

**U.S. Department of State  
Trafficking In Persons Report  
Armenia – Tier 1**

*June 20, 2014*

Armenia is a source and, to a lesser extent, destination country for men, women, and children subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced labor and sex trafficking of women and men; sex and labor trafficking of women and children within the country is an increasing problem. Women and girls from Armenia are subjected to sex trafficking within the country and in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Turkey. Armenian men are subjected to forced labor in Russia and, to a lesser extent, Turkey. Armenian women and children are vulnerable to forced begging domestically. Officials reported the forced begging of two boys who were compelled to steal if they did not receive a certain amount of money each day. Some children work in agriculture, construction, and service provision within the country. Men in rural areas with little education and children staying in child care institutions remain highly vulnerable to trafficking.

The Government of Armenia fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. In 2013, all branches of government improved their anti-trafficking coordination and collaboration in an effort to narrow gaps in policies, legislation, and practices. The government continued to preserve its strong collaborative working ties with anti-trafficking NGOs, local media, donor organizations, and regional partners. These measures contributed to an increased number of trafficking convictions and victims identified; however, gaps in the identification of victims of labor trafficking remain. In 2013, the Government of Armenia developed a draft law on identification and assistance to the victims of trafficking; however, the lack of formal victim-witness protection continued to be a concern.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARMENIA:**

Improve efforts to identify victims of forced labor, including by strengthening victim identification training of front-line staff, empowering labor inspectors of the reformed inspectorate to identify victims through unannounced visits, and having stronger cooperation with law enforcement; provide sensitivity training to judges to foster a culture of empathy for trafficking victims; continue to work with Russian authorities on identifying Armenian forced labor victims and prosecuting labor traffickers; continue to work with NGOs to find ways to identify and assist Armenian trafficking victims in Turkey; continue to work with NGOs to reintegrate victims; establish a victim compensation mechanism for trafficking victims; continue to work with NGOs to improve the safety of victims and ensure freedom of movement while receiving shelter and assistance; continue awareness-raising campaigns to rural and border communities as well as to children leaving child care institutions; license, regulate, and educate local employment agencies and agents so they can help prevent the forced labor of Armenians abroad; and continue robust partnerships with civil society groups.

**PROSECUTION**

The Armenian government strengthened law enforcement efforts, increasing the number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of trafficking offenses. Armenia prohibits both sex trafficking and labor trafficking through Articles 132 and 132-2 of its criminal code, which

prescribe penalties of five to 15 years' imprisonment—penalties that are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Article 138 was amended in 2013 to reflect punishment for rape committed against a minor under 18 and against a minor under 14, which ranges from eight to 15 years of age. The government investigated 10 new trafficking cases in 2013, the same amount as in 2012, and prosecuted 12 defendants for trafficking offenses—including one case of child forced begging—compared with prosecutions against 18 alleged traffickers in 2012; two additional cases were reopened due to new circumstances.

Armenian courts convicted 15 traffickers in 2013, compared to 10 convicted in 2012. In one case, three men and five women were convicted for trafficking eight women and girls to the UAE. Sentences ranged from four to 11 years' imprisonment. One trafficker, whose husband was also convicted, had her sentence reduced to two years' probation as a result of her cooperation and to take care of her children. Prosecution of labor trafficking cases continued to be a challenge for Armenian investigators due to the fact that most of the cases happen in Russia, with which law enforcement collaboration remained difficult. The absence of diplomatic relations with Turkey also hindered the identification of Armenian trafficking victims there.

Judges inexperienced with trafficking cases were reportedly less sensitive to victims, taking little account of the vulnerability and psychological experience of victims. In some cases, defense attorneys interrogated victims. The government conducted training sessions and awareness-raising programs on human trafficking, including forced labor, for hundreds of personnel. The Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs conducted trafficking-related training for over 250 civil servants; approximately 340 police employees and regular officers were trained at the Police Academy, and the Ministry of Justice implemented mandatory training for officers and employees of corrections institutions. The Government of Armenia did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking.

## PROTECTION

The Government of Armenia enhanced efforts to protect identified trafficking victims by counselling children who were about to leave child care facilities and co-funding one of the two NGOs that work with trafficking victims. The government certified five male and 13 female trafficking victims in 2013—eight of whom were subjected to forced begging within the country—and offered assistance, including referrals to NGO shelters, to all of them. Seventeen of these 18 certified victims were identified by police; the previous year the government certified eight trafficking victims, of which seven had been identified by police. Five of the 10 female sex trafficking victims were victimized in Armenia and the rest were victimized in the UAE. The government partially funded one of the two NGOs that sheltered 20 victims, of which 14 were newly identified. The short-term shelter provided support to nine victims and the longer-term shelter provided assistance to 29 victims, of whom 11 were referred in 2012. The government provided all victims legal, medical, and psychological help. Authorities also included victims in different social, educational, and employment projects, and provided housing. Four trafficking victims received free medical assistance, ranging from clinical examinations to surgery, through a government program for vulnerable persons. Due to security concerns, adult victims were required to notify staff when they left NGO shelters unescorted, but were free to leave if they no

longer wanted assistance. Services were equally available to female and male victims. Based on the small number of minor victims, there was no special shelter for them, but when required, minor victims could be housed in a trafficking shelter or referred to a child care institution. Although none were identified in 2013, previously identified foreign victims were provided temporary residency permits and allowed to work in Armenia; in previous reporting periods the government did not deport foreign victims. The government spent the equivalent of approximately \$72,000 for assistance and counseling of children leaving child care institutions as well as the equivalent of approximately \$6,800 for scholarships and lump sum assistance, which were similar to previous years. Reforms to address difficulties the Labor Inspectorate had experienced in identifying victims of forced labor, including the unification of all state inspectorates, were not finalized in 2013. All victims officially recognized by the government assisted police with trafficking investigations. During the last several years many victims gained greater trust in law enforcement when witnessing ongoing efforts to investigate their cases and prosecute the offenders. There were no reports in 2013 of identified trafficking victims being inappropriately detained; they were exempted from criminal prosecution for crimes they were forced to commit as a result of their victimization.

## PREVENTION

The Government of Armenia continued to demonstrate robust trafficking prevention efforts. The government spent the equivalent of approximately \$19,400, the same amount as the previous year, to increase public awareness of human trafficking, funding public service announcements, which included messages aimed at reducing demand for commercial sex acts; a television program on trafficking; and targeting youth in 15 cities across Armenia with seminars and role-playing scenarios. Government agencies continued to undertake a variety of prevention activities, including an anti-trafficking media contest with a cash prize designed to improve professional journalism and the broadcasting of anti-trafficking public service announcements and other programs on national and regional stations during peak viewing periods. The government also provided trafficking awareness training to labor inspectors, social workers, NGOs, educators, media, and students. The Ministerial Council to Combat Trafficking in Persons, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Inter-Agency Working Group against Trafficking in Persons continued to meet regularly and to coordinate the implementation of the government's anti-trafficking action plan in strong partnership with NGOs and international organizations. Both NGOs operated hotlines, which were advertised nationally through all forms of media as well as awareness-raising campaigns at various events. In 2013, the police added an anti-trafficking component to their hotline for migration-related calls; this number was advertised on their daily television program. The government regularly published reports of its anti-trafficking activities during the reporting period. The government provided anti-trafficking training to Armenian troops before their deployment overseas on international peacekeeping missions.