

*Report on Human Trafficking Issues  
to the Standing Committee of the  
2023 Winter Meeting  
of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly*

*February 23-24, 2023*

*Vienna, Austria*

**by**

**Rep. Christopher H. Smith, U.S.A.**

**Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues**

**for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

## Table of Contents

<b>High Level Meetings and Speaking Events</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Legislative Efforts</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Concern about the Vulnerability of Ukrainian Refugees to Human Trafficking</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Continued Support for the OSCE/ODIHR International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>U.S. State Department <i>Trafficking in Persons Report 2022</i>: Human trafficking in the Context of a Global Pandemic</b>	<b>8</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participating States Making Measurable Progress: Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Germany, Iceland and Romania</li><li>• Participating States Losing Ground in the Fight Against Trafficking: Belarus, Bulgaria and Serbia</li><li>• Participating States Remaining on Tier 3: The Russian Federation and Turkmenistan</li></ul>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>14</b>

Madame President, fellow parliamentarians, please accept the following report on my activities since the 2022 Winter Meeting 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, especially with every foreign delegation that I meet, which averages to about 1-3 for every week we are in session. 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 and the importance of utilizing the National Referral Mechanism and the wisdom of local survivor-leaders.

On July 8, 2022, my office attended the American Hotel and Lodging Association's event on No Room for Trafficking to discuss legislative efforts to combat human trafficking in hotels, locally and abroad. I have worked several years on specific legislation to support and train hotel owners and their staff to combat human trafficking in their workplace and among their guests. This concern has gained more attention.

On July 14, 2022, I held a Tom Lantos Hearing on child labor in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This hearing examined human rights violations in the DRC's mining sector, including child, and forced labor, disregard for worker safety, and environmental degradation. It looked at the role played by outside actors, including Chinese and Russian concerns, in corrupting government regulatory regimes in the DRC, and what impact this has on the global supply chain of certain extracted minerals. We also examined the key role of civil society in combatting such abuses.

On July 19, 2022, my office attended the release of the U.S. Department of State's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report.

On August 1, 2022, I was keynote speaker for the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons event for OSCE special webinar where I discussed the history of trafficking in persons legislation in the U.S. and efforts going forward, including supply chain and prevention education.

On September 8, 2022, my office met with a group from Pakistani leaders participating in the International Visitor Leadership Program to discuss the evolution of the TVPA over the years as well as U.S. Congress' rulemaking process, checks and balances of the U.S. branches of government, whole-of-government approach to combatting trafficking in persons, and the current gaps and challenges to counter human trafficking.

On September 23, 2022, my office attended the U.S. Advisory Council Report release, led by survivor-leaders. The Report highlights priorities, from the perspective of survivor-leaders (our best experts), to effectively combat human trafficking. One of the outcomes of this meeting was vibrant discussions about the need to elevate survivor leadership, including exploring ways to consider a survivor as Ambassador-at-large for human trafficking.

On December 5, 2022, I met with law enforcement experts specialized in internet crimes against children to discuss ways we can expand efforts to address this growing crime locally and abroad. I incorporated their partnership with schools in my legislation.

On December 7, I spoke at the Washington Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum on child forced labor with rare earth minerals and global supply chain.

On December 14, 2022, I met with Mykola Kuleba, Director of Save Ukraine, which has been evacuating children, especially orphans and children with special needs, from war zones. They offer shelters and psychological treatment to them. The particular focus of the discussion was the vulnerability of Ukrainian refugees to human trafficking.

### **Legislative Efforts**

In February 2023, I introduced the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act of 2023, which would address, for the first time in the United States, forced organ harvesting and trafficking in human beings for the purpose of organ removal through sanctions and an annual report. This bill will be part of a hearing and markup at the end of this month.

I will also be introducing the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2023, which has key domestic and foreign affair provisions to ensure we authorize needed funding and approaches to continue our support in the global fight against human trafficking.

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

Almost 8 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. I want to thank the frontline states Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova, which have taken in this unprecedented flow of-refugees, and done so with incredible generosity from their governments, from their citizens, from NGOs and charitable organizations, and others.

This refugee crisis is different in that some 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. In addition, 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 continue to be credible reports that traffickers are trolling border areas, train stations, and refugee centers trying to lure refugees with promises of accommodation, onward transportation, or employment. Some are masquerading as volunteers or others providing assistance. Others are using 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 in the war.

Many refugees are having difficulty finding longer term housing and jobs due to lack of language skills and childcare. Some assistance programs are ending, and many humanitarian organizations are pulling out. The savings that many refugees had been living on are dwindling. Roma refugees from Ukraine are at risk as they face discrimination in assistance, housing, and jobs in many places.

Ukrainian orphans and unaccompanied minors are particularly vulnerable to falling prey to human traffickers. Thousands of displaced children in Ukraine have been unaccompanied, either because they were evacuated from state care or because they lost their parents or caretakers in the war, making them vulnerable to falling prey to human traffickers. As refugees, they need to be securely tracked and transferred into national child protection systems so that they do not fall prey to human trafficking or otherwise disappear. Particularly at the beginning of the war, many children simply passed through borders and may have gone missing.

A recent survey of Ukrainian women refugees conducted by ODIHR found that since leaving Ukraine, many had experienced sexual harassment, received requests for sexual favors, proposals to work in the commercial sex industry or produce pornographic materials, or even suffered sexual violence. Two in five said they were worried about human trafficking while almost half had not received information on how to stay safe.

Based on the survey results, ODIHR has issued several recommendations. I would like to highlight a few: countries hosting refugees ensure proper vetting in assistance, housing, and employment programs; train stakeholders working with refugees on victim identification and on taking a trauma-informed approach; work to disrupt online recruitment platforms targeting Ukrainian refugees; and address demand.

The OSCE has been very active concerning preventing and addressing the vulnerability of Ukrainian refugees to human trafficking.

The Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator has since last March been distributing messages informing Ukrainian refugees about safety concerns and resources. Facebook and Instagram pages “Work Safe!” were created to promote safety among job seekers and share verified hotline numbers to assist refugees. Thomson Reuters partnered with the OSCE to examine whether there was a demand for Ukrainian women for sexual exploitation, including human trafficking through real-time, in-depth data analysis of internet patterns. This project “found clear signals that human traffickers are preying on Ukrainians escaping the war and that the demand for online sexual services is fueling the criminal profitability of exploitation.”<sup>1</sup> Some of the evidence included “increases of up to 300% in global online interest in a range of sexually derogatory search terms related to Ukrainian women. This pattern is consistent across Europe. Social media is the primary means that traffickers use to lure, groom, and advertise their victims.”<sup>2</sup>

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has also undertaken significant action to protect Ukrainian refugees. ODIHR has conducted rapid National Referral Mechanism (NRM) assessment visits to Romania, Moldova, Slovakia and the Czech Republic focusing on strengthening anti-trafficking response systems resulting in drafting assessment reports and providing specific recommendations to strengthen and support NRM frameworks and partnerships. ODIHR also conducted three trainings for civil society and frontline responders on addressing human trafficking risks in the context of Russia’s military attack on Ukraine with participants from 102 organizations from 32 countries. As I mentioned previously, ODIHR conducted a survey on the safety and security of women refugees fleeing Ukraine, which collected empirical data to better inform the development of responses to addressing the vulnerabilities and risks of Ukrainian women refugees to human trafficking. The survey reached 980 women refugees from Ukraine providing insights into the lived experiences, concerns, and challenges that women refugees face.

In addition, ODIHR’s NRM Handbook has several important new concepts that I think are crucial to preventing Ukrainian refugees from falling prey to human traffickers and assisting victims who do. First, it recognizes the crucial role that survivors can play in informing policy development and make its implementation as effective as possible. Survivors are the real experts; their lived experiences and their perspectives can help inform our policies and our legislation and

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/our-purpose/how-technology-is-being-used-to-combat-human-trafficking/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

make them more effective. Second, it recognizes the effects that trauma can have on trafficking victims and describes how that must be taken into account in identification and assistance efforts. Third, it addresses children and their needs separately from adults. We must do more to prevent children from being trafficked, and we must ensure that assistance for child victims is culturally responsive, age-appropriate, and trauma-informed.

I hope that the OSCE will do more to address the demand that fuels human trafficking. The OSCE has done a lot to address labor trafficking in supply chains, particularly those related to public procurement, and now should do more to address the demand for sex trafficking, including Ukrainian refugees, and the trafficking in human beings for the removal of organs.

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

I continue to support the OSCE/ODIHR “International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council,” or ISTAC, the first such council established by an international organization. ISTAC was featured in the State Department’s 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report.

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.

I understand that the OSCE is in the process of selecting its next group of survivor experts, and I urge that this move forward as soon as possible.

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.

## **U.S. State Department *Trafficking in Persons Report 2022: Survivor Engagement in the Anti-Trafficking Field: History, Lessons Learned, and Looking Forward***

The 2022 *Trafficking in Persons Report*<sup>3</sup> was released on July 19, 2022 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.

This year's report focused on the vital role that survivors of human trafficking play in combating this crime. As the report explains, "their perspective and experience should be taken into consideration to better address this crime and to craft a better response to it. They run organizations, advocate before legislatures, train law enforcement officers, conduct public outreach, and collaborate with government officials on local and national levels. They serve the anti-trafficking community and society at large as doctors, lawyers, mental health professionals, and more. Engaging survivors as partners is critical to establishing effective victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally competent anti-trafficking policies and strategies that address prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts. Meaningful engagement means collaborating with survivors in all aspects of anti-trafficking efforts such as developing practices, policies, and strategies, as well as prioritizing survivor leadership of those efforts whenever possible."

The report highlights the importance of taking into account meaningful survivor input in a responsible and meaningful way. It notes that "integrating survivors and their perspective and expertise into the development and execution of anti-trafficking policy, programming, and public awareness efforts is essential. This recognition has prompted governments and stakeholders to consider the best mechanisms to incorporate survivor input and to establish adequate support, including compensation, for survivor leaders." One of the mechanisms highlighted in the report is the OSCE's own International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC). Established in 2021,

---

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of State, *2022 Trafficking in Persons Report* (July 2022) <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>



it “provides advice, guidance, and recommendations to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and through ODIHR to the OSCE participating states, on matters pertaining to combating human trafficking, including but not limited to: draft legislation, policies, and state practices; implementation of relevant OSCE participating states’ commitments; research, drafting, and reviewing of material related to the international normative framework for combating human trafficking; and educational and capacity-building efforts undertaken by ODIHR to combat human trafficking in the OSCE region.” The first cohort finished their term recently, and I look forward to the appointment of the second cohort soon.

I appeal to you as legislators to consider establishing a survivors’ council in your countries. Stay one step ahead of the traffickers, 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. Lives depend on it.

#### Participating States Making Measurable Progress: Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Germany, Iceland and Romania

Several OSCE participating States made significant progress last year. Azerbaijan “demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Azerbaijan was upgraded to Tier 2. These efforts included convicting slightly more traffickers and continuing to issue more significant sentences and fewer suspended sentences than in previous years. The government increased victim protection efforts, including identifying more victims and increasing funding toward victim assistance and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)-run anti-trafficking shelter. The government amended laws to expand victim identification efforts to include the State Migration Service (SMS) and measures to prevent re-victimization of foreign national victims.”<sup>4</sup>

Cyprus “made key achievements to do so during the reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on its anti-trafficking capacity therefore Cyprus was upgraded to Tier 1. These achievements included convicting traffickers for the first time in three years. The government hired additional social workers and created a new Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare Services (SWS), which will help coordinate and strengthen victim protection. The Minister of Justice signed an MOU with the new Deputy Minister of Social Welfare to streamline cooperation between the Anti-Trafficking Unit (ATU) and SWS officers on the national referral mechanism (NRM). Civil society reported the implementation of the NRM improved and the service quality at the government-run shelter was appropriate. The government

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/azerbaijan/>

arranged for foreign national victims to return to Cyprus to testify and paid accommodation and travel expenses for family members to support a victim during the trial. The government launched an anti-trafficking hotline and formed a sub-committee on creating awareness campaigns on demand reduction for commercial sex.”<sup>5</sup>

Germany “made key achievements to do so during the reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore, Germany was upgraded to Tier 1. These achievements included prosecuting and convicting more traffickers, as well as increasing law enforcement efforts on labor trafficking compared with the prior year. With the opening of an additional counseling center in 2021, trafficking-specific NGO service providers operated in all 16 states. In 2021, one state established a new trafficking-specific prosecutor’s office, and another state opened two new safe houses for male victims, although accommodations overall remained inadequate. The government increased funding for victim services and established an inter-ministerial framework on labor trafficking with NGO-run victim care providers. The government also established a voluntary certificate program for private health care recruitment agencies that required labor law compliance.”<sup>6</sup>

Iceland was upgraded to Tier 1 for achievements which included “prosecuting and convicting one trafficker, marking the government’s first prosecution and conviction in 12 years. In addition, the government identified and assisted more potential trafficking victims and funded a new counseling and support center for victims of gender-based violence, including trafficking victims. The government also established a law enforcement advisory panel that worked with foreign law enforcement agencies and anti-trafficking organizations and cooperated with international organizations on data collection regarding trafficking trends and responses. Furthermore, the government funded and published a new online emergency services portal with information on trafficking indicators and assistance, developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) for emergency services operators responding to suspected trafficking cases, and financed production of educational videos to help workplace inspectors detect potential incidents”.<sup>7</sup>

Romania was upgraded to Tier 2 for efforts that included “investigating more trafficking cases, prosecuting and convicting more traffickers, and implementing a pilot program that authorized funding at the local level to an NGO for victim services. Additionally, amendments to the criminal code entered into force, eliminating the statute of limitations for trafficking crimes and thereby giving the government additional time to prosecute such crimes. Furthermore, the government adopted an emergency ordinance and an action plan aimed at improving its capacity to assist vulnerable children and other at-risk populations and investigate various crimes against children, including trafficking. The government also adopted procedures for identifying victims among asylum-seekers and migrants

---

<sup>5</sup><https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/cyprus/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/germany/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/iceland/>

and referring those victims to assistance. Moreover, the government amended the labor law on the protection of Romanian citizens working abroad to include a broader definition of temporary and seasonal workers and workers' rights, additional regulations for recruiting agencies, and increased fines for labor law violations.”<sup>8</sup>

### Participating States Losing Ground in the Fight Against Trafficking: Belarus, Bulgaria and Serbia

The fight against trafficking in persons requires constant vigilance. Belarus was downgraded to Tier 3 this year. “Despite the lack of significant efforts, the government took some steps to address trafficking, including conducting trafficking-related investigations and prosecutions and identifying and referring to services more trafficking victims. However, the government did not report if it investigated, prosecuted, or convicted any traffickers under its trafficking statute and did not provide adequate protection services to trafficking victims. Media and NGO reports indicated authorities returned many third-country migrants and asylum seekers who arrived in the country as part of the state-sponsored migration crisis to their countries of origin without comprehensively screening them for trafficking. Moreover, as part of its broader repression of civil society and independent, pro-democracy activism, the government widely limited the activities of civil society organizations, including organizations providing support to trafficking victims, and did not provide funding or in-kind assistance to NGOs. The government did not report conducting awareness raising activities, and its efforts to prevent labor trafficking remained inadequate. For the fifth consecutive year, the government did not report investigating or filing charges related to illegal recruitment of migrant workers.”<sup>9</sup>

Bulgaria was downgraded to the Tier 2 Watchlist this year, although it prosecuted “significantly more suspected traffickers, ordering restitution, and drafting an annual national program for combating trafficking and victim protection with increased funding to implement the national anti-trafficking strategy. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, even considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity. Authorities investigated and convicted significantly fewer traffickers, marking the lowest number of reported investigations and convictions since the government has been reporting trafficking data. Courts continued to issue suspended sentences for most convicted traffickers, which weakened deterrence, did not adequately reflect the nature of the crime, and undercut broader efforts to fight trafficking. Victim identification and assistance data remained unreliable and unclear and contained duplications from previous years, making it difficult to discern an accurate picture of the

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/romania/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/belarus/>

trafficking situation and compare annual data. Moreover, uncoordinated child protection services persisted, and although authorities identified 42 child trafficking victims, the government did not report assisting any of them. Furthermore, despite a non-punishment provision, authorities penalized trafficking victims for crimes traffickers compelled them to commit. The lack of resources, legal authority to pursue labor trafficking cases, and sufficient training impeded labor officials' ability to enforce laws effectively. Finally, corruption in law enforcement and the judiciary continued to hinder progress, and alleged complicity in trafficking crimes persisted with impunity.”<sup>10</sup>

Serbia was also downgraded to the Tier 2 Watchlist, although made efforts which included “investigating more suspects and revising indicators to identify trafficking victims among schoolchildren. The government increased resources to the Center for Protection of Trafficking Victims (CPTV), which established agreements with companies to secure food, hygiene products, and other donations for victims. The government developed a coordination body to support victims during criminal proceedings, formed four Special Working Groups on various anti- trafficking issues, and designated the Ombudsman as the National Rapporteur on trafficking. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, even considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti- trafficking capacity. The government did not make proactive efforts to identify victims, and the implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for identification remained inadequate. CPTV continued to lack the staff, skills, and resources necessary to consistently assess victims and coordinate care placement; the CPTV-run shelter remained closed due to its inability to obtain a license. The Anti- Trafficking Council did not meet, and the government did not adopt the 2021-2022 national action plan (NAP). Official complicity in trafficking crimes remained a concern. The government did not fully protect victims or fully investigate credible allegations that approximately 500 Vietnamese workers were subjected to forced labor at a People’s Republic of China (PRC)-owned factory.”<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 prosecuting and convicting more traffickers, extending work and residence permits for foreign workers in response to the pandemic, and facilitating the return of Russian children from Iraq and Syria, some of whom may have been trafficking victims. However, during the reporting period, there was a government policy

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/bulgaria/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/serbia/>

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. Citizens from the DPRK continued to arrive throughout the year, many of whom likely engaged in informal labor; the government issued 4,093 visas to North Koreans in 2021 in an apparent attempt to circumvent UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs). The government did not report how many North Korean workers remained in Russia in 2021. Separate from this complicity, the government did not report identifying any trafficking victims, and efforts to prosecute and convict traffickers remained weak compared with the estimated scope of the problem. Authorities continued to lack a process for the identification of victims and their referral to care, and the criminal code did not establish a definition for a victim of trafficking, hindering identification efforts and limiting access to victim services. The government's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 created significant vulnerabilities to trafficking for the millions of refugees fleeing Ukraine. The government offered no funding or programs to provide services for trafficking victims and took steps to limit or ban the activities of civil society groups, including some dedicated to anti-trafficking activities. Authorities routinely penalized potential victims, including by detaining and deporting potential forced labor victims for immigration violations, and prosecuted sex trafficking victims for commercial sex crimes, without screening for trafficking indicators. 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 its dependence on handpicking. However, 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 prevented robust observation of the cotton harvest. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions; did not hold any officials accountable for their complicity in forced labor crimes; identified no victims; and did not fund any victim assistance programs.”<sup>13</sup>

## Conclusion

---

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/russia/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/turkmenistan/>

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 and assist victims, and to prosecute perpetrators. Likewise, we must be vigilant about how forced organ harvesting and trafficking in human beings for the purpose of organ removal remain hidden in plain sight. We must collaborate with UNODC and others who have taken the lead to combat this crime. We must also 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.