 6, I spoke at the OSCE 22<sup>nd</sup> High-level *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* Conference Protection: upholding victims' rights and strengthening assistance on U.S. supply chain legislation to prevent trafficking, importance of keeping survivor-informed policy, calling on the international community to invest in prevention of trafficking at the early onset of crisis like Ukraine, importance of ongoing prevention of child trafficking, and providing wrap around social services for survivors for healing and empowerment.

On March 31, I was keynote at the American Hotel and Lodging Association's Safety Summit. I spoke on the critical role that this industry plays to combat sex and labor trafficking, including child sex tourism. The campaign works to raise public awareness and facilitate collaboration on best practices for policies, procedures, and training to enhance domestic and international hotel and lodging companies' human trafficking prevention efforts. The campaign has trained over 700,000 hotel employees nationwide.

On March 9, I met with Poland Ambassador to U.S., Marek Magierowski, to underscore the United States' commitment to providing aircraft, military equipment and humanitarian aid to those on the frontlines defending freedom against tyranny as well as to coordinate efforts to hold Vladimir Putin accountable for war crimes. We also discussed the increasing risk for exploitation and trafficking of the Ukrainian women and children fleeing to neighboring countries.

This meeting came as a result of my chairing the first hearing in the House of Representatives on March 8 to hold Russia accountable for its barbaric invasion of Ukraine, pressing for the prosecution of Vladimir Putin and others for their war crimes and crime of aggression against the Ukrainian people and nation.

This hearing follows [new legislation I authored and introduced March 7](#) urging the creation of appropriate regional or global justice mechanisms to immediately investigate and prosecute Putin and those responsible within the Russian Federation as "war criminals."

On February 25, I participated in the OSCE Economic Committee with Val Richey during the PA Winter Meeting to discuss trafficking concerns.

My staff and I participated and led several meetings with anti-trafficking stakeholders, including universities and faith-based NGOs, eventually amassing support by over 300 anti-trafficking NGOs and over 500 advocacy groups for our Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2022 legislation, which I introduced on February 1, 2022, with Congresswomen Karen Bass.

On January 24, I participated in the launch of the update of ODIHR's "Handbook on National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs) to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons," along with Tatiana Kotlyarenko, ODIHR's Adviser on Anti-Trafficking Issues, Shandra Woworuntu, Chair of the OSCE International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC), Valiant Richey, the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, and several other experts. I will discuss the substance of the NRM Handbook later in this report.

On December 10, 2021, I met with OSCE Special Representative Valiant Richey during his visit to Washington, D.C. We discussed current legislative efforts in the United States, including the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2021 and the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. We agreed on the importance of strengthening efforts to address internet safety, demand for sex trafficking, supply chain issues, and the integration of survivor- and trauma-informed approaches.

On October 27, I co-chaired a hearing on "Combating Global human Trafficking" for the Africa, Global Health, And Global Human Rights Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Earlier in October, I met with a Liberian delegation to discuss their TIP Report ranking and concerns related to the need to strengthen their anti-trafficking law related to children and penalties for traffickers as well as on monitoring foreign-born laborers from China and Cuba. I also met with a Korean delegation to discuss the issue of forced labor among their temporary visa workers.

In September, I met with the Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand to discuss their efforts to combat trafficking during COVID-19, particularly child sex trafficking and labor trafficking on fishing vessels. I also submitted questions for the record to Secretary Blinken during a U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing regarding concerns about the vulnerability to human trafficking, exploitation, and child marriages for Afghani children and women.

In August, I met with a Nigerian delegation to discuss their country's TIP Report ranking and concerns around sex trafficking in government-run IDP camps and child soldiers. I also gave

remarks at a Taiwan Parliamentary Human Rights Commission Virtual Hearing, and I met with a former Rohingya trafficking prisoner over human trafficking concerns in Vietnam and South Korea.

## **New Legislative Efforts**

[I authored and introduced on March 7](#) legislation, **H.Res 966**, urging the creation of appropriate regional or global justice mechanisms to immediately investigate and prosecute Putin and those responsible within the Russian Federation as “war criminals”, which would act as a trafficking prevention mechanism.

On February 1, I introduced a new version of our **Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2022**, which includes a provision calling attention to Russia’s aggression on Ukraine and the resulting human trafficking and humanitarian crisis, as Putin continues to wage the largest and most lethal war in Europe since World War II.

I also co-sponsored, with Congressman Jim McGovern, the **Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act**, which was signed into law by President Biden on December 23, 2021. The Act stops U.S. imports produced by slave labor, including from China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where the Chinese Communist Party is committing genocide against predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other Central Asian minorities. By prohibiting these imports - unless clear and convincing evidence shows the goods were not produced with forced labor - this new law will help ensure the United States is not aiding and abetting the Chinese Communist Party in their horrific human rights violations. It is an important and necessary step toward ending—or at least mitigating—Xi Jinping’s horrible ongoing genocide. I will continue to work tirelessly to ensure this new law is implemented and enforced to the fullest extent possible and hold the Chinese government accountable for its gross human rights abuses and abject cruelty towards people of all faith. I urge all of you to consider similar legislation and policies in your countries.

On September 3, 2021, I introduced a comprehensive reauthorization of the TVPA, the **Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2021** on the 183<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the self-emancipation of Frederick Douglass.

## **Update of ODIHR’s Handbook on National Referral Mechanisms to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons**

When ODIHR published the first edition of its NRM handbook in 2004, the concept of NRMs as a co-operative, national framework through which governments fulfill their obligations to protect and promote the human rights of victims of trafficking and co-ordinate their efforts in

partnership with civil society and the private sector was new. Since then, NRMs have been established in many OSCE participating States as well as outside the OSCE region. This new updated and revised edition includes lessons learned and best practices to strengthen efforts to identify, assist, and protect victims. Its new components are groundbreaking, particularly new sections on the importance of including survivor voices in policymaking, incorporating a ge-appropriate and trauma-informed approach that takes into account how the trauma a victim has experienced can affect them, and the importance of using specific NRM practices for children.

The timing of this update could not be more important. After more than two years, we are still contending with the COVID-19 pandemic. It has changed our lives in very many ways. It has also had a serious impact on anti-trafficking efforts, on patterns of trafficking, on victims and on survivors. In addition, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has resulted in the largest refugee crisis since World War II. Most of these refugees are women and children who are extremely vulnerable to falling prey to human traffickers. We must step up our efforts, and this handbook will help us do that.

I urge all of you to work with ODIHR to promote these concepts in your parliaments, your legislation, and your policies.

### **Concern about the Vulnerability of Ukrainian Refugees to Human Trafficking**

I am extremely concerned about the vulnerability of Ukrainian refugees – as well as internally displaced persons – to human trafficking. More than 8.4 million refugees have fled Ukraine since Russia's massive invasion of Ukraine on February 24, the largest migration of people in Europe since the second world war.

Given Ukraine's exit restrictions on males from 18-60, UNHCR estimates that 90% of those leaving Ukraine are women and children. Most cross the Ukrainian border without resources or a place to go, making them extremely vulnerable to human trafficking. Trafficking networks from Ukraine to EU countries were already well-established before the war, and more Ukrainian women were trafficked into the EU than from any other country.

There have been credible reports from border areas where refugees are crossing that traffickers are trolling trying to lure refugees with promises of accommodation, onward transportation, or employment. Some are masquerading as volunteers or others providing assistance. Traffickers are reportedly also using online methods such as social media and online advertising to lure potential victims, including through posts offering housing, employment, or other assistance.

Children are particularly vulnerable. Almost half of Ukrainian refugees are children. Thousands are unaccompanied, either because they have been evacuated from state care in Ukraine or because they have lost their parents or caretakers to the war. We need to ensure that children are safe and taken care of, and we must be able to reunite them with family after the war if possible.

I am very concerned about reports that civilians – including children - are being forcibly deported by Russian forces from Ukraine to Russia, where they may also be at risk of human trafficking. These children may end up being adopted and assimilated in Russia, which could amount to a war crime or even genocide as part of an intentional destruction of the Ukrainian identity. Alarmingly, in May, Russian President Putin issued a decree simplifying the procedure for obtaining Russian citizenship for Ukrainian orphans or children left without parental care, particularly in the temporarily occupied territories.

I am also concerned about the future. The longer the refugees have to remain outside of Ukraine, the more vulnerable they will become as they try to find longer term housing and employment. In addition, there is the potential for another wave of refugees this fall. Recently, as the security situation has improved in eastern Ukraine, some refugees returned. They may have gone back to check on their homes or family left behind, or they may have used up their savings. But this does not mean that we can close the reception centers, housing and employment programs set up to support them, nor stop the anti-trafficking awareness raising programs set up to prevent them from falling into the hands of traffickers. As Russia continues its bloody invasion, many of these refugees may have to flee again this fall as food and energy shortages in Ukraine worsen and their children need to go back to school.

The OSCE has offered valuable tools that I hope we will all use to strengthen our responses. Val Richey, the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, has issued recommendations for OSCE states to protect refugees. ODIHR is conducting needs assessments and training in frontline states. Moreover, ODIHR's above-mentioned handbook on National Referral Mechanisms can also be used to strengthen efforts to address this situation.

### **Continuing effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Anti-Trafficking Efforts**

The COVID-19 pandemic had a serious impact on anti-trafficking efforts, on patterns of trafficking, on victims and on survivors.

One of the main trends we saw develop due to the shift of so many activities online – such as exacerbated vulnerabilities of children to online grooming and targeting by traffickers as schools became virtual and children spent more time online in social media and gaming – is



likely to remain a problem, as traffickers increasingly use virtual platforms for on-demand streaming of sexual exploitation.

The internet also allowed traffickers to live stream the exploitation of their victims, enabling the simultaneous abuse of one victim by many perpetrators around the globe.

Another trend that emerged from the pandemic was an increased use of cryptocurrencies and virtual currencies. This is likely to grow and fighting it will require that law enforcement have more resources and training to investigate the online aspects of human trafficking, including following the trail of virtual currencies and investigating on the “dark web.”

These are areas where I think we could strengthen OSCE focus and assistance.

In February, the Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Val Richey, published a new study and recommendations on “Policy responses to technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings: Analysis of current approaches and considerations for moving forward.” It recognizes that technology is misused to groom and recruit children and vulnerable adults, to advertise trafficking victims for sexual services, to share depictions of exploited adults and children, and to live stream forced pornography. It found that while some companies have developed measures or tools to respond to this problem on their platforms, there has been inadequate adoption of safety measures, inconsistent and slow reporting to authorities, and a lack of redress for victims and impunity for traffickers. The study offers policy recommendations, including mandated age verification for those appearing in explicit material and proactive monitoring to identify risks on their platforms. I urge all of you to take a close look at these recommendations to address this growing global threat.

We should also strengthen our efforts to investigate and prosecute traffickers through financial transactions. With this rise of online sexual abuse of children, we need to address how new technologies are being used in financial transactions - including cryptocurrencies - to hide traffickers’ nefarious activities from the eyes of law enforcement. We need to do more to train our law enforcement to address this issue and step up international cooperation in this regard.

### **Continued Support for the OSCE/ODIHR International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council**

I continue to strongly support the establishment of the OSCE/ODIHR “International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council,” or ISTAC, the first such council established by an international organization. ISTAC consists of 21 survivor-leaders of human trafficking from across the OSCE and will assist with OSCE work in combatting trafficking in human beings.

The United States established its own Advisory Council on Human Trafficking in 2015 as a platform to enable trafficking survivors to provide recommendations on federal anti-trafficking policies to the President’s Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (PITF). Members of the Council are appointed by the President for two-year terms. In 2019, the U.S. State Department launched its own Human Trafficking Expert Consultant Network (the Network), which among other things, has provided comments to the U.S. delegation during negotiations of OSCE Ministerial decisions. I, myself, find recommendations from survivors extremely valuable in the legislative process for both hearings and writing legislation, as they have informed the original TVPA of 2000 and the other four reauthorizations signed into law—all of which I authored—including, as well the two I introduced for reauthorization in September 2021 and February 2022.

ISTAC members have been actively participating in OSCE and other international events, where they have made many valuable recommendations. I urge all of your countries to consult with ISTAC members as well as to create your own survivor-leader councils to provide a platform for survivor voices to be heard by policymakers. Survivor consultants can also guide grant committees and program design.

### **U.S. State Department *Trafficking in Persons Report 2021: Human Trafficking in the Context of a Global Pandemic***

The 2021 *Trafficking in Persons Report*<sup>1</sup> was released on July 1, 2021 by Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Required by my *Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000*, this report is one of the most successful ways the U.S. promotes best practices and ensures government accountability for the minimum standards to eliminate human trafficking. This annual report lays bare the record of 187 countries’, including the United States’, progress in a tier ranking and narrative—with recommendations for progress.

Tier 1 countries fully meet the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking. Tier 2 countries do not meet the minimum standards but are making a significant effort to do so. Tier 2 Watch List countries are in a grace period and in real danger of becoming Tier 3 unless they show significant effort to go along with their promises. Tier 3 countries do not meet the minimum standards and are not making significant effort to do so. Along with the embarrassment of being listed on Tier 3, Tier 3 countries are open to sanction by the U.S. government.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State, *2021 Trafficking in Persons Report* (July 2021) <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

This year's report focused on the COVID-19 pandemic as a health crisis with unprecedented repercussions for human rights and economic development globally, including in human trafficking. According to the report, "COVID-19 generated conditions that increased the number of people who experienced vulnerabilities to human trafficking and interrupted existing and planned anti-trafficking interventions. Governments across the world diverted resources toward the pandemic, often at the expense of anti-trafficking efforts, resulting in decreased protection measures and service provision for victims, reduction of preventative efforts, and hindrances to investigations and prosecutions of traffickers. At the same time, human traffickers quickly adapted to capitalize on the vulnerabilities exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic."

The report discusses the growing number of people experiencing economic and social vulnerabilities, how traffickers adapted and exploited COVID-19 related risks, including targeting the growing number of people affected by the worsening economic and social effects and offering false promises and fraudulent job offers or re-exploiting survivors who became financially unstable and vulnerable to revictimization. It also focused on the increase in online recruitment and grooming as children spent more time online for virtual learning due to school closures, often with little parental supervision and drastic increases in online commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, including online sexual exploitation of children and demand for and distribution of child sexual exploitation material, including content that involved human trafficking victims. The report showed that "victims and survivors faced obstacles accessing assistance and support as lockdowns, social distancing protocols, and a lack of resources caused service providers to close shelters and reduce services."

I appeal to you as legislators to stay one step ahead of the traffickers, to adapt to countering new forms of trafficking, innovate to create new technologies to fight trafficking, and consider new cross-border collaboration. Please keep refining your State's trafficking laws and please use your oversight functions to ensure their full implementation. We must reverse these downward trends. Lives depend on it.

Participating States Making Measurable Progress: Belarus, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan

Several OSCE participating States made significant progress last year. Belarus moved up from Tier 3 to the Tier 2 Watchlist for its efforts including "fewer Belarusians participating in the 2020 national *subbotnik*, and there were no reports of retaliation. Additional achievements included amending the national referral mechanism (NRM) to improve victim identification and assistance

and requiring the recording of child victim and witness testimony during pre-trial investigation for later use in court to reduce possible re-traumatization.”<sup>2</sup>

Armenia moved up from the Tier 2 Watchlist to Tier 2. It “investigated more suspects, convicted a sex trafficker, and identified more victims. The government developed a manual for local police on monitoring businesses for trafficking and engaging vulnerable communities and adopted a law that restricted interviews for children to 90 minutes in the presence of a psychologist. The Prosecutor General’s Office (PGO) created a working group to review all trafficking cases from 2018-2019 to identify legal or procedural issues and law enforcement added trafficking curriculum to train the new patrol police. The government significantly increased resources to the NGO-run shelter, developed screening indicators for social workers, and strengthened procedures to identify child victims. The government allocated funds to repatriate victims for the first time, and it adopted the 2020-2022 national action plan (NAP) and allocated resources to its implementation.”<sup>3</sup>

Bosnia and Herzegovina also moved up from the Tier 2 Watchlist to Tier 2. Its efforts included, “efforts included strengthening the anti-trafficking strike force by allocating resources for honoraria and operational costs, expanding membership of the strike force, and creating a network of prosecutors and investigators to facilitate coordination.”<sup>4</sup> Kazakhstan moved up to Tier 2 for “investigating more trafficking cases and identifying more victims of sex trafficking and forced labor than the previous year; increasing the number of trafficking convictions for the first time in five years; and, achieving the first convictions for forced labor crimes in three years.”<sup>5</sup> Kyrgyzstan was upgraded for its efforts including, “efforts included initiating investigations into potential cases of official complicity; reassessing hundreds of previously dismissed cases for trafficking indicators, leading to the reinstatement of several investigations; repatriating dozens of vulnerable Kyrgyzstani children from potentially exploitative circumstances in armed conflict zones in Iraq and Syria; and, with support from an international organization, developing and disseminating anti-trafficking training materials for police and prosecutors.”<sup>6</sup>

Uzbekistan continued to make progress and was upgraded from the Tier 2 Watchlist to Tier 2. Improvements included, “passing a new anti-trafficking law outlining improved victim protection protocols; amending the criminal code to explicitly criminalize child forced labor in the first offense; identifying more victims than in prior years; investigating, prosecuting, convicting, and sentencing significantly more traffickers than the previous reporting period, constituting the first quantitative enforcement increase in six years; and, for the first time, referring potential cases of official

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/belarus/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/armenia/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/kazakhstan/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/kyrgyz-republic/>

complicity in cotton harvest forced labor for criminal investigation. Authorities also undertook new efforts to repatriate and provide robust protection and reintegration services for hundreds of Uzbekistani women and children previously stranded in exploitative conditions that often amounted to trafficking in armed conflict zones in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan; mitigated elevated risk among vulnerable populations during the pandemic by connecting nearly half a million unemployed migrant workers with job opportunities; and significantly reduced the incidence of forced labor in the annual cotton harvest—despite an increase in the size of the work force—through continued mechanization and privatization measures, increased oversight into labor practices, expanded provision of monitoring access to civil society and international organizations, and other factors.”<sup>7</sup>

#### Participating States Losing Ground in the Fight Against Trafficking: Cyprus, Norway, Portugal, and Switzerland

The fight against trafficking in persons requires constant vigilance. Cyprus was downgraded from Tier 2 to Tier 2 because “the government investigated fewer suspects, and, for the third consecutive year, courts did not convict any perpetrators under the trafficking law. Court proceedings for most crimes lasted years, and foreign victims and witnesses often returned to their countries of origin without an adequate means to ensure the continued inclusion of their testimony, resulting in trafficking cases convicted under lesser charges.”<sup>8</sup>

Norway was also downgraded from Tier 1 to Tier 2. “Authorities prosecuted zero trafficking cases for the first year ever, convicted only one trafficker—the fewest since 2005, and continued to charge traffickers with non-trafficking crimes, such as pimping. Victim identification and assistance data remained unreliable. For the fourth consecutive year, the government did not report an official number of identified and assisted victims and continued to delay development of a comprehensive statistical system for collecting data, formal identification procedures, and a national referral mechanism (NRM). Moreover, authorities did not consistently identify potential child trafficking victims and did not report identifying or assisting any child victims despite their involvement in trafficking cases. Finally, authorities’ sole focus on an individual’s lack of residence permit or immigration documentation resulted in the deportation of victims without screening for trafficking indicators.”<sup>9</sup>

Portugal was downgraded from Tier 1 to Tier 2. “The government prosecuted fewer suspects and did not report convicting any traffickers at the time of this report. The government identified significantly fewer victims for the second consecutive year and the fewest since 2008. The government did not identify any Portuguese or child victims as a result of ongoing gaps in victim

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/uzbekistan/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/cyprus/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/norway/>

identification. The government also continued to lack legal safeguards to protect victims from prosecution for crimes their traffickers compelled them to commit.”<sup>10</sup> Switzerland was downgraded to Tier 2 as a result of “Lenient sentencing, resulting in 60 percent of traffickers receiving fully suspended sentences or fines, undercut efforts to hold traffickers accountable, weakened deterrence, created potential security and safety concerns—particularly for victims who cooperated with investigations and prosecutions, and was not equal to the seriousness with which other similar crimes were treated regarding sentencing. The government did not report the number of trafficking investigations for the third year in a row and reported fewer convictions, which could not be attributed to pandemic-related court closures. Law enforcement efforts on labor trafficking remained low compared with sex trafficking, and the government lacked comprehensive and sufficiently disaggregated data on trafficking. For the third consecutive year, the government decreased victim identification and identified the fewest victims since 2015. The government remained without a national standardized identification and referral mechanism and continued to lack legal safeguards to protect trafficking victims against potential prosecution.”<sup>11</sup>

### Participating States Remaining on Tier 3: The Russian Federation and Turkmenistan

Two OSCE participating States have remained on Tier 3 for many years.

Russia “took some steps to address trafficking, including by facilitating the return of Russian children from Iraq and Syria, identifying some victims, and extending work and residence permits for foreign workers in response to the pandemic. However, during the reporting period there was a government policy or pattern of trafficking. The government was actively complicit in the forced labor of North Korean workers. The government did not screen North Korean workers for trafficking indicators or identify any North Korean trafficking victims, despite credible reports in previous years that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) operated work camps in Russia and exploited thousands of North Korean workers in forced labor. Although the government took steps to repatriate North Korean workers in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs), citizens from the DPRK continued to arrive throughout the year, many of whom likely engaged in informal labor. While the Russian government reported the number of North Korean workers in Russia declined in 2020, the government issued almost 3,000 new tourist and student visas to North Koreans in 2020 in an apparent attempt to circumvent the UNSCRs. Separate from this complicity, the government did not initiate any new prosecutions of suspected traffickers and convicted only one trafficker. Authorities continued to lack a process for the identification of victims and their referral to care, and the total number of victims identified by the government remained negligible compared with the estimated scope of the problem. Moreover, the criminal code did not establish a definition

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/portugal/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/switzerland/>

for a victim of trafficking, hindering identification efforts and limiting access to victim services. Authorities routinely penalized potential victims, including by detaining and deporting potential forced labor victims for immigration violations, and prosecuted sex trafficking victims for prostitution crimes without screening for trafficking indicators. The government offered no funding or programs to provide services for trafficking victims. As in previous years, the government did not draft a national strategy or assign roles and responsibilities to government agencies to combat human trafficking”<sup>12</sup>

Turkmenistan “took some steps to address trafficking, including by continuing to participate in anti-trafficking awareness campaigns and continuing to purchase equipment for mechanization of the cotton harvest to reduce the vulnerability to forced labor generated by dependence on handpicking. However, during the reporting period, there was a government policy or pattern of forced labor; the government continued to direct policies that perpetuated the mobilization of adults and children for forced labor in the annual cotton harvest, in public works projects, and in other sectors in some areas of the country. The government’s denial of access to independent monitoring missions—coupled with pandemic-related limitations—prevented robust observation of the cotton harvest. Despite these trends, the government did not hold any officials accountable for their complicity in forced labor crimes. The government did not report any information on investigations, prosecutions, or convictions; identified no victims; did not implement legal provisions on victim protection; and did not fund any victim assistance programs.”<sup>13</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has added a major new challenge to our effort to prevent and combat human trafficking. We must do all we can to protect Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons from falling prey to human traffickers, to identify assist any who do, and to prosecute perpetrators. In addition, we will continue to struggle to overcome the repercussions of the COVID-19 virus and the changes it made to human trafficking patterns. We must continue to respond to new challenges and ensure that our efforts are effective against new trends such as an increase in the use of digital technologies. I urge you all to work within your parliaments to strengthen your legislation and policies to combat human trafficking. We need international cooperation and coordination now more than ever. Please join me in this effort until we have raised a generation that is free of human trafficking.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/russia/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/turkmenistan/>