

# Report shows US fights human trafficking, needs to do more

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WASHINGTON (BP)—The United States is among 33 top countries fighting human trafficking but falls short in prosecuting traffickers, aiding victims and tackling forced labor in particular, the U.S. State Department said in its latest report.

Faith communities can help countries address human trafficking, which currently victimizes an estimated 25 million adults and children worldwide in sex trafficking and forced labor, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large John Cotton Richmond said in releasing the [2019 Trafficking in Persons Report](#).

“Traffickers continue to operate with impunity and only a small fraction of victims receive trauma-informed, victim-centered support services,” said Richmond, ambassador-at-large to monitor and combat trafficking in persons. “Yet, by working together, governments, civil society organizations, survivor advocates and faith communities can reverse this troubling pattern.”

The Trafficking in Persons Report annually measures nearly 200 nations on their success in fighting human trafficking within their own borders, based on practices established in the latest versions of the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and the international 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, also known as the Palermo Protocol.

Most victims of human trafficking are victimized within their country of residence, the report said, although sex trafficking victims are transported internationally more often than labor victims.

# U.S. fully meets ‘minimal standards’

The United States “fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking,” the report found. “These efforts included increasing the number of convictions, increasing the amount of funding for victim services and number of victims served, continuing to seek and incorporate survivor input on human trafficking programs and policies, and launching new public outreach measures to more sectors.

“Although the government meets the minimum standards,” the State Department reported, “it opened, charged and prosecuted fewer cases; issued fewer victims trafficking-specific immigration options, and granted fewer foreign national victims of trafficking eligibility to access benefits and services.”

The Trafficking in Persons Report is a valuable resource for churches seeking to engage human trafficking globally, said Raleigh Sadler, a Baptist who founded [Let My People Go](#), a New York ministry equipping churches to address human trafficking.

“The report exists to educate us on what human trafficking looks like around the world and what is being done about it,” Sadler said. “For those of us in the local church, we could read the country narratives to have a better picture of what is happening in each setting. Imagine what could happen if we prayed for those in each country.”

## Ranking nations

The report divides countries into three tiers, with Tier 1 countries meeting minimum Trafficking Victims Protection Act standards to eliminate trafficking, Tier 2 nations making significant efforts to comply with the act, and Tier 3 countries not making significant efforts to comply, according to

the report.

A Tier 2 Watch List earmarks nations that have committed to meet minimum standards, but have a significant number of people severely victimized by human trafficking and the nations are unable to provide evidence of improvements.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo described human trafficking as a strain and a stain on all of humanity.

“We detest it because it flagrantly violates the unalienable rights that belong to every human being,” Pompeo said upon the report’s release. “Every person, everywhere, is inherently vested with profound, inherent, equal dignity. ... America was founded on a promise to defend those rights. ... But too often we’ve fallen short, and we cannot fall short on this challenge.”

Sharing Tier 1 with the United States are Argentina, Australia, Austria, The Bahamas, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Guyana, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan and the United Kingdom.

## **The worst offenders**

Countries with the most severe problems, those in Tier 3, not only overlook human trafficking, the report said, but some systematically perpetrate the crime.

“Some of these governments allow human traffickers to run rampant, and other governments are human traffickers themselves,” Pompeo said. “In North Korea, the government subjects its own citizens to forced labor both

at home and abroad and then uses proceeds to fund nefarious activities.

“In China, authorities have detained more than a million members of ethnically Muslim minority groups in internment camps,” Pompeo said. “Many are forced to produce garments, carpets, cleaning supplies, and other goods for domestic sale.”

Tier 3 countries are Belarus, Bhutan, Burma, Burundi, China, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, The Gambia, Iran, North Korea, Mauritania, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan and Venezuela.

The majority of countries studied, nearly 100, ranked in Tier 2. An additional 38 countries are on the Tier 2 Watch List.

The report covers April 2018 through March 2019 and uses information from a variety of sources including U.S. embassies, government officials, nongovernmental and international organizations, published reports, news articles, academic studies, research trips worldwide and information submitted to [tipreport@state.gov](mailto:tipreport@state.gov).

The study defines human trafficking as “sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act” is under age 18; or “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.”