

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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girls in these marriages may be at risk of sex trafficking or domestic servitude. One report noted 7,323 marriages of girls 10-14 years of age were registered in the Spring of 2020—and had increased by 23 percent by the Summer of 2020, reporting 16,381 marriage registrations of girls younger than 15 years of age. DPRK nationals working in Iran may have been forced to work by the DPRK government.

Iranian women, boys, and girls are vulnerable to sex trafficking abroad, including in Afghanistan, Armenia, Georgia, Iraq, the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In 2018, a prominent Iranian NGO reported an increase in the number of Iranian nationals in commercial sex in nightclubs in Tbilisi, Georgia, including some child sex trafficking victims; traffickers operating the nightclubs reportedly confiscate victims' passports and physically abuse and threaten victims. Similarly, in 2018, the media continued to report an increase in young Iranian women in commercial sex in Dubai; some of these women are trafficking victims, whose traffickers confiscate their passports and threaten them with violence or execution if they return to Iran. Some reports also suggest collusion between traffickers in Dubai and Iranian police, the IRGC, and the Basij. Nationals from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar reportedly purchase sex from Iranian women in Dubai, including trafficking victims. Reports suggest that Iranian women are also vulnerable to sex trafficking in Turkey, particularly in Turkish cities close to the Iranian border. According to press reports, more than 2,000 young Iranian women and girls entered the IKR in 2018, many of whom are victims of sex trafficking in cafes, hotels, and massage centers. According to a regional scholar, traffickers reportedly use Shiraz, Iran, as a transit point to bring ethnic Azeri girls from Azerbaijan to the UAE and exploit them in sex trafficking operations.

Iranian and Afghan refugee and migrant children, orphans, and children who are homeless or use the streets as a source of livelihood in Iran are highly vulnerable to forced labor, and experts suggest child trafficking is increasing. An Iranian official stated that the number of child laborers has increased significantly due to the pandemic and the related economic downturn, and that some of the children are forced to work for profiteers and traffickers. Official Iranian statistics indicate there are three million children working in Iran, but media suggest there are approximately seven million children “sold,” “rented,” or sent to work in Iran. Most of these children are reportedly between the ages of 10-15 years old, and the large majority are foreigners with no official identification documents. The number of children working in transport, garbage and waste disposal, “dumpster diving,” car washing, brick factories, construction, and the carpet industry reportedly continues to increase; these children experience abuse and withheld wages and may be exposed to infectious diseases—all indicators of forced labor. Young Afghan children, mainly boys, are forced to perform cheap labor and domestic work, which often involves debt-based coercion, restriction of movement, non-payment of wages, and physical or sexual abuse. Criminal groups kidnap or purchase and force Iranian and migrant children, especially undocumented Afghan children, to work as beggars and street vendors in cities, including Tehran. These children, who may be as young as three years old, are routinely subjected to physical and sexual abuse and drug addiction. Orphaned children are vulnerable to criminal begging rings that maim or seriously injure the children to gain sympathy from those passing on the street. Poor families “rent” their children by the day to criminal groups that force the children, some as young as five years old, to beg in the street; if the children do not collect a specified amount of money by the end of the day, the groups force children to work in illegal workshops or exploit them in commercial sex. Reports indicate that organized gangs force some children, including Afghan children, to engage in crimes, such as drug trafficking and smuggling of fuel and tobacco. Some Afghan children, ranging from ages 14-17, use smugglers to transport them from Afghanistan to Iran in search of work; once in Iran, smugglers turn the children over to employers who force them to work. The increase in Afghan migrants entering Iran, following the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, likely includes a greater number of unaccompanied and undocumented Afghan children seeking employment in Iran, which may increase their vulnerability to exploitation.

Foreign workers, Pakistani migrants, and Afghan migrants and refugees are highly vulnerable to forced labor and debt-related coercion in Iran. In the wake of the Taliban seizing control of Afghanistan in August 2021,

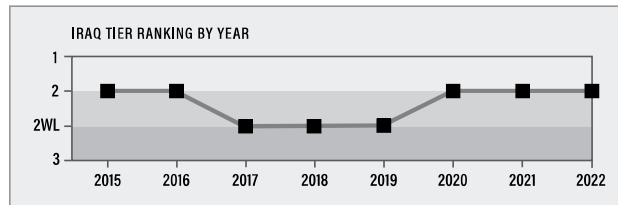
reports indicate an increase in the number of undocumented Afghans entering Iran. At the end of 2021, the UN estimates as many as 3.5 million Afghans live in Iran and reports there are 780,000 Afghans registered as refugees in Iran. In addition to registered refugees, the government hosts an estimated 586,000 Afghans who hold Afghan passports and Iranian visas and an estimated 2.6 million undocumented Afghans. Undocumented Afghans face increased vulnerability to economic and social hardships and exploitation, including trafficking. Afghan refugees and migrants frequently travel illegally through Iran en route to Turkey, making them ineligible to receive state assistance and vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Organized trafficking groups subject Pakistani men and women migrants in low-skilled employment, such as domestic work and construction, to forced labor using debt-based coercion, restriction of movement, non-payment of wages, and physical or sexual abuse. Increasingly, employers seek adjustable work contracts for registered foreign workers where employers deny workers their benefits and coerce them to work overtime, increasing the workers' vulnerability to forced labor. Traffickers subject Afghan migrants, including children, to forced labor in construction and agriculture in Iran.

Iranian authorities continue to force and coerce Afghan migrants, including children, as well as some Pakistani migrants and Iranian children, into armed groups in the region. Several credible sources continue to widely report the IRGC and Basij coerce Afghan men and boys residing in Iran, including boys as young as 13 years old, to fight in the Iranian-led and funded Fatemiyoun Brigade deployed to Syria. Officials threaten these individuals with arrest and deportation to Afghanistan. In 2021, media sources continued to report Afghan migrants in Iran were deceived by the IRGC to join the Fatemiyoun Brigade through promises of a monthly salary and an Iranian residency permit and were subsequently sent to Lebanon for military training upon recruitment. However, Afghans who return from war are refused residency in Iran and remain undocumented or return to Afghanistan, where they fear persecution by the Taliban for alleged association with the Fatemiyoun Brigade. The Basij also reportedly recruits and trains Iranian children who are deployed to Syria. Sources also indicate the government exploits undocumented and impoverished Pakistani adults living in Iran to fight for the IRGC-led Zaynabiyoun Brigade in Syria. According to a November 2020 media report, the IRGC reportedly established three centers located in Al Mayadin to facilitate recruitment and training of Syrian youth from Dayr az Zawr to fight in the IRGC and affiliated militias in Syria. Established in 2019, the largest center reportedly houses 250 children between the ages of 13-18 years; the children undergo three months of training in preparation for combat. In addition, the Iranian government provides funding to militias operating in Iraq, and to Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN), which recruit, train, and use child soldiers in combat in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

IRAQ: TIER 2

The Government of Iraq does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Iraq remained on Tier 2. These efforts included prosecuting more traffickers and continuing to investigate allegedly complicit officials; the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) convicted traffickers under its anti-trafficking law for the first time and added additional specialized anti-trafficking units to two new independent administrations in the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). The government also identified more victims and continued to refer some victims to NGOs for care. Additionally, the government took action to lessen the vulnerability to trafficking of Iraqi migrants en route to Europe, as well as Iraqi refugees residing in camps in Syria, and finalized an action plan to prevent the forced recruitment and use of child soldiers in armed conflict. However, the federal government and KRG did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Deficiencies in identification and referral procedures, coupled with authorities' lack of understanding of trafficking, continued to prevent many victims from receiving appropriate protection services.

Authorities did not proactively identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, which resulted in the continued punishment of some victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, such as immigration and “prostitution” violations. The government also lacked adequate protection services for victims of all forms of trafficking and did not have any shelter for adult male and LGBTQI+ victims. Lastly, the government investigated fewer trafficking cases and convicted fewer traffickers compared with previous years.



PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Ensure trafficking victims are not punished for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, such as “prostitution” and immigration violations.

- Develop and institute guidelines for proactive victim identification and referral to protection services for all relevant officials and train officials on these procedures.
- Allow all relevant authorities to officially identify potential trafficking victims and refer them to care, not solely investigative judges via a court order.
- Ensure victim identification and protection measures are provided independent of the prosecution of a trafficker.
- Significantly increase unhindered access to adequate protection services for victims of all forms of trafficking and their children, including trauma and psycho-social counseling, medical care, long-term shelter, legal aid and support, translation and interpretation services, reintegration services, employment training, and financial assistance.
- Protect victims from re-traumatization during trial, including by allowing alternative means for victim and witness testimony.
- Increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, convict, and stringently sentence traffickers, including complicit government officials and staff and guards at government-run shelters, even when victims do not participate in legal proceedings against their trafficker(s).
- Establish a legal framework for NGOs to operate shelters for victims and provide financial resources, facilities, and trained personnel to such organizations.
- Prevent the unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers by all armed groups under its control, including units of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and provide appropriate protection services to demobilized child soldiers.
- Amend the anti-trafficking law to ensure that a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion is not required to constitute a child sex trafficking offense, in accordance with the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.
- Finalize regulations to enable full implementation of the anti-trafficking law.

PROSECUTION

The Iraqi government increased overall law enforcement efforts. Iraq’s 2012 anti-trafficking law criminalized forced labor and some forms of sex trafficking. Inconsistent with the definition of trafficking under international law, the anti-trafficking law required a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion to constitute a child sex trafficking offense and therefore did not criminalize all forms of child sex trafficking. The anti-trafficking law prescribed penalties of up to 15 years’ imprisonment and a fine for trafficking offenses involving adult male victims and up to life imprisonment and a fine if the offense involved an adult female or child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent, and with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with penalties prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Article 399 of the penal code criminalized “the prostitution of a child” and provided a penalty of up to 10 years’ imprisonment, which was sufficiently stringent, although not commensurate with the penalties prescribed for rape. The government continued to lack implementing regulations for the anti-trafficking law, hindering its ability to enforce the law, bring traffickers to justice, and protect victims. The KRG has not yet developed the regulatory and enforcement framework required to fully implement the 2012 Iraqi anti-trafficking law, which the IKR’s regional parliament approved in 2018. Further, NGOs noted that the KRG’s insufficient knowledge of the law,

particularly in the judiciary, continued to hamper its implementation. In December 2020, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) submitted a draft amendment to the 2012 anti-trafficking law that included provisions to establish a specialized court in each appellate jurisdiction, establish a legal defense fund to assist victims, require referral of all victims to state-run shelters, allow for issuance of residency visas to all trafficking victims, prohibit penalization of victims for any criminal charges resulting from their trafficking, and strengthen legal penalties for trafficking offenses to allow for seizure of perpetrator’s assets. At the close of the reporting period, the draft amendment was under consideration by the Council of Ministers for review and revision before it would be reviewed by the Council of Representatives (COR).

For the first time, the Iraqi government reported the type of trafficking crimes for which alleged perpetrators were investigated and prosecuted. In 2021, the MOI’s anti-trafficking unit initiated investigations of 183 individuals; 169 were investigated for sex trafficking, and 14 were investigated for forced labor. The anti-trafficking unit also continued investigations of 119 individuals for sex trafficking and 10 individuals for forced labor in ongoing cases from the previous reporting period. In total, the government investigated 312 individuals during the year, a decrease compared with the investigations of 394 alleged traffickers during the previous reporting period. Authorities referred 184 individuals for prosecution under the 2012 anti-trafficking law, including 163 alleged sex traffickers and 21 alleged labor traffickers; this was a large increase from 35 individuals referred for prosecution in 2020. The government convicted 83 traffickers under the anti-trafficking law and additional trafficking-related laws, a decrease compared with 127 traffickers convicted during the previous reporting period. Of the 83 convictions, 77 individuals were convicted for sex trafficking, and six individuals were convicted for forced labor. Courts sentenced the traffickers from six years to life imprisonment, while an unknown number of traffickers in two cases received the death penalty. As in the previous reporting period, the KRG did not report the number of individuals investigated during the year. However, during the year, one NGO reported the KRG prosecuted 12 sex traffickers, including two ongoing cases from the previous reporting period. The KRG did not report achieving any prosecutions in the previous reporting period. The KRG had historically not reported any convictions under its anti-trafficking law; however, for the first time, the government convicted six sex traffickers; of the six, two were Iraqi nationals, and four were foreign nationals. The Iraqi nationals received sentences of six months’ imprisonment, while the foreign nationals received the same sentence and extradited to their country of origin.

Serious concerns of alleged official complicity in trafficking crimes remained, although the government continued to take some action to address such reports. During the year, the MOI investigated 12 cases in which members of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), specifically MOI police officers, were investigated for sex trafficking; the government did not report the outcome of these investigations at the close of the reporting period. In previous reporting periods, observers and an international organization reported official complicity in the recruitment or use of child soldiers by non-compliant militia units affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) that operated under the Popular Mobilization Committee (PMC), a component of the ISF. In 2021, there were no reports of official complicity in the recruitment or use of child soldiers. Some NGOs continued to report that government officials in key positions protected traffickers from investigation and prosecution or avoided prosecution themselves due to their positions of power and political connections. For example, NGOs reported at least one government official from KRG Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs’ (KMOLSA) Directorate of Labor was allegedly bribed to authorize the establishment and licensing of recruitment agencies and companies to bring in foreign workers to the IKR and authorize work permits for individual workers; the companies and recruitment agencies allegedly exploited foreign workers by refusing to issue valid residency documents, threatening workers and their families in cases where a worker filed a complaint against the company or raised issues about work conditions and prevented workers from obtaining legal counsel in disputes. The KMOLSA official allegedly helped previously blacklisted companies re-open under new names and took action to prevent the companies from financial penalties. NGOs reported the KRG was investigating the

case and it remained ongoing at the close of the reporting period. The government did not report efforts to investigate or prosecute continued allegations that security and camp management personnel in IDP camps were complicit in the sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and girls, particularly those with ties to alleged ISIS members.

The MOI's anti-trafficking directorate continued to report that its many responsibilities limited its ability to conduct trafficking investigations; lack of resources, budgetary constraints due to the country's financial crisis, ongoing government formation following October 2021 elections and weak coordination among governmental ministries also hindered overall law enforcement efforts. Additionally, Iraqi government and KRG officials—including police officers and investigative judges—continued to lack a general understanding of trafficking and the ability to recognize trafficking indicators. Local NGOs also reported KRG law enforcement lacked a clear reporting system for trafficking crimes, and many government actors tasked with handling trafficking lacked specialized training for identifying and investigating potential cases. Despite these limitations, the Iraqi government and the KRG took steps to address some of these shortfalls during the reporting period. In August 2021, the KRG Ministry of Interior (KMOI) changed the title of the Directorate to Combat Trafficking in Persons (DCTIP) to the Directorate of Combating Organized Crimes (DCOC) via Ministerial Decree no. 29 of 2021; the KRG asserted that restructuring the DCOC signaled the exertion of greater efforts to address trafficking by giving the new office a broader mandate for related crimes, such as money laundering and terror financing. However, NGOs and other activists expressed concern that this change could further undermine an already under-staffed specialized trafficking office with additional responsibilities. During the previous reporting period, the KRG established fully operational anti-trafficking police units in all four governorates of the IKR, as well as in the two independent administrations of Garbiyan and Raparin. In 2021, the KRG approved two new DCOC units for the newly independent administrations in Soran and Zakho, adding to the six units which operated under the newly-created DCOC. However, due to budgetary constraints and pandemic-related delays, the KRG was unable to open a specialized court to handle trafficking-related cases as planned in 2021. The Iraqi government also continued to utilize MOI's anti-trafficking directorate; which received additional resources and staffing in the previous reporting period, including the addition of several specialized units—one that focused on professional training for all staff, run by specialized investigators and educators with expertise in trafficking crimes, and another focused on tracking potential trafficking crimes perpetrated through social media, a trend that increased due to the pandemic.

An international organization reported the Iraqi government did not provide specialized training to officials on trafficking policies, enforcement, or laws due to limited funding and resources. The MOI's Training and Rehabilitation Directorates routinely delivered training to police officers that included modules on anti-trafficking. Otherwise, the Iraqi government received extensive support for training and capacity-building from NGOs and international organizations; this included training for lawyers, law enforcement officials, judges, and prosecutors on victim-centered approaches in legal proceedings. As part of its renewed partnership with an Erbil-based NGO to continue shelter operations, the KRG funded training on victim identification that was facilitated by the NGO. Additionally, in the IKR, several NGOs and an international organization conducted trainings and capacity-building programs for staff of the DCOC through funding by KMOI and other foreign governments. KRG officials also received extensive and in-depth training from an Erbil-based NGO on victim identification, screening, referral to shelter, providing access to justice for victims, and overall protection needs; members of DCOC's anti-trafficking police, the Erbil Residency Directorate, KMOLSA, Department of Foreign Relations (DFR), and the Independent Human Rights Commission (IHRC) participated in the trainings. An NGO noted this was the first time DFR and IHRC staff participated in an anti-trafficking training.

PROTECTION

The government increased overall efforts to protect victims. The MOI reported it identified 81 trafficking victims, which included 38 victims of sex trafficking (16 adult female, three adult male, four adults who identified as LGBTQI+ persons, and 15 children), 17 victims of forced

labor, (including two children), and 26 victims of unspecified exploitation (two adult males, seven adult females, and 17 children). This was an increase from the previous reporting period when the MOI identified 58 trafficking victims. Of the 81 identified victims in this period, the Iraqi government referred 27 victims to the MOLSA-run trafficking shelter in Baghdad. The government also referred 35 foreign trafficking victims to an NGO for shelter. The remainder of the identified victims were referred to healthcare facilities or requested to stay with family. For the first time, the KRG reported victim identification and referral data; the KRG identified 77 victims, including 34 labor trafficking victims (32 females and two males) and 43 foreign national victims of an unspecified exploitation. The KRG reported that of the 77 victims, it referred 72 victims to protective services.

The Iraqi government remained without systematic victim identification guidelines for all officials, including first responders, who came in contact with potential trafficking victims among vulnerable groups, including undocumented foreign migrants and persons in commercial sex. The Iraqi government also did not have a national referral mechanism (NRM); the government continued to have an ad hoc referral process. However, during the reporting period, an international organization coordinated with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MOMD) to address capacity gaps in referral mechanisms; with support from an international organization, the MOMD piloted an NRM in Ninewa governorate in 2020 and Al Anbar governorate in 2021. Civil society organizations reported some Iraqi officials, including district-level police officers, did not proactively identify trafficking victims because officials lacked a general understanding of the crime. NGOs reported some police officials proactively identified foreign labor trafficking victims, but they did not adequately screen for victims among Iraqi citizens, including those that were internally displaced, or during investigations of commercial sex crimes. Investigative judges were the only officials who could officially identify and refer a trafficking victim to protection services via a court order, including the government-run shelter in Baghdad; however, because judges required victims to testify in front of their perpetrators in court, many victims did not come forward due to fear of retaliation. Because of this requirement and the resulting absence of victim witnesses, judges determined in many cases there was insufficient evidence to officially classify a person as a trafficking victim, thereby denying victims' access to protection services. An international organization noted successful victim identification was strongly linked to the capacity and experience of individual investigative judges. Furthermore, the Iraqi government did not have specialized judges or courts that were trained or dedicated to handling trafficking cases; both NGOs and international organizations continued to report that the lack of specialized investigative judges hindered the official determination of trafficking victims, and so some victims may have been unidentified and unable to receive protection services. NGOs and an international organization continued to report authorities frequently held trafficking victims in detention facilities while an investigative judge determined their status as a victim; due to pandemic-related postponed court proceedings, authorities held some victims for extended periods of time without the ability to receive protection services. The KRG reported victims could be identified through management offices at refugee and IDP camps, hotlines, foreign embassies and the public and then referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency, including the specialized anti-trafficking police in IKR. However, just as in Federal Iraq, in the IKR, specialized judges also retained the authority to refer victims to shelter, and IKR NGOs reported similar concerns that some victims may have been unable to receive access to the shelter and protective services during the year if they were not recognized as a victim by a judge.

Some officials continued to criminalize and punish trafficking victims. Authorities arrested, imprisoned, deported, and financially penalized trafficking victims in Iraq, including in the IKR, for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, such as "prostitution" and immigration violations. Foreign migrant workers, including foreign labor trafficking victims, faced regular discrimination in the criminal justice process, revictimization, and retaliation from traffickers. During the reporting period, NGOs noted that even in cases where victims were correctly identified as such after being screened for trafficking indicators, some continued to be detained for engaging in commercial sex, begging, pursuing unauthorized work, or for having an irregular status. For

example, one NGO reported assisting at least seven individuals who had been screened and identified as trafficking victims by authorities and subsequently deported rather than referred to care and assisted in their voluntary repatriation. Police at times inappropriately arrested and detained foreign trafficking victims, rather than the perpetrators, after employers and recruitment agents filed false claims of theft against the victim in retaliation for the victim reporting allegations of trafficking to the police. Although employers were legally responsible to pay immigration fees or expenses related to foreign worker recruitment under Iraq's sponsorship system, in practice authorities penalized workers, including identified and unidentified trafficking victims, for failing to pay. An international organization reported officials sometimes waived residency fines, but the decision-making process appeared arbitrary and highly dependent on the individual official. In March 2020, the Higher Judicial Council (HJC) advised its judges to waive all fines for trafficking victims who were in violation of Iraq's residency laws; however, the Iraqi government did not report if any trafficking victims who had violated residency laws had fines waived. Another NGO reported that within IKR, KRG authorities also improved the process for waiving fines that trafficking victims would otherwise be subject to for working in Kurdistan without legal documentation; however, as this process was informal, some trafficking victims may not have benefitted from the change. In 2021, 32 potential trafficking victims in the IKR had fines waived or adjudicated through comprehensive case management and legal support from a local NGO. NGOs continued to report the Iraqi government and KRG increasingly recognized that people arrested for "prostitution" crimes could be victims of trafficking and should be treated as such; however, despite these improvements, other NGOs reported authorities continued to charge sex trafficking victims on "prostitution" violations. In April 2021, Kurdish security forces arrested 15 individuals suspected of being LGBTQI+ persons for "immorality" and on "prostitution" charges but failed to screen for trafficking indicators and therefore may have penalized potential sex trafficking victims. In addition, Iraqi and KRG authorities continued to inappropriately detain and prosecute without legal representation children allegedly affiliated with ISIS—some of whom were victims of forcible recruitment and use—and used abusive interrogation techniques and torture to obtain confessions; the Iraqi government did not report screening these children as potential trafficking victims or referring them to protection services. As of December 2021, an international organization reported at least 1,267 children, some as young as nine years of age, remained in detention in Iraq for periods ranging from three to five years, including for alleged association with armed groups, primarily ISIS.

The Iraqi government provided limited protection services to trafficking victims and did not operate shelters specifically for male trafficking victims. By law, the Iraqi government was the only authority permitted to provide shelter to trafficking victims; its shelter served women and children, including victims of trafficking and survivors of gender-based violence. However, NGOs reported the shelter lacked capacity to care for child trafficking victims, who were instead sent to the MOLSA orphanage, and minority communities, including those who identified as LGBTQI+ persons. In 2021, a local NGO reported the Iraqi government relied on donations from civil society and international organizations to fund the government shelter; in the previous year, the government allocated funds from MOI and MOLSA accounts to support protections services. MOLSA continued to operate a trafficking shelter in Baghdad for female and child trafficking victims; during the reporting period, 27 trafficking victims utilized the shelter, an increase from 18 victims that were assisted at the shelter in the previous reporting period. MOLSA—in coordination with the Ministry of Health (MOH)—reported it provided victims at the shelter with psycho-social, trauma, and reintegration services; medical care; and long-term shelter; MOH reported it dedicated two doctors for trafficking victims at the shelter. NGOs and an international organization reported that overall services fulfilled victims' basic physical needs, but a lack of resources, staffing, and case management training limited shelter staff's ability to provide psycho-social and medical care and vocational training specifically for trafficking victims. Furthermore, an international organization reported the MOLSA shelter only provided basic services and referred cases to other organizations for specific protection needs. Moreover, foreign trafficking victims were frequently referred to an international organization for assistance, including shelter

and facilitating repatriation to the victims' countries of origin. In 2020, MOLSA reportedly developed a distinct case management system and clinical psychology tracks for different categories of trafficking victims and provided vocational training to trafficking victims. Although it did not report the extent to which the case management system was utilized, MOLSA reported victims were provided vocational training at the shelter during the year. In most cases, officials did not allow female victims to freely enter and exit shelters because they were referred via a court order, and officials limited victims' ability to communicate with anyone outside of the shelters. An international organization reported foreign victims could not easily access services outside of the shelter while they awaited repatriation; instead, foreign victims often relied on their embassies for support. The embassies of the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Indonesia reportedly provided shelter for their nationals while they awaited repatriation. In contrast, the government reported foreign victims and Iraqi victims were legally entitled to the same benefits, and the MOI reported providing identical physical and mental services and legal assistance to both Iraqi and non-Iraqi citizen trafficking victims.

During the previous reporting period, an NGO reported allegations that staff and guards at Iraqi government-operated shelters abused trafficking victims; to address this, MOLSA installed a monitoring system to prevent any violations by shelter staff against victims—in addition to conducting physical checks when the victims were admitted to the facility and discharged—in order to detect and document any potential abuse against the shelter occupants. No allegations of abuse by staff or guards were reported during the year, and MOLSA reported the monitoring system continued to be utilized. The Iraqi government did not provide specialized care for rape victims, including trafficking victims who were also victims of rape. The government reported that in cases of Iraqi victims of rape or sexual exploitation, due to social norms, victim's family members often attempted to convince them to leave the MOLSA shelter and drop any charges to avoid shame. For such cases, the government continued to operate 16 Family Protection Units across federal Iraq that focused on family reconciliation for victims of trafficking or other abuse, such as rape. NGOs continued to report that the largest gap in victim service provision was the lack of specialized trafficking shelters in the country. The Iraqi government did not report providing funding or in-kind assistance to NGOs that provided victim care; however, NGOs and international organizations reported the government fully cooperated with civil society actors, especially regarding victim services for foreign trafficking victims. In 2021, the Iraqi government repatriated 338 Iraqi refugee families from al-Hol camp in Syria to a transit camp in Iraq; the government ensured the repatriated families received humanitarian assistance, case management, and psycho-social support, including family tracing and reunification services for unaccompanied and separated children, all who were vulnerable to trafficking. The Iraqi government did not report efforts to provide protection services to demobilized child soldiers of ISIS, the PMF, or other armed groups, thus failing to prevent revictimization or re-recruitment of these children. However, in June 2021, the Iraqi Council of Ministers submitted a draft law on child protection to the COR, which aimed to protect children from all forms of violence and exploitation, in addition to criminalizing enslavement, coercion to work, or involvement in armed conflict, and outlined protection services for children who were victims of such situations. The law had not been finalized at the close of the reporting period.

The KRG continued to operate four domestic violence shelters in the IKR for women; the shelters could provide limited services to female trafficking victims. Victims needed to obtain a court order to leave the shelters, which significantly restricted their movement, and shelter space was limited. The KRG did not report how many trafficking victims received services at these shelters during the reporting period. Since November 2019, the KRG allowed an Erbil-based NGO to operate the first and only trafficking shelter in the IKR. In December 2021, the KRG renewed its partnership with the NGO to operate the shelter through December 2022; the renewed partnership continued to support comprehensive case management, as well as legal, health, and mental health services, and expanded psycho-social support programming. The shelter could house as many as 38 victims at one time and was almost always at capacity; during the reporting year, 58 trafficking victims received shelter services. The KRG continued to facilitate the release of Yazidis

held captive by ISIS, most of whom were likely trafficking victims, and reported it coordinated with NGOs and an international organization to provide essential psycho-social and protective services to these victims.

Neither the Iraqi government nor the KRG provided adequate protections to victims or witnesses to encourage their assistance in investigations and prosecutions of traffickers. However, the MOI reported 19 identified victims voluntarily assisted law enforcement authorities during the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers. Civil society organizations, including the Iraqi Bar Association, reported they provided free attorneys to represent foreign workers in court proceedings. The Iraqi government did not allow trafficking victims to work, move freely, or leave the country during trials. The MOI reported any foreign or Iraqi trafficking victim could file a civil lawsuit against a trafficker but did not report if any victims filed during the reporting period. NGOs reported government compensation was available to victims but took an extended period of time to obtain and, likely due in part to authorities' poor investigative techniques and overall lack of protections provided to victims during trial, was almost impossible for victims to pursue successfully. Courts did not protect the privacy or identity of victims when testifying against the trafficker; NGOs reported courts required victims to testify in front of their traffickers, as well as, at times, in front of an entire courtroom of other people waiting for their cases to be heard. Iraqi courts also did not provide translation and interpretation services for foreign trafficking victims, which delayed cases for months; in some cases, courts used unqualified interpreters, which harmed the credibility of victims' testimonies. Furthermore, NGOs reported that even when a victim did not want to pursue legal proceedings against a trafficker, some victims could be required by the government to participate by providing testimony or serving as a prosecution witness in other trafficking cases, possibly contributing to further trauma for the victim. Labor and criminal courts in the IKR did not provide translation and interpretation services for foreign workers, including foreign labor trafficking victims, creating difficulties for victims suing abusive employers or filing criminal charges. Although the Iraqi anti-trafficking law allowed for the government to provide special residency status benefits to foreign trafficking victims, the government did not report offering this assistance to any victims. The KRG did not offer special residency status to victims during the reporting period either, but it reportedly continued to refrain from deporting victims. The Iraqi government and the KRG provided foreign victims relief from deportation or offered legal alternatives to their removal to countries in which they may have faced hardship or retribution. NGOs reported that repatriation efforts for trafficking victims continued to be impacted by the pandemic; complex and expensive testing and quarantine requirements delayed repatriation and some countries required their nationals to be fully vaccinated prior to returning home. Despite these obstacles, the Iraqi government and KRG reportedly cooperated with an international organization and NGOs to repatriate around 125 foreign trafficking victims and more than 3,000 vulnerable Iraqi migrants returning from the Belarusian-Polish border and the Belarusian-Lithuanian border following an outflow of migrants from the country attempting to travel to Europe during the reporting period.

PREVENTION

The government increased efforts to prevent human trafficking. The government's Central Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (CCCT) continued to be led by MOI and included representatives from the MOH, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Displacement and Migration, MOLSA, Ministry of Justice, the HJC, the Council of Ministers General Secretariat (COMSEC), and Iraq's Independent High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), as well as three representatives from the KRG; the committee met three times during the reporting period. The KRG's anti-trafficking committee—established in 2016—which was led by the KMOI and included 17 government ministries and an international organization as an observer, met at least once during the reporting period. The KRG reported the newly created DCOC was also represented in the committee. The Iraqi government maintained a 2019-2021 national action plan (NAP) but acknowledged that the pandemic delayed its implementation. However, the CCCT actively increased its engagement and coordination with civil society organizations in an effort to advance the NAP; including meeting with an NGO to discuss

ways to advocate for policies and procedures to improve protection of victims and increase the prosecution of traffickers. During the year, an NGO facilitated the committee's first meeting in 18 months and reported working with the committee to draft a 2022-2025 NAP. The CCCT also worked closely with an NGO to create a network of local NGOs, lawyers, and social workers in each Iraqi governorate and connected with the MOI's anti-trafficking directorate to establish and refine referral mechanisms, improve service provision for victims, and empower local civil society organizations to combat trafficking.

During the reporting period, the MOI's anti-trafficking directorate and the CCCT conducted a nationwide awareness campaign that included publishing stories about trafficking on national media outlets and government-run radio to highlight the warning signs of the crime; it also advertised its anti-trafficking hotline and posted information at hospitals, markets, border crossings and security checkpoints, airports, police stations, and transportation hubs. As in the previous reporting period, the Ministry of Transportation reported it continued to work with bus companies and airlines to raise awareness about trafficking. In the IKR, the DCOC used its specialized trafficking unit to provide seminars, campaigns, and sessions for community members and foreign workers to raise awareness of trafficking; an NGO reported that the Residency Directorate in Erbil developed awareness materials to be distributed to foreign workers upon arrival at the airport warning of the signs of trafficking. The MOI continued to operate a 24-hour anti-trafficking hotline, and the MOI continued to use a public email address, launched in the previous reporting period, to receive trafficking tips; the government did not report how many inquiries the hotline or the email address received nor if any resulted in investigations or prosecutions of trafficking crimes. In the previous reporting period, the MOI's hotline received 169 calls, which resulted in 35 alleged trafficking cases and 10 convictions. An international organization also reported the MOI's hotline was only available in Arabic, which limited its accessibility for foreign trafficking victims. The KRG operated its own service line in the IKR where trafficking victims could theoretically seek assistance and report labor abuses, but it did not report how many alleged trafficking cases it received through the service line during the reporting period. However, an NGO reported that this service line was not public or publicized and no hotline existed specifically for trafficking victims. An Erbil-based NGO also operated a general service line, available for victims of trafficking and gender-based violence and other vulnerable populations; 20 victims were identified and referred to care via the NGO's hotline.

The Iraqi government and the KRG continued to cooperate with each other to maintain an online visa system to track migrant workers and their sponsoring companies to prevent employers from committing labor abuses; the government reported the system could automatically block any single individual or company from sponsoring more than 50 foreign laborers. In June 2021, MOLSA referred 400 private sector companies to the labor courts for violating the allowed percentage of hired migrant workers; however, the ministry also deported thousands of workers associated with these companies and did not report screening them for trafficking indicators prior to deportation, which may have penalized some unidentified victims. The KRG reported challenges tracking migrant workers hired by employers and companies that used fake or fraudulent registrations and others who acted as agents, sponsoring foreign labor visas before ultimately hiring the workers to third party companies for profit. Although the KRG prohibited "pre-payment employment," recruitment agencies were able to deduct up to 25 percent of a worker's first paycheck as a service fee for facilitating employment, which may have increased the vulnerability of workers to exploitation and debt bondage. The Iraqi government reported it regulated labor recruitment and placement of foreign workers through MOI's Residency Office and MOLSA, where recruitment agents or private citizens working as lawyers licensed by the government sponsored workers. Under this sponsorship system, a worker could not change employers until completing two years of work with a sponsor, unless the worker had a complaint of poor treatment or abuse. However, even in cases where an employee had a legitimate complaint, NGOs and an international organization reported the employee was often relocated to a new employer and authorities rarely held the abusive employer accountable. An international organization also reported

agencies that the government backlisted changed names frequently to enable them to continue to operate, and in cases where an employer was punished for abuse, it was common for a single perpetrator to be penalized rather than the entire company or agency. In the previous reporting period, in an effort to improve the identification of potential trafficking cases in instances of abuse or labor law violations, the HJC allocated judges with greater knowledge and experience of trafficking crimes in Iraqi labor dispute courts. NGOs also raised concerns the KMOLSA's regulation on foreign labor conflicted with its 2018 anti-trafficking law, particularly in the case of exploited workers who may be potential trafficking victims and, although they may be recognized as victims under the anti-trafficking law, they could be punished for having an irregular status under the foreign worker regulations in the IKR. Furthermore, NGOs reported regulations for recruitment agencies and employers were weak in the current law, which hindered KMOLSA from enforcing requirements and holding agencies and employers accountable for violations, including those that amount to trafficking crimes. In an effort to improve the two laws, the KRG sought technical assistance from an Erbil-based NGO to analyze the government's proposed amendments to the law to ensure protection of the rights of foreign workers and agency and company accountability. At the close of the reporting period, the draft amendments were pending MOLSA's legal advisor for review. The government reported it made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts by continuing surveillance on social clubs, hotels, and massage parlors; increasingly, MOI also conducted surveillance on coffee shops and cafeterias. In the IKR, KMOI and Asayish security forces continued to monitor message centers, cafes, bars, and hotels, locations often used for commercial sex. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for child sex tourism. In the previous reporting period, the HJC directed courts to use the anti-terrorism law to counter some forced marriage practices, including *fasliya* and *nahwa*—a practice in which a family forces a woman to marry one of her father's cousins—which placed women and girls at increased risk of trafficking. Unlike previous years, the government did not report investigating or prosecuting any individuals for *nahwa* or *fasliya*. Neither the Iraqi government nor the KRG provided anti-trafficking training to its diplomatic personnel.

During the reporting period, a large outflow of migrants, predominately from the IKR, attempted to migrate to Europe via transit countries, primarily Turkey and Belarus. Some migrants were reportedly lured by government-controlled Belarusian travel agencies that promised travel to Minsk and ultimately access to the Belarusian-Polish border or Belarusian-Lithuanian border to enter the EU. After arriving in Minsk via plane, these migrants paid €15,000–€20,000 (\$17,010–\$22,680) to be transported to border areas; hotels managed by the Belarusian government hosted migrants before they were loaded onto buses or taxis and brought to the border. Once at the border, media reports allege the migrants were left to cross the border into Poland or Lithuania; in some instances, migrants attempted to cross the border into Europe multiple times without success and remained stranded between borders with few resources, heightening their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. To address this increased vulnerability and prevent additional migrants from entering such situations, the Iraqi government closed the Belarusian consulates in Erbil and Baghdad to reduce the issuance of visas to Iraqis for entry into Belarus, canceled flights between Iraqi airports and Minsk, and coordinated repatriation flights for any Iraqi nationals stranded on the border or in Belarus, Lithuania, or Poland to return home voluntarily. Between October and December 2021, the Iraqi government, with an international organization, facilitated the return of more than 3,000 Iraqi nationals from Belarus to Iraq. Once Iraqi migrants returned to Iraq, an international organization observed that many of them faced situations of violence, abuse, and exploitation. In 2021, the Iraqi government repatriated 338 Iraqi refugee families from al-Hol camp in Syria to a transit camp in Iraq. The government ensured the repatriated families received humanitarian assistance, case management, and psychosocial support, including family tracing and reunification services for unaccompanied and separated children, all who were vulnerable to trafficking.

Iraqi law prohibited compulsory or voluntary recruitment of any person younger than age 18 into the governmental armed forces, including governmental paramilitary forces, militia groups, or other armed groups.

There were no reports the Iraqi military or KRG security forces unlawfully recruited or used children in combat or support roles during the reporting period. However, the Iraqi government did not exercise complete control over certain units of the PMF, which sometimes undertook operations independent of political leaders or military commanders. The Iraqi government's inter-ministerial senior committee—first established in 2019 to monitor, evaluate, and report on children's rights violations in conflict zones in Iraq—continued to closely coordinate with an international organization during the reporting period but did not report on actions by the committee during the reporting period. MOLSA, in coordination with an international organization, the government's inter-ministerial committee, and the PMC, developed and finalized a new action plan to address the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict; implementation of the plan was scheduled to begin in January 2022.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Iraq, and traffickers exploit victims from Iraq abroad. The violent conflict with ISIS exacerbated the population's vulnerability to trafficking, in particular women and children, although the government's territorial defeat of the terrorist group, announced in December 2017, has improved conditions for Iraqi civilians. However, insecurity remained in many areas, including those liberated from ISIS rule. As of December 2021, nearly five million Iraqis displaced as a result of ISIS have returned to their areas of origin, whereas approximately 1.2 million remain in protracted displacement; about 80 percent have been displaced for more than three years, placing them at continued risk of exploitation. As of February 2022, more than 180,000 IDPs were living in 26 formal camp locations in Iraq, and more than 100,000 are in informal settlements. Many of those that are displaced are female heads of households vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse due to their perceived affiliation with ISIS and lack of Iraqi identification documentation. In addition, more than 245,000 Syrian refugees remained displaced in Iraq, the vast majority in the IKR. With the defeat of the ISIS physical caliphate, the reported incidence of these violations has diminished. Between 2014 and 2018, ISIS militants kidnapped and held captive thousands of women and children from a wide range of ethnic and religious groups, especially Yazidis, and sold them to ISIS fighters in Iraq and Syria, where ISIS fighters subjected them to forced marriage, sexual slavery, rape, and domestic servitude. ISIS maintained an organized system to buy and sell women and girls for sexual slavery, including sales contracts notarized by ISIS-run courts. Media have reported ISIS sold some captives to wealthy individuals in Gulf countries, and reports suggested some Yazidi captives were moved to Syria, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. IKR-based civil society organizations also reported in 2018 that ISIS members and supporters kidnapped Yazidi children for exploitation in Turkey. ISIS reportedly kidnapped 120 Turkmen children in 2014; they have reportedly been sold multiple times for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and only 20 of the kidnapped children were rescued by the end of 2018. Throughout 2015–2019, thousands of women and children escaped ISIS captivity—many of whom were pregnant as a result of rape, forced marriage, and sex trafficking; these women and girls, including IDPs among this population, remain highly vulnerable to various forms of exploitation, including re-trafficking. Some Yazidi women and girls reside in Iraqi IDP camps or al-Hol camp in Syria, where many reportedly continue to live with or near individuals that formerly exploited them under ISIS rule. As of early 2022, the KRG reported 2,763 Yazidis—including adults and children—remain missing. Some reports indicate the missing women and girls remain held by ISIS in northeastern Syria and Turkey or have been exploited in other parts of the region, Europe, or Asia.

Children remain vulnerable to forcible recruitment and use by multiple armed groups operating in Iraq, including—but not limited to—ISIS, the PMF, tribal forces, the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), and Iran-backed militias. Despite the defeat of the physical caliphate, ISIS continues to abduct and forcibly recruit and use children in combat and support roles, including as human shields, informants, bomb makers, executioners, and suicide bombers; some of these children were as young as eight years old, and some were children with intellectual disabilities. Multiple sources report the PKK and People's Protection Units (YPG) operating in the IKR and Sinjar continued to recruit and use children. In 2021, an unverified source reported that the PKK recruited dozens of children

to prepare them for combat, including children from Kirkuk, Iraq. Furthermore, unverified reports in 2021 alleged that Yezidi Resistance Forces and Yezidi Women's Protection Units' militias employed Yezidi minors and teenage recruits in paramilitary roles in Sinjar. Local NGOs reported in 2018 that Yezidi militias in Sinjar recruited approximately 10 to 20 Yezidi boys, and NGO and local government contacts confirmed in 2018 that hundreds of Yezidi children had been recruited by the PKK-aligned Yezidi Civil Protection Units (YPS) and other PKK-affiliated militias. In 2018, civil society organizations reported the PKK recruited and trained children from Sinjar, Makhmour, and other locations and then sent them to bases in Sinjar, Turkey, and the Qandil Mountains between Iraq and Iran.

Since 2015, NGOs have reported some non-compliant, Iran-aligned PMF units recruit, use, and provide military training to children, though the incidence of these reports has declined with the defeat of ISIS' territorial presence in Iraq. In 2021, there were no reports of children being recruited and used by the Iraqi government or the KRG. In 2018 and 2019, NGOs alleged that some PMF-affiliated militias, including Iranian-backed Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN) and Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), recruited boys younger than the age of 18 to fight in Syria and Yemen. In 2017, reports also indicated both the AAH and Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) militias recruited and used child soldiers. Some of the forces in the HHN, AAH, and KH militias operated under the umbrella of the PMF, but they generally operate outside of the command and control of the Iraqi government. Civil society organizations and local contacts reported in 2017 that posters commemorating children who died while fighting for Shia militias were commonplace in Shia-majority areas of Baghdad and throughout southern Iraq. Most of the children who were celebrated for fighting allegedly fought for brigades of the AAH and KH militias. Credible reporting in 2017 indicated Sunni tribal militias recruited boys out of IDP camps, some of whom received military training. In addition, international observers reported the ISF used three children at a checkpoint in early 2019.

Refugees and IDPs face heightened risk of forced labor and sex trafficking due to their economic and social vulnerability and lack of security and protections. Between 2015 and 2018, NGOs reported trafficking networks in the IKR targeted refugees and IDPs, operating with assistance from local officials, including judges, officials from the Asayish forces, and border agents. Women and girls in IDP camps whose family members have alleged ties to ISIS may continue to be exposed to a complex system of potential sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and abuse by security and military officials. Criminal gangs continued to reportedly force women into "prostitution" and boys and girls to beg, especially IDP and refugee children and children with disabilities, primarily in urban areas; criminal gangs also force children to sell and transport drugs and weapons. In 2021, observers reported an increase in the use of children 8-15 years old by criminal gangs to distribute narcotics. Civil society organizations also reported children, including IDP children, were forced to work in chemical factories in Erbil and mining shops in Sinjar in IKR. In October 2020, the Iraqi government announced its decision to begin to close all IDP camps across the country. NGO and media reports alleged government officials forced thousands of civilians, mostly women and children, out of camps with very little notice. NGOs and an international organization expressed concern that many of the camps' residents did not have anywhere to return to as their homes were destroyed during the conflict with ISIS or they feared retaliation and violence if they returned home because of real or perceived affiliation with ISIS. Furthermore, NGOs reported other camp residents experienced challenges obtaining civil documentation and security clearance to travel to other parts of the country, resulting in secondary displacement and exacerbating the risk of exploitation and trafficking in a highly vulnerable population. An international organization reported tens of thousands of IDP children lacked civil documentation, particularly those born or formally residing in areas under ISIS control, and could not access basic services, including enrolling in school, and in May 2022, the UNHCR reported that approximately one million displaced Iraqis lacked civil documentation. In 2021, an international organization reported that children, mostly among IDPs and refugees, were directly impacted by the sudden closure of IDP camps; children were forced to work by their families for survival. Observers noted that forced labor was often seen among Iraqi IDP children, as well as Syrian refugee children, between

the ages of 10-18 who were exploited in street-selling and hospitality, including girls who were predominately forced into domestic work. Iraqi refugees in Jordan are vulnerable to labor trafficking in Jordan's informal labor sector, in part due to employers paying them less than market wages and expecting them to work excessively long hours.

Iraqi, Iranian, and Syrian women and girls, as well as LGBTQI+ persons in the IKR and Federal Iraq, are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking. LGBTQI+ individuals across all ethnic and religious groups remained at risk of sex trafficking primarily because of cultural stigmas. According to IKR press reports, the collapse of Iran's currency and economic slowdown spurred an influx of more than 2,000 young Iranian women and girls into the IKR in 2018, many of whom were victims of sex trafficking in cafes, hotels, and massage centers. According to KRG law enforcement in 2018, IKR-based taxi drivers allegedly facilitate the transportation of these women and girls from Iran to the IKR under the cover of tourism. Numerous media reports from 2018 claim girls as young as 11 years old are observed in night clubs and casinos in Baghdad as waitresses, dancers, and in commercial sex; some militia groups, including AAH, reportedly provided security at these establishments and relied on them for income. NGOs reported in 2018 and 2019 that male sex traffickers in the IKR use the threat of publicizing compromising photos of women to sexually exploit or force them into commercial sex. The media reported in 2018 trafficking gangs increasingly use social media sites, particularly Facebook, to buy and sell women and girls for sex and labor exploitation. Reports from 2014-2017 suggested some Iraqi law enforcement officials have allegedly frequented brothels known for sex trafficking or accepted bribes to allow sex trafficking. Foreign media reports from 2018 suggested a growing trend of child sex trafficking of Iraqi girls ages 11-16 in Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and the UAE.

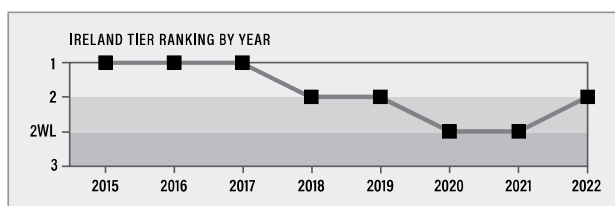
Traditional practices, including *fasliya*—the exchange of family members to settle tribal disputes—and child-forced and "temporary" marriages, place women and girls at increased risk of trafficking within the country. In 2019, an international media outlet reported clerics operated "marriage offices" in areas outside of important shrines in Iraq, which advertised "temporary marriages" with girls as young as nine years old for the purpose of sex trafficking. Some militia groups, such as AAH, reportedly provided security for these "offices" and relied on them for income. Additionally, a local NGO disclosed in early 2021 that reports from local partners in southern Iraqi border provinces noted Saudis and Kuwaitis exploited children in sex trafficking during hunting trips in areas inhabited by Kawalyah, nomadic tribesman without civil documentation. As reported in previous years, traffickers forced Syrian girls from refugee camps in the IKR into early or "temporary marriages" with Iraqi or other refugee men; some KRG authorities allegedly ignored, or may have accepted bribes to ignore, such cases, including those in which girls are sold multiple times. An NGO reported in early 2022 that traffickers continued to open massage parlors in five-star hotels in Iraq as a cover for commercial sex and sex trafficking; some of these hotels are owned by state entities, which allow the traffickers to operate with impunity. The Iraqi government further confirmed in 2022 that massage parlors, coffee shops, bars, and nightclubs were locations for sex trafficking. Additionally, according to the Iraqi government, traffickers use social media to operate their networks and recruit victims, such as by advertising fake job offers.

Some men and women from throughout Asia and Africa who migrate—both legally and illegally—to Iraq are subjected to forced labor as construction workers, security guards, cleaners, handymen, and domestic workers. In May 2021, COR Committee on Labor and Social Affairs reported Iraq hosted approximately one million foreign workers, including those with both legal and non-legal status; reportedly, only 10 percent had officially registered with the government. In early 2020, observers reported an increase in trafficking victims from Ghana, Kenya, and Sierra Leone; furthermore, in 2021, NGOs noted an increase in victims from Cameroon, India, Indonesia, Sudan, and Syria. In particular, observers noted an increase of Ghanaian domestic workers referred to NGOs as trafficking victims during the year. In addition, NGOs noted an increase in Indonesian trafficking victims being transported through Turkey to the IKR, then working in Turkey for around a month, before being told to renew their work permits in Kurdistan and then forcibly made to remain and work. NGOs reported some employers and recruitment agents exploit

workers' illegal status by withholding salaries and subjecting workers to substandard living conditions. Some foreign migrants are recruited for work in other countries in the region but are forced, coerced, or deceived into working in Iraq and the IKR. In 2021, NGOs reported migrants in the IKR receive harsher treatment by their employers, including physical and emotional abuse, and continue to be vulnerable to nonpayment or under-payment of wages and food deprivation, both of which have increased during the pandemic. In 2018, the KMOI reported 22 workers from the Philippines legally entered the IKR under the sponsorship of a labor contracting company but were subsequently forced to work in Baghdad. In early 2020, NGOs reported smugglers in the IKR promise some sub-Saharan African workers better work opportunities in Baghdad, but upon arrival, traffickers exploit the workers in forced labor. An international organization reported in 2018 that if a foreign worker had a complaint of abuse about an employer, recruitment agents moved the worker to a different employer and did not report the employer to the police. Recruitment agencies reportedly operate clandestinely without permits and beyond the control of the government.

IRELAND: TIER 2

The Government of Ireland does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Ireland was upgraded to Tier 2. These efforts included increasing convictions compared with the year prior—including two convictions under the anti-trafficking law for the first time since at least 2013—and consequently assigning significant sentences. The government formally recognized seven sea fishers as trafficking victims and identified potential trafficking victims during inspections, which was an increase compared with prior year reporting. The government also expunged more than 600 prior convictions for commercial sex offenses, many of which may have involved prior sex trafficking victims, and launched an awareness campaign in partnership with an international organization. Furthermore, the government increased funding for victim assistance and for public awareness and prevention efforts compared with the prior year. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government prosecuted fewer suspected traffickers than the prior year and did not prosecute any labor traffickers. Systemic deficiencies in victim identification, referral, and assistance persisted, and services for victims remained inadequate. The government did not uniformly screen for trafficking in vulnerable populations, like sea fishers, before referring them to immigration authorities for deportation, even when victims self-identified. The government did not adopt an updated national anti-trafficking action plan (NAP), amend its national referral mechanism, or overhaul its accommodation framework for trafficking victims, which continued to leave victims with inadequate and unsuitable accommodations. The government did not report providing trafficking-specific training to any judges, remained without legal safeguards to protect victims from prosecution for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, and did not report awarding restitution or compensation for trafficking to any victims in 2021.



PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Increase efforts to identify and protect all victims, especially Irish citizens, victims of labor trafficking and forced criminality, and vulnerable populations like children, sea fishers, and asylum-seekers. • Improve

victim identification and referral by issuing a revised national referral mechanism in coordination with NGOs; providing victim identification training for all front-line officials, including for labor inspectors; and offering formal identification, a recovery and reflection period, and services to all victims. • Allow formal victim identification by entities other than the police, including civil society, labor inspectors, social workers, and health care professionals. • Vigorously investigate, prosecute suspects, and convict traffickers of both sex and labor trafficking using the trafficking law. • Enforce the amended rules for the working scheme for sea fishers, consider additional measures of protection to reduce their risk of labor trafficking, and improve coordination with civil society working in this sector. • Offer specialized accommodations to trafficking victims that are safe, appropriate, and trauma-informed. • Continue to systematically train law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges on a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach to law enforcement efforts and trials and sensitize judges to the severity of trafficking crimes. • Allow all victims to access the national referral mechanism without requiring cooperation with law enforcement. • Adopt a legal provision to exempt victims from penalization for the unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit. • Update and adopt a national anti-trafficking action plan with a clear timeline for implementation, responsible ministries, and resources for implementation. • Continue to train law enforcement and prosecutors on developing cases with evidence to corroborate victim testimony. • Increase resources for legal assistance to trafficking victims, as well as the legal services provided, including assistance to victims through investigations and court proceedings, which can be accessed at the earliest opportunity and prior to engaging with police. • Establish a national hotline to report all forms of trafficking crimes, including labor trafficking, and provide victim assistance and referral. • Increase awareness of and trafficking survivor access to damages and increase prosecutor's efforts to systematically request restitution for survivors during criminal trials, particularly for undocumented workers or victims of sex trafficking. • Continue regular liaison between investigators and prosecutors on evidentiary standards and legal matters that arise during investigations in trafficking cases. • Prioritize investigating fraudulent labor recruitment and ensure cases found to be labor trafficking are prosecuted as trafficking rather than labor code violations. • Expand government authorities to ensure the effective regulation and monitoring of agencies that recruit domestic workers and au pairs.

PROSECUTION

The government increased law enforcement efforts. The 2008 Human Trafficking Act, amended in 2013, criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties up to life imprisonment, which were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with punishments prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. The law broadly defined sexual exploitation to include the sexual abuse of children. The Criminal Justice (Sexual Offences) Act of 2017 criminalized the purchase of sexual services and prescribed more severe penalties for the purchase of sex from a person subjected to trafficking. In such cases, the burden of proof shifted to the accused, who had to prove they were unaware the victim was exploited in trafficking.

The national police anti-trafficking unit reported investigating 44 new cases of trafficking in 2021 (25 for sex trafficking and 19 for labor trafficking), compared with 38 investigations in 2020 and 41 in 2019. The number of investigations correlated to the number of identified victims, as law enforcement opened a new case for each individual victim. Police continued investigating 20 trafficking cases initiated in prior years—13 for sex trafficking and seven for labor trafficking, including one case for forced criminality. Although courts remained open in 2021, pandemic-related court closures in 2020 caused delays; investigations and prosecution decisions were largely unaffected. The government initiated the prosecution of one sex trafficking suspect in 2021, a decrease compared with three in 2020 and five in 2019. The government did not initiate any prosecutions for labor trafficking in 2020 or 2021. The government continued to pursue two sex trafficking prosecutions initiated in prior years. For the first time since at least 2013, the government convicted two sex traffickers under the amended anti-trafficking law; judges sentenced them to five years and eight months' and five years and one month's imprisonment. Prosecutors filed an appeal for the sentences being unduly lenient. Additionally,