

Italy

Office To Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2016 Trafficking in Persons Report Report

ITALY: Tier 1

Italy is a destination, transit, and source country for women, children, and men subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor. Victims originate from Nigeria, Romania, Morocco, China, and other countries. Female victims are often subjected to sex trafficking in Italy after accepting promises of employment as waitresses, dancers, singers, models, or caregivers. Eastern European women and girls are forced into prostitution by Romanian and Albanian criminal groups. Nigerian women and girls are subjected to sex and labor trafficking through debt bondage and coercion through voodoo rituals. Experts estimate approximately 3,000 children are exploited in street prostitution. Men from Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe are subjected to forced labor through debt bondage in agriculture in southern Italy and in construction, house cleaning, hotels, and restaurants in the north. Chinese men and women are forced to work in textile factories in Milan, Prato, Rome, and Naples. Children subjected to sex trafficking, forced begging, and forced criminal activities are from Romania, Nigeria, Brazil, Morocco, and Italy, particularly Romani and Sinti boys who may have been born in Italy. Transgender individuals from Brazil and Argentina are subjected to sex trafficking in Italy. Unaccompanied children are at risk of trafficking, particularly boys from Somalia, Eritrea, Bangladesh, Egypt, and Afghanistan who often work in shops, bars, restaurants, and bakeries to repay smuggling debts or send money to their families. Official complicity in human trafficking crimes occurs at the local level. Italian men engage in child sex tourism abroad, including countries throughout Africa, Latin America, and East Asia.

During the reporting period, NGOs and government officials reported the number of trafficking victims in Italy increased significantly due to the dramatic rise in migrants and asylum-seekers arriving by boat from sub-Saharan Africa; one international organization estimated more than 2,800 likely trafficking victims arrived in 2015 from Nigeria alone. Most migrants and asylum-seekers rely on smugglers at some point during their journey and in some instances are forced into exploitation upon arrival in Italy. Italy received approximately 154,000 irregular arrivals by sea in 2015, more than half of whom requested asylum; these individuals were highly vulnerable to trafficking. Although the government operated temporary centers throughout the country to house asylum-seekers, the system was overwhelmed and the government was forced to house approximately 90,000 asylum-seekers in improvised shelters; international organizations reported increased incidents of labor and sex trafficking of asylum-seekers as a direct result of shelter shortages. Asylum-seekers, who are unable to legally work while their applications are reviewed, often sought employment in informal sectors, increasing their vulnerability to trafficking. More than one-third of the approximately 18,000 unaccompanied minors who arrived in Italy in 2015 left their protected communities to work, beg, or journey northwards, increasing their vulnerability.

The Government of Italy fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The influx of migrants to the country during the reporting period placed a significant strain on government resources, especially among agencies that combat human trafficking. Despite this challenge, the government convicted a significantly larger number of traffickers, passed its first national action plan, and continued to provide training

to law enforcement officials. However, investigations and prosecutions decreased, government-supported NGOs remained severely underfunded, many victims among vulnerable groups went unidentified, and there remained a significant lack of government coordination on anti-trafficking efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ITALY:

Continue to vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking cases and ensure convictions of traffickers result in dissuasive sanctions; formalize victim identification and referral procedures and consistently train law enforcement and other officials on their proactive application; improve efforts to screen irregular migrants and asylum-seekers to identify possible trafficking victims, particularly in migrant reception and expulsion centers; provide adequate long-term funding to NGOs assisting victims; develop specialized services for child trafficking victims and expand accommodation for male victims; allow asylum-seekers to obtain legal employment while waiting for their applications to be reviewed; establish a national coordination structure that involves all relevant public bodies and NGOs; allocate sufficient funding towards the implementation of the national action plan; make efforts to reduce the demand for child sex tourism; and implement nationwide awareness-raising activities on all forms of trafficking.

PROSECUTION

The government demonstrated a decrease in investigations and prosecutions, but an increase in convictions. The 2003 Measures Against Trafficking in Persons law prohibits all forms of trafficking and prescribes penalties of eight to 20 years' imprisonment, which are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with penalties prescribed for other serious offenses, such as rape. Authorities investigated 2,897 suspected traffickers in 2014, the most recent year for which law enforcement statistics were available, a decrease from 3,803 in 2013. The government prosecuted 828 defendants for suspected trafficking crimes in 2014, a decrease from 1,024 in 2013. In 2014, courts convicted 169 traffickers and appeals courts affirmed convictions of 184 defendants, representing a significant increase from the 74 traffickers convicted and 108 convictions upheld in 2013. The government was unable to provide complete data on sentences imposed in 2014, but reported some convicted traffickers received prison sentences ranging from five to 13 years' imprisonment. The government did not disaggregate law enforcement statistics involving sex and labor trafficking crimes but historically has prosecuted both. The training curriculum for law enforcement agencies included victim identification and investigation of trafficking and exploitation crimes; in 2014, the most recent year for which law enforcement statistics were available, 1,942 officers were trained. Despite isolated incidents of local government officials involved in trafficking, media did not report any new investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in trafficking offenses.

PROTECTION

The government maintained modest protection efforts. The Department of Equal Opportunity, the entity responsible for coordinating protection efforts, reported government-supported NGOs assisted approximately 800 victims in 2015, similar to the 810 victims assisted in 2014; however, due to poor record keeping, the government was unable to provide a verified number of victims assisted. The government allotted 8 million euros (\$7.35 million) to trafficking victim assistance programs implemented by NGOs in 2015; the same amount allocated in 2014, despite the significant increase in the number of victims. Local governments provided an additional 1,700,000 euros (\$1,870,000) to victim assistance programs. The government relied predominantly on NGOs and international

organizations to provide shelter and services to victims, who cited insufficient funding and the lack of a formal referral mechanism as serious problems during the reporting period. These issues were particularly problematic in reception areas where migrants and refugees were forced to wait for extended periods for shelter, which resulted in increased instances of labor and sex trafficking.

Adult victims were entitled to a six-month temporary residence permit that was renewable if the victim found employment or enrolled in a job training program. Child victims received an automatic residence permit until age 18 and were accommodated in generalized children's centers or in new centers established for trafficking victims that are also asylum-seekers. The government granted 324 temporary residence permits for victims of exploitation in 2015; it is unclear how many recipients were trafficking victims. Although victims were not required to cooperate with law enforcement to obtain a residence permit, some NGOs and international organizations reported authorities gave preference to those who collaborated with law enforcement. It is unclear how many victims collaborated in the prosecution of their traffickers in 2014. Police worked in collaboration with NGOs and international organizations to screen for trafficking victims as part of standard registration procedures at most ports of entry. NGOs reported, however, that many trafficking victims among irregular migrants, asylum-seekers, and unaccompanied children went unidentified due to officials' inconsistent use of identification criteria. Therefore, although the law protects victims from being penalized for unlawful acts committed as a result of being subjected to trafficking, many unidentified victims were treated as regular asylum-seekers or illegal migrants.

PREVENTION

The government sustained limited trafficking prevention efforts. In February 2016, the government adopted a national action plan; however, it did not fund or implement the plan during the reporting period. Government officials and representatives from NGOs and international organizations cited an absence of coordination on trafficking efforts; the government continued to lack a national anti-trafficking coordinator and there was no national rapporteur to conduct independent evaluations of anti-trafficking efforts. It also did not implement any nationwide public awareness campaigns. Local authorities and NGOs continued to distribute brochures, posters, bumper stickers, and media advertisements providing information on victim assistance. The government's hotline for victims of trafficking received more than 3,600 calls for information in 2015, of which 610 were directly related to trafficking. Local municipalities and police supported NGO-led education campaigns aimed at reducing the demand for commercial sex. Although Italians engaged in child sex tourism in various countries abroad, the government did not make any efforts to address the demand for child sex tourism, nor did it make any tangible efforts to reduce the demand for forced labor. The government provided anti-trafficking training to Italian troops prior to their deployment abroad as part of international peacekeeping missions and for its diplomatic personnel.