

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

July 27, 2015

Armenia is a source and, to a lesser extent, destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex and labor trafficking. The sex and labor trafficking of Armenian women and children within the country is an increasing problem. Women and girls from Armenia are also subjected to sex trafficking in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Turkey. Women from China subjected to sex trafficking in Armenia were identified for the first time in 2014. Armenian men are subjected to forced labor in Russia and, to a lesser extent, in Turkey. Armenian women and children are vulnerable to forced begging domestically. Some children work in agriculture, construction, and service provision within the country, where they are also vulnerable to labor trafficking. 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 2014, Parliament approved a law establishing standard procedures for the identification, support, protection, and reintegration of suspected and identified trafficking victims across national and local government bodies, NGOs, international organizations, and civil society. The government, however, continued to lack formal victim-witness protection, and fewer victims were identified. Police successfully identified foreign victims trafficked in Armenia and referred them to care. The government maintained strong collaborative working ties with anti-trafficking NGOs, local media, donor organizations, and regional partners. Courts convicted fewer traffickers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARMENIA:

Improve efforts to identify victims of forced labor, including by strengthening victim identification training for officials and empowering labor inspectors to identify victims through unannounced visits, and increasing cooperation across law enforcement entities; provide sensitivity training to judges and lawyers to improve treatment of trafficking victims; work with Russian authorities to identify

Armenian forced labor victims and prosecute labor traffickers; work with NGOs to find ways to identify and assist Armenian victims in Turkey and reintegrate victims; effectively develop and implement new victim compensation mechanisms for trafficking victims; work with NGOs to improve the safety of victims and ensure their freedom of movement while receiving shelter and assistance; continue awareness-raising campaigns to rural and border communities and 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 government demonstrated decreased law enforcement efforts, as authorities reported fewer prosecutions and convictions. Armenia prohibits both sex 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. The government investigated 10 new trafficking cases in 2014, the same amount as in 2013; four additional investigations were carried over from 2013. Authorities prosecuted seven defendants, compared with 12 in 2013; one case from previous years was reopened due to new circumstances. Armenian courts convicted seven traffickers in 2014—five for sex trafficking and two for labor trafficking—compared with 15 in 2013. Sentences ranged from six to 11 years' imprisonment. Prosecution of labor trafficking cases remained a challenge for Armenian investigators as most cases happened in Russia, where difficulties collaborating with law enforcement persisted. The Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs conducted trafficking-related training for over 270 civil servants; the government trained approximately 600 police employees and regular officers at the Police Academy, and the Ministry of Justice included trafficking topics in mandatory human rights training for 60 officers and 720 employees of corrections institutions. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking.

PROTECTION

The government enhanced efforts to protect identified victims. Parliament adopted the Law on Identification and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking and

Exploitation, which was scheduled to come into force in June 2015, pending presidential ratification. The law outlines actions for national and local government bodies, NGOs, international organizations, and civil society to identify and support trafficking victims. The government certified two male and 11 female trafficking victims in 2014—one of whom was a child subjected to forced begging within the country—and offered assistance, including referrals to NGO shelters, to all of them. All certified victims were identified by police; the previous year the government certified 18 trafficking victims, of which 17 had been identified by police. Four victims identified in 2014 were Chinese nationals subjected to sex trafficking in Armenia by Chinese traffickers. Five of the 11 female sex trafficking victims identified by Armenian authorities had been subjected to trafficking in Armenia, five in the UAE, and one in Turkey. The absence of diplomatic relations with the Government of Turkey and thus an Armenian Embassy in Turkey hindered the identification of Armenian trafficking victims in Turkey. The government partially funded one NGO that provided shelter to 16 victims, 10 of whom were identified in 2014. A short-term shelter provided support to 12 victims and a longer-term shelter provided assistance to 36 victims. The government and local NGOs jointly provided all victims legal, medical, and psychological assistance; housing; and access to social, educational, and employment projects. Due to security concerns, NGO shelters required adult victims to notify staff when they left shelters unescorted, but victims were free to leave if they no longer wanted assistance. Services were available to female and male victims. There was no special shelter available for child victims; they could be housed in an adult trafficking shelter or referred to a child care institution. The four Chinese victims were provided the same assistance package as Armenian citizens; the four women returned to China in early 2015 with the assistance of the Chinese Embassy and a government co-funded NGO. The government spent 8,728,800 dram (\$18,600) for assistance and counseling of children leaving child care institutions, as well as approximately 950,000 dram (\$2,000) for scholarships and lump sum assistance. The government did not finalize reforms started in 2013 to address difficulties the Labor Inspectorate experienced in identifying victims of forced labor, including the unification of all state inspectorates. All victims officially recognized by the government assisted police with trafficking investigations. During the last several

years, victims reported greater trust in law enforcement when assisting investigations and prosecutions. There were no reports in 2014 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 under law.

PREVENTION

The government continued robust trafficking prevention efforts. The government disbursed 25,097,400 dram (\$53,400) to increase public awareness of trafficking and fund prevention projects. Government agencies used these funds to support a variety of prevention projects and activities, including an anti-trafficking media contest with a cash prize designed to improve professional journalism; awareness-raising workshops and seminars targeting youth, labor migrants, and community representatives; and anti-trafficking public service announcements on national and regional stations during peak viewing periods. The government provided trafficking awareness training to labor inspectors, law enforcement, civil servants, 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 met regularly and continued to coordinate implementation of the government's anti-trafficking action plan in strong partnership with NGOs and international organizations. Two NGOs continued to operate hotlines to assist victims, which were advertised nationally through all forms of media, and hold awareness-raising campaigns at public events. The police continued to maintain a hotline for anti-trafficking and migration-related calls; this number was advertised on a daily television program. The government regularly published reports of its anti-trafficking activities. The government provided anti-trafficking training and guidance for its diplomatic personnel. The government provided anti-trafficking training to Armenian troops before their deployment overseas on international peacekeeping missions.