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# 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Algeria

## ALGERIA (Tier 2 Watch List)

The Government of Algeria does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Despite making significant efforts to do so, it did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period. Therefore, Algeria remained on Tier 2 Watch List for the second consecutive year. Significant efforts included investigating and prosecuting more trafficking crimes, identifying significantly more trafficking victims, and drafting an NRM and national anti-trafficking strategy in collaboration with an international organization which remained pending approval. However, victim protection services remained inadequate. The government remained without formal victim identification and referral procedures to ensure officials consistently referred victims to appropriate shelter and services. Due to inconsistent screening among vulnerable populations, the government did not take effective measures to prevent the inappropriate penalization of potential victims solely for unlawful acts, including alleged immigration offenses, committed as a direct result of being trafficked. As a result of such practices, reports indicate foreign victims were often deterred from reporting trafficking crimes to the police or seeking assistance. The government did not have effective policies or laws regulating or providing oversight over labor recruiters.

## PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Finalize and implement SOPs for victim identification and screening and train officials who encounter vulnerable populations, such as undocumented migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, and individuals in commercial sex, on their use.
- Finalize and implement a formal national victim referral procedure to refer victims to appropriate care.
- Significantly increase the availability and quality of specialized protection services – including short-term shelter, long-term housing, counseling, and psycho-social care – for all trafficking victims, including by partnering with service providers.
- Continue efforts to increase investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of sex and labor traffickers.
- Ensure victims of all forms of trafficking are referred to and receive protection services, including appropriate shelter, adequate medical and psycho-social care, and legal assistance.
- Finalize, adopt, and implement a comprehensive national action plan.
- Train front-line officials on victim identification and referral procedures.
- Partner with NGOs and international organizations to provide services to trafficking victims and populations vulnerable to human trafficking.
- Ensure the safe and voluntary repatriation of foreign victims, including through collaboration with relevant organizations and source country embassies, and provide foreign victims with legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they may face retribution or hardship.
- Screen for forced labor indicators among Cuban regime-affiliated workers, including medical professionals, and Chinese nationals employed at worksites affiliated with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and refer them to appropriate services.
- Consistently enforce strong regulations and oversight of labor recruitment companies, including by eliminating all worker-paid recruitment fees, requiring written labor contracts in languages the workers understand, and holding fraudulent labor recruiters criminally accountable.
- Screen any North Korean workers for signs of trafficking and refer them to appropriate services in a manner consistent with obligations under UN Security Council Resolution

## PROSECUTION

The government increased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts.

Law No. 23-04, the 2023 anti-trafficking law, criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of five to 15 years' imprisonment and fines of 500,000 to 1.5 million Algerian dinar (\$3,700-\$11,100) for offenses involving adult victims and 10 to 20 years' imprisonment and fines of one million to two million Algerian dinar (\$7,400-\$14,800) for offenses involving child victims. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape.

The government reported investigating 11 cases involving 76 suspects, an increase compared with eight investigations involving 38 suspects in 2023, but did not specify the number of sex trafficking or forced labor cases within those investigations in 2024. The government initiated 76 prosecutions under the 2023 anti-trafficking law; the government did not specify if these prosecutions involved sex trafficking or labor trafficking. This was an increase compared with 66 prosecutions initiated in 2023. In 2024, courts convicted one sex trafficker under the 2023 anti-trafficking law, the same number of convictions as in 2023. Courts sentenced the trafficker to life imprisonment. The government also convicted five individuals under the 2023 anti-trafficking law for misdemeanor charges for failing to report trafficking crimes; courts sentenced these five individuals with sentences ranging from six months imprisonment and a fine to one year imprisonment – half of which was suspended – and a fine. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in trafficking crimes.

The General Directorate of National Security maintained a central office to combat human trafficking and illegal immigration and 61 specialized units focused on human trafficking and migrant smuggling to cover each *wilaya* (state) in Algeria. In July 2024, the gendarmerie established a central office for combating organized crime with a Department for Combating Smuggling of Migrants and Human Trafficking. The government maintained four courts dedicated to transnational organized crime cases, under which it classified trafficking. The government coordinated with a foreign government on a trafficking investigation and sent an extradition request to another in 2024. Officials acknowledged one of the biggest obstacles to prosecuting cases was identifying trafficking crimes, in part because of a lack of well-trained investigators and judicial officials, as well as limited public awareness. The government, at times in coordination with international organizations, conducted multiple anti-trafficking trainings for law enforcement, judicial officials, border security officials, labor inspectors, and other front-line responders on trafficking indicators and distinguishing between migrant smuggling and human trafficking; identifying, assisting, and interviewing victims; and other trafficking-related topics.

## PROTECTION

The government maintained inadequate victim protection efforts.

The government identified 139 trafficking victims, compared with 74 victims identified in the previous reporting period. Of the 139 victims identified, traffickers exploited 33 in sex trafficking, 100 in labor trafficking, and six in unspecified forms of trafficking; at least 126 victims were foreign nationals. The government continued to distribute standardized victim identification indicators but did not report whether the indicators had been promulgated into a comprehensive victim identification protocol by the end of the reporting period. The government reported individual agencies used their own victim identification protocols and an informal referral system to ensure victims received access to medical care, psychological services, and shelter. The government remained without formal referral procedures. The government drafted an NRM in collaboration with an international organization; at the end of the reporting period, the draft NRM

was under review by the General Secretariat of the Government before being presented to Parliament.

Victim protection services remained inadequate. The government did not provide shelter or other protection services specifically tailored to the needs of trafficking victims, nor did it track the resources it allocated to protection services. However, the government continued to report the Ministries of Health and National Solidarity, as well as other ministries, could provide foreign and domestic trafficking victims with free services as needed, including shelter, food, medical care, interpretation, legal consultations, psychological counseling, and repatriation assistance. However, an international organization reported sub-Saharan African migrants had difficulty accessing assistance and noted most undocumented migrants, including foreign trafficking victims, avoided seeking care at medical centers due to fear of arrest and deportation. The government reported its three women's shelters, 103 children's shelters, and seven general shelters could assist trafficking victims; however, shelter employees did not have specialized training on working with trafficking victims, and it was unclear whether these shelters assisted any trafficking victims during the reporting period. The government also could refer trafficking victims to 35 quasi-governmental reception centers throughout the country that could provide food, clothing, medical care, and psychological support; the government reportedly provided in-kind support to these centers but did not report if the centers supported any trafficking victims during the reporting period. The government reported referring all identified trafficking victims to unspecified government services in 2024. Laws and policies related to restrictions on foreign funding and movement outside of Algiers impeded civil society's efforts to provide specialized services to victims of trafficking and partner with officials on victim identification and protection efforts. The government reported it allowed relief from deportation for identified trafficking victims for an indefinite period of time and allowed all foreign victims to stay in Algeria temporarily; however, it did not grant work permits to foreign trafficking victims while under temporary residency status. The government reported it could provide victims with access to a lawyer, police protection, and video testimony during trial; however, it did not report providing any during the reporting period. Trafficking victims were legally entitled to file civil suits against their offenders; courts awarded one victim five million Algerian dinar (\$37,010) in 2024, but the decision was pending final judgement. The government approved a victim compensation fund to be financed by fines issued during sentencing in January 2025. Courts could order restitution for victims if the perpetrator was convicted; however, the government did not report awarding restitution during the reporting period.

Due to a lack of formal identification procedures and inadequate screening among vulnerable populations, such as refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers, the government did not take effective measures to prevent the inappropriate penalization, including deportation, of potential victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. As a result, reports indicated authorities sometimes expelled potential trafficking victims outside of official deportation procedures. Such practices potentially increased vulnerability to trafficking, exacerbated distrust of foreign officials, and deterred potential victims from reporting trafficking crimes or seeking assistance. Officials continued to rely on victims to report abuses to authorities, yet civil society groups observed most trafficking victims in Algeria were undocumented migrants who typically did not report trafficking crimes to the police or file lawsuits against their traffickers.

## **PREVENTION**

The government maintained prevention efforts.

The inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, continued to coordinate the government's efforts; the full committee met nine times in 2024 and had regular informal meetings. The presidential decree that formally institutionalized the anti-trafficking committee required it to submit a report to the president on the trafficking situation in Algeria; the committee did not report if they submitted this report during the reporting period. The government drafted a 2025-2027 national anti-trafficking strategy and action plan; the strategy was pending approval by the Prime Minister's Office at the end of the reporting period. The government

organized multiple public awareness campaigns in Arabic and French. The government did not report operating a trafficking-specific hotline. The government did not have effective policies or laws regulating or providing oversight for labor recruiters. An NGO reported that treatment of “illegal exit” as a criminal offense under Algerian law exacerbated the vulnerability of trafficking victims, in particular Chinese workers employed in BRI projects. In addition, Algerian law permitted non-written labor contracts, further increasing the vulnerability of foreign and Algerian workers to labor exploitation and trafficking. The government did not report prohibiting worker-paid recruitment fees. The government did not report efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. The government did not provide anti-trafficking training to its diplomatic personnel.

## **TRAFFICKING PROFILE:**

Trafficking affects all communities. This section summarizes government and civil society reporting on the nature and scope of trafficking over the past five years. Human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Algeria, and traffickers exploit victims from Algeria abroad. Algerian children are vulnerable to sex and labor trafficking in Algeria. Algerian women and girls are also vulnerable to exploitation in sex trafficking rings, often as a result of financial difficulties; these incidents are reportedly clandestine in nature and therefore difficult for authorities and civil society actors to identify.

Undocumented sub-Saharan migrants, primarily from Burkina Faso, Benin, Cameroon, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, are most vulnerable to labor and sex trafficking in Algeria, mainly due to their migration status, poverty, and, in some cases, language barriers. Unaccompanied women and women traveling with children are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking and domestic servitude. Refugees and asylum-seekers are also vulnerable to trafficking either before or during their migration to Algeria. In some instances, traffickers use false promises of work to recruit migrants to Algeria where they ultimately exploit them in sex or labor trafficking. More often, sub-Saharan African adults enter Algeria voluntarily, frequently with the assistance of smugglers or criminal networks. Many migrants remain in Algeria and work in Algeria’s informal job market. While facing limited opportunities in Algeria, many migrants illegally work in construction and some engage in commercial sex acts to earn money to send home, which increases their risk of sex trafficking and debt bondage. Traffickers often use restaurants, private homes, or informal worksites to exploit victims, making it difficult for authorities to locate traffickers and victims. Some migrants become indebted to smugglers, who subsequently exploit them in forced labor and sex trafficking upon arrival in Algeria. For example, some employers reportedly force adult male and child migrants to work in the construction sector to pay for smuggling fees for onward migration, where employers restrict migrants’ movement and withhold their salaries and, at times, their travel documents. Smugglers and traffickers exploit female migrants that owe smuggling debts in the southern city of Tamanrasset – the main transit point into other cities in Algeria for migrants – in debt bondage, often through domestic servitude, forced begging, and sex trafficking. Some migrants also fall into debt to fellow nationals who control segregated ethnic neighborhoods in Tamanrasset; these individuals pay migrants’ debts to smugglers and then force the migrants into bonded labor or commercial sex. Tuareg and Maure smugglers and traffickers in northern Mali and southern Algeria force or coerce men to work as masons or mechanics; women to wash dishes, clothes, and cars; and children to draw water from wells in southern Algeria. Recent reports indicate Nigerian trafficking networks had strengthened in Algeria and past smuggling routes from Edo State, Nigeria, through Agadez, Niger to Libya were shifting to Algeria; traffickers allegedly use traditional *juju* rituals to compel Nigerian victims into sex trafficking and other forms of exploitation in Algeria.

Traffickers exploit foreign women and girls, primarily sub-Saharan African migrants, in sex trafficking in bars and informal brothels, typically by members of their own communities, including in cities of Tamanrasset, Oran, and Algiers. Criminal networks exploit young adult women from sub-Saharan Africa in sex trafficking in Algeria. Many sub-Saharan migrant women in southern Algeria willingly enter into relationships with migrant men to receive basic shelter, food, income,

and safety in exchange for sex, cooking, and cleaning. While many of these relationships are purportedly consensual, these women are at risk of trafficking.

Criminal begging rings are common in Algeria. Leaders of begging networks coerce or force sub-Saharan African migrant children to beg through the use of punishment, and children separated from families during police raids in northern cities and removed to the border with Niger are potentially exploited in forced begging. Local leaders suggest migrant children may also be coerced into work by their parents as a result of extreme economic pressures. Nigerien female migrants begging in Algeria, who often carry children – sometimes rented from their mothers in Niger – may be forced labor victims. Nigerien children, ranging from four to eight years old, are brought to Algeria by trafficking networks with the consent of their parents and forced to beg for several months in Algeria before being returned to their families in Niger. According to reports, there were 890 Cuban regime-affiliated medical workers in Algeria whom the Cuban regime may have forced to work. North Korean nationals working in Algeria may be operating under exploitative working conditions and display multiple indicators of forced labor. Chinese nationals employed in Algeria at worksites affiliated with the China's BRI are vulnerable to forced labor, including in the construction sector. An NGO reported Chinese workers in Algeria experience conditions of debt bondage, fraudulent recruitment, passport confiscation, unpaid wages, and contract switching. Criminal networks coerce Algerian children to commit criminal acts, such as theft and drug trafficking, in Europe, at times through the use of drugs to manipulate dependence; these criminal networks also allegedly exploit Algerian children in sex trafficking. Media and NGOs report unscrupulous actors, including Russian officials and illicit recruiters, fraudulently recruited women ages 18-22 from Africa, the Middle East – including Algeria, – South Asia, and South America for vocational training programs and subsequently placed them in military drone production sites. Media report workers at these sites are subjected to hazardous conditions, surveillance, hour and wage violations, contract switching, and worker-paid recruitment fees, all of which are indicators of human trafficking.