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2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: South Africa

SOUTH AFRICA (Tier 2 Watch List)

The Government of South Africa does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included increasing investigations and convictions of traffickers; investigating and prosecuting some allegedly complicit government officials; coordinating with foreign governments on trafficking investigations and repatriation of victims; increasing coordinated labor inspections to investigate forced labor; adopting an anti-trafficking NAP; accrediting two shelters; and expanding awareness-raising activities. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, even considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on its anti-trafficking capacity. While the government finalized and approved the implementation regulations to operationalize the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons (PACOTIP) Act's immigration provisions, the regulations awaited final adoption and were not yet in effect at the end of the reporting period. Agencies responsible for identifying, referring, and certifying trafficking victims lacked coordination, and knowledge gaps in understanding human trafficking and referral SOPs, likely hindered overall protection efforts. Law enforcement continued to lack the necessary capacity and training to effectively identify and refer trafficking victims to care. The government inappropriately penalized victims solely for offenses committed as a direct result of being trafficked, including by detaining potential trafficking victims, even after identification as such by government officials, instead of referring them to care. Reports of low-level official complicity in trafficking crimes persisted. Because the government has devoted sufficient resources to a written plan that, if implemented, would constitute significant efforts to meet the minimum standards, South Africa was granted a waiver per the Trafficking Victims Protection Act from an otherwise required downgrade to Tier 3. Therefore South Africa remained on Tier 2 Watch List for the third consecutive year.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.
- Increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict officials complicit in trafficking crimes and traffickers within organized crime syndicates, including cases of online exploitation.
- Promulgate and implement the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) immigration provisions in chapters 3 and 7 of PACOTIP, including sections 15, 16, and 31(2)(b)(ii) to ensure the issuance of

appropriate immigration status and identification documents for trafficking victims.

- Increase training for South African Police Service (SAPS) officers on trauma-informed interviewing techniques as well as victim identification and referral SOPs, and train specialized investigators on human trafficking investigations and computer forensics to investigate online exploitation.
- Increase resources and training for front-line responders to effectively use victim identification and referral SOPs to identify trafficking victims, including by screening for trafficking indicators among vulnerable populations, such as individuals engaging in commercial sex, children, LGBTQI+ persons, refugees, migrants, and Cuban medical workers, and systematically refer trafficking victims to care.
- Increase collaboration between NICTIP, Provincial Task Teams (PTTs), and civil society to integrate referral and response systems and include all stakeholders, including survivors.
- Implement policies to remove the requirement for victims to participate in investigations and prosecutions in order to be formally identified and receive trafficking victim status.
- Formalize a confidential reporting mechanism for civil society to safely report allegations of official corruption and complicity in trafficking crimes directly to the government for vigorous investigation.
- Accredite or establish additional shelters to accommodate the needs of male, LGBTQI+, and child trafficking victims.
- Implement and consistently enforce strong regulations and oversight of labor recruitment companies, including by holding fraudulent labor recruiters criminally accountable.
- Increase outreach and awareness efforts to vulnerable populations, especially for those engaging in commercial sex, in rural and agricultural communities, and foreign migrants.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. PACOTIP criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to life imprisonment, a fine of up to 100 million South African rand (\$5.9 million), or both. The penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those for other serious crimes, such as rape. The implementing regulations for PACOTIP's immigration provisions found in sections 15, 16, and 31(2)(b) (ii) were finalized and approved by the Minister of Home Affairs, but not yet formally adopted by parliament and promulgated; therefore, critical sections of the act remained inactive for the tenth consecutive year. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offenses and related matters) Amendment Act of 2007 (CLAA) also criminalized the sex trafficking of children and adults and prescribed penalties of up to life in prison. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 (BCEA), amended in 2014, criminalized forced labor and prescribed maximum penalties of three to six years' imprisonment. In addition, the Children's Amendment Act of 2005 prescribed penalties of five years to life imprisonment or fines for the use, procurement, or offer of a child for slavery, commercial sexual exploitation, or to commit crimes. Prosecutors sometimes relied on the Prevention of Organized Crime Act of 1998, in combination with CLAA, which added additional charges – such as money laundering, racketeering, or criminal gang activity – and increased penalties of convicted defendants.

The Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI, or Hawks), a division of SAPS, initiated 29 trafficking case investigations – 19 for sex trafficking, eight for labor trafficking, and two for unspecified forms of trafficking – and continued 35 case investigations from previous reporting

periods. This compared with initiating 18 case investigations in the previous reporting period. The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) initiated 15 prosecutions of 30 suspects and continued 28 prosecutions of 74 suspects from prior reporting periods, compared with nine prosecutions with 16 suspects during the previous reporting period. The government convicted 14 traffickers in eight cases, including two forced labor cases, under trafficking or immigration-related charges, compared with convicting 11 traffickers in the previous reporting period. Judges sentenced traffickers from 15 years to life imprisonment. The government reported two convictions were upheld on appeal and seven individuals were acquitted, which were appealed by the government and remained ongoing. The government initiated prosecutions of two South African traffickers for forced labor in agriculture; their associates, two Mozambican recruiters, fraudulently recruited and transported 39 victims, including children, from Mozambique and were convicted for illegal entry, which included a sentence of three months' imprisonment and a fine. The case remained ongoing.

The government recognized official complicity as a key challenge in addressing all transnational crime, including human trafficking, and investigated and prosecuted government officials during the reporting period. The government prosecuted the co-defendant of an acting judge, who was deceased before criminal proceedings began, for multiple trafficking-related crimes. The government charged three SAPS officers for extorting potential trafficking victims in a case reported in 2021; the case remained ongoing. Two NPA prosecutors were implicated in a potential corruption scheme for obstructing efforts to hold a high-profile, public figure accountable for alleged child sex trafficking over several years; the government did not report any actions taken against the prosecutors. Observers and government officials continued to report widespread corruption particularly among DHA, the Department of Social Development (DSD), SAPS, and DPCI. Observers reported high-level law enforcement officials obstructed trafficking investigations. DHA arrested 22 immigration officials for corruption related to facilitating illegal entry, transportation, and harboring of foreign nationals. Observers also reported in exchange for bribes, lower-level officials warned traffickers of operations by law enforcement, immigration officials facilitated undocumented entry for traffickers at land and air border points, and DSD returned survivors to traffickers instead of referring them to care. Observers reported some SAPS officers were unwilling to investigate cases, particularly of children forced to engage in street vending or begging, and relied on NGOs to obtain victims' statements and build cases. Observers reported cases of sex trafficking of Basotho women from Lesotho in South African brothels; however, due to alleged official complicity of both Basotho and South African officials linked to the brothels, they continued to operate with impunity. Given mistrust in law enforcement, civil society reported the need for a trusted, high-level government contact to receive reports of officials complicit in human trafficking crimes, to facilitate investigations and to avoid retribution. The government reported the existence of several secure mechanisms to report corruption, but did not specify if any were sensitive to the specific considerations of human trafficking crimes.

Law enforcement agencies lacked sufficient resources and training to adequately and appropriately investigate all reported trafficking cases. SAPS officers sometimes conflated GBV and human trafficking crimes. Observers reported law enforcement had insufficient training in trauma-informed interviewing and victim care, resulting in cases of DPCI investigators retraumatizing victims or not taking victims' statements. The lack of clarity on case status, low prospect of success, and sometimes years-long delays in cases dissuaded some victims from participating in trials. DPCI had a national anti-trafficking coordinator, four investigators to provide operational support, and provincial anti-trafficking coordinators in all nine districts; however, there were no officers or staff solely dedicated to anti-trafficking efforts. SAPS created an anti-trafficking unit within its General Detectives section, which primarily handled trafficking crimes involving adult victims. The SAPS family, child, and sexual offense unit handled trafficking crimes involving children. Observers reported SAPS did not

collaborate with civil society and were reportedly slow to investigate leads generated by other law enforcement agencies. Media reports accused NPA of not proceeding with victims' cases in prior years because of discrimination due to disabilities or race.

With support from an international organization, the government trained more than 450 frontline law enforcement officers in Gauteng, Western Cape, and Eastern Cape provinces. An international organization supported DPCI to conduct a train-the-trainer training for 16 DPCI and SAPS officers to educate other officers on the SAPS TIP SOPs. An international organization also supported NPA to train 100 prosecutors from eight provinces in three trainings. The government signed memoranda of understanding with the Governments of Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia, and Thailand for intelligence sharing and coordinating victim repatriations. The government coordinated with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to investigate potential trafficking of DRC migrants residing in the country. SAPS coordinated with the Lesotho Mounted Police Service on three cross-border investigations; however, SAPS officers sometimes did not effectively communicate with their counterparts.

PROTECTION

The government made uneven protection efforts. The government identified and referred 74 trafficking victims to care, including 42 labor trafficking victims, 23 sex trafficking victims, and nine victims of unspecified forms of trafficking, compared with identifying 83 victims and referring 74 victims to care in the previous reporting period. Of the sex and labor trafficking victims identified, there were 31 women, 25 men, 14 children, and nine were unspecified; 43 were foreign victims. NGOs identified and referred to care an additional 52 trafficking victims and identified 383 potential victims through transit monitoring. Observers reported official statistics did not reflect the scope of trafficking, since institutional problems and lack of proactive screening resulted in some victims remaining unidentified by the government. Conflation between GBV and human trafficking also led to the misidentification of victims.

In partnership with international organizations, the government trained social workers on victim identification, reporting, and referrals, particularly focused on combating online abuse and exploitation. Most agencies, including SAPS, DSD, NPA, and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJCD), used SOPs adapted for each agency to identify and refer trafficking victims to care, developed in accordance with PACOTIP and support from an international organization; however, agencies and provinces implemented the SOPs inconsistently. Authorities inappropriately penalized victims of trafficking for offenses committed as a direct result of being trafficked, including for immigration offenses. As reported by multiple sources, trafficking victims were detained and deported after identification as trafficking victims and the government did not screen detained migrants for trafficking. During the reporting period, the government deported more than 800 Basotho, which included some trafficking victims. The government reportedly arrested and charged 52 undocumented migrants working in a single factory, including Malawians, Zimbabweans, and PRC nationals, including some potential trafficking victims, for immigration violations; allegedly, these potential victims were charged and faced deportation after declining to participate with investigations, despite expressing fears of retaliation. The government arrested and charged 19 Bangladeshi potential trafficking victims with immigration violations after officials could not provide interpretation services and the potential victims declined to cooperate with investigations.

The government reported providing trafficking victims with temporary emergency shelter, food assistance, interpreters, specialized medical care, psycho-social support, and transportation.

Observers reported the lack of training, awareness of agency responsibilities, and coordination by government officials resulted in victims facing delays in receiving care and increased the potential for victims returning to or being located by their traffickers. By law, trafficking victims were not required to participate in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers; however, in practice, to access services, many victims had to report to law enforcement. For certification as a trafficking victim – the process that permitted victims to access government services and benefits – victims must report their case to SAPS; SAPS was then required to confirm the trafficking allegations, file human trafficking charges within 48 hours, and coordinate with the provincial DSD representative. DSD was responsible for certifying trafficking victim status by issuing a letter of recognition, authorizing and monitoring the provision of protective services, preparing victim-witnesses for court, and accompanying victims through trial and repatriation, if applicable. Observers reported DSD and SAPS lacked coordination and were often unreachable to certify victims' status, resulting in victims sometimes unable to access timely emergency shelter and services, hindering overall protection efforts. DSD and SAPS disputed this characterization, claiming officials were available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Observers reported instances of SAPS officers leaving trafficking victims at shelters without coordinating with DSD and, when this occurred in Gauteng and Western Cape, DSD refused assistance to victims until confirmation from SAPS was obtained. As reported by observers, in numerous instances, SAPS, DPCI, and DSD left victims at police stations overnight if their case was opened at the end of or after business hours. After reporting to SAPS, within the same 48-hour time period, victims had to decide whether to participate in criminal justice proceedings. Reportedly, victims willing to participate in investigations and prosecutions received certification and services faster than those unwilling to cooperate. To circumvent the existing process in Western Cape, DSD and the Department of Health (DOH) had SOPs that permitted medical and psychological assessments for victims before certification to access immediate care.

The government continued oversight of 18 NGO-run multipurpose shelters, operated one government multipurpose shelter that could assist trafficking victims, and accredited two new shelters; however, the accreditation of nine shelters to serve trafficking victims expired during the reporting period. These shelters continued providing services to trafficking victims. Each province had at least one accredited multipurpose shelter. Standards of care determined the accreditation status of shelters and accreditation lasted either two or four years before reevaluation. Victims were not permitted to leave shelters without police escort but could discontinue shelter services at any time. Few shelters accepted victims with their children. Additionally, the government oversaw 88 NGO and government-operated semi-accredited shelters in compliance with DSD's minimum standards of care for trafficking victims that could provide emergency care for up to 72 hours. The government also operated a network of 61 Thuthuzela Care Centers (TCCs) – full-service crisis centers to assist victims of GBV, including trafficking victims – adding six new TCCs during the reporting period. The government could provide shelter for unaccompanied child trafficking victims in Child and Youth Care Centers. Additional NGO-operated shelters, unaccredited by the government, also provided care specifically to trafficking victims. The government provided NGO-operated multi-purpose shelters a stipend on a per-person, per-night basis; however, these shelters reported funds were generally inaccessible after business hours, due to unresponsiveness by SAPS and DSD. Due to decreases in both government and private funding for NGO-operated shelters, numerous chronically underfunded shelters serving trafficking victims faced closure. The government maintained accreditation for one shelter serving male trafficking victims in Gauteng. Vulnerable populations, such as LGBTQI+ persons, particularly transgender persons and LGBTQI+ migrants, were especially at high risk for trafficking due to social stigmatization. Reportedly, two one-stop centers could provide shelter to LGBTQI+ victims, but available space was limited. Shelters accessible to persons with disabilities provided limited services; it was unknown if trafficking victims received these services during the reporting period. In Gauteng,

trafficking victims could receive substance abuse treatment through five accredited treatment centers; treatment was provided for 12 weeks. The shelters in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), and Western Cape generally offered adequate standards of care in both rural and urban areas, but quality of care in other provinces varied. Observers reported government shelter staff sometimes neglected to inform victims of the status of criminal cases against traffickers. Foreign victims, including both undocumented and with legal authorization, were fearful of accessing services at government facilities. Undocumented victims could not legally seek employment, even when cooperating with law enforcement, and their trials extended several years.

Through the NPA's Court Preparation Program, the government could provide victims with the option to testify via video conference both while in the country and after repatriation for foreign victims; and enhanced shelter and witness protection if the victim faced danger due to participation in the case. The government could provide interpretation for victims' oral testimony and translation for written statements. The government reported that all victim identified participated in criminal justice proceedings. NGOs emphasized the critical need for SAPS to issue Police Inquiry Numbers and CAS numbers to victims to facilitate follow-up on victim referrals and enable victims to track their cases. PACOTIP allowed judges to order victim restitution in trafficking cases, but the government did not report any orders during the reporting period.

Foreign victims faced additional barriers to access care and justice. PACOTIP authorized trafficking victims to receive relief from deportation. During the reporting period, the government finalized and approved regulations guiding the implementation of this provision and handling of trafficking cases; however, the regulations awaited final adoption by Parliament and were not yet in effect. As proscribed under PACOTIP, foreign trafficking victims were entitled to a visitor's visa for 30 days, which could be extended if cooperating in an investigation or prosecution or if danger to the victim exists in their home country; however, the government did not report issuing these visas. DHA had a policy to issue temporary identification documentation for foreign trafficking victims, requiring renewal every two weeks and continued cooperation with SAPS; however, DHA did not report providing such documentation to any trafficking victims. The Mpumalanga PTT coordinated with the Governments of Mozambique and Eswatini to repatriate trafficking victims, sometimes in partnership with an international organization.

PREVENTION

The government maintained mixed efforts to prevent trafficking. The government coordinated anti-trafficking efforts through NICTIP, which was chaired by DOJCD, with representatives from DHA, DSD, SAPS, NPA, DOH, Department of Employment and Labor (DOEL), Department of International Relations and Cooperation; with support from an international organization, NICTIP met regularly. NICTIP, with support from an international organization, drafted and approved its 2023-2026 National Policy Framework (NPF), soliciting input from select NGOs and one survivor, and allocated resources for its implementation. The government did not have a dedicated budget for anti-trafficking efforts, but individual agencies contributed to their respective anti-trafficking efforts. DOJCD allocated 1.7 million South African rand (\$100,310) to support training efforts, implementation of the NPF, and NICTIP and some PTT meetings for 2023. The chair of NICTIP directed all governmental trafficking efforts and implementation of the NPF. DOJCD also chaired the National Rapid Response Team, which coordinated trafficking investigations and victim identifications and referrals; its activities were not reported. Established in all nine provinces, PTTs coordinated provincial policies and Provincial Rapid Response Teams (PRRTs) facilitated local responses to trafficking cases and victim identifications. As reported in previous years, some PTTs met regularly, including in KZN, Western Cape, Free State, and

Mpumalanga, while others met sporadically. Representatives on both NICTIP and PTTs shared duties on multiple task teams for other crimes, such as GBV, which limited capacity and resources to address human trafficking. Observers previously reported SAPS, DHA, and DOEL were often absent from PTT and PRRT meetings, likely hindering overall efforts.

The government did not comprehensively monitor or investigate forced labor of adults or children in the agricultural, mining, construction, and fishing sectors and labor inspectors lacked necessary training to effectively identify trafficking. DOEL trained 48 inspectors on employment laws, human trafficking, and child exploitation in KZN. SAPS, DOEL, and DHA conducted joint inspections targeting child and forced labor; the joint task force referred several cases for investigation involving child labor and foreign trafficking victims, some of whom were penalized for immigration violations. While inspectors had the legal authority to investigate private farms, they reported difficulty in securing access. For the past three years, observers reported DHA did not often provide vulnerable migrant populations with proper immigration documentation, resulting in children denied entry to schools, which increased vulnerabilities for trafficking. The government did not effectively regulate foreign labor recruiters or penalize them for fraudulent recruitment. Although the law prohibited worker-paid recruitment fees, the government's limited capacity hindered its ability to enforce this provision, especially in the informal sector. SAPS operated a crime hotline that could receive reports of potential trafficking cases and a mobile app that led to 19 investigations with one confirmed trafficking case. The government and civil society directed most trafficking-related calls to the NGO-operated National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH), which the government advertised. In cooperation with PRRTs, NHTH received 3,374 calls pertaining to human trafficking in 2022, identified 391 potential victims, and successfully assisted with the removal of 50 trafficking victims from exploitation. Observers reported most calls to the NHTH from victims occurred after police neglected to take their reports seriously or alleged police complicity was involved. An NGO-operated national social justice hotline also received calls concerning human trafficking.

The government conducted awareness-raising activities in KZN, Free State, Gauteng, Eastern Cape, North West, Northern Cape, and Western Cape provinces, in collaboration with international organizations, reaching more than 84,000 individuals. DSD partnered with a taxi union to raise awareness of trafficking among taxi drivers and commuters. DPCI focused on raising awareness in vulnerable communities. PTTs in four provinces conducted anti-trafficking awareness activities. The government's efforts to implement a previously reported integrated data collection system faced challenges and the government remained without means to collect human trafficking-related data. The South African National Defense Forces maintained a hotline for reports of sexual exploitation by armed forces but did not report whether it received any calls regarding such exploitation during the reporting period. Since 2015, 58 allegations of sexual exploitation and 10 allegations of sexual abuse were made against 67 South African peacekeepers; of these, the government has taken accountability measures in 22 cases and continued investigating six other cases. The Generic and Sector Specific Training Manual on the PACOTIP Act contained a training plan for peacekeepers; however, the government did not report providing anti-trafficking training to its troops prior to deployment as peacekeepers. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. The government reported training its diplomatic personnel on transnational crimes, but not specifically on identifying trafficking indicators.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in South Africa, and traffickers exploit victims from South Africa abroad. Traffickers recruit victims from

neighboring countries and rural areas within South Africa, particularly Gauteng, and exploit them in sex trafficking locally and in urban centers, such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Bloemfontein. Traffickers force both adults and children, particularly those from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities and rural areas as well as migrants, into labor in domestic service, mining, food services, construction, criminal activities, agriculture, and the fishing sector. Traffickers may exploit South Africans in forced labor on vineyards and fruit and vegetable farms across the country.

High unemployment and socioeconomic stratification increased vulnerability of exploitation, particularly of youth, Black women, and foreign migrants. Traffickers recruit victims who are unemployed and struggle with substance use, and commonly use substances to maintain control of victims, including children. Parents with drug addictions sometimes exploit their children in sex trafficking to pay for drugs. Traffickers increasingly entice foreign and South African women and girls with the promise of marriage and then force them into labor after marriage. Abuse of the custom of *ukuthwala*, a cultural norm that can manifest into forced marriage, may contribute to vulnerability of girls and women to exploitation, particularly in Eastern Cape and KZN. According to a study, in 2021, approximately 500,000 children dropped out of school, resulting in a total of 750,000 children not enrolled in school; high death rates from the pandemic increased the orphan population, leaving more children vulnerable to exploitation. There were some reports of boys lured out of the country for fake sports scholarships and then forced into exploitation.

Traffickers recruit both foreign and South African victims through fake job advertisements on social media and classified advertisement forums, including advertisements for webcam modeling, hospitality, mining, and domestic work. Some fake advertisements, particularly for domestic work, specifically request Zimbabwean or Malawian applicants. Some farmers rely on “bakkie brokers” to rapidly expand their personnel during harvest season, bringing foreign migrants to work on farms; these brokers are unregulated and charge workers recruitment fees. Traffickers exploit young men from neighboring countries who migrate to South Africa for farm work; some are subsequently arrested and deported as undocumented immigrants. Despite high unemployment, migrants travel from East, Central, and Southern Africa to South Africa looking for economic opportunity, particularly from Ethiopia and Mozambique, and are vulnerable to exploitation. The lack of valid documentation, due to a protracted asylum process, limited asylum seeker’s ability to access protection and services.

Official complicity in trafficking crimes, especially by police and immigration officials, facilitated the operation of traffickers and organized syndicates engaging in trafficking. Syndicates, predominantly operated by Nigerians, force women from Nigeria and countries bordering South Africa into commercial sex, primarily in brothels and other commercial-front establishments. South African organized trafficking syndicates exploit girls as young as 10 years old in sex trafficking. Some well-known brothels, previously identified as locations of sex trafficking, continue to operate with officials’ tacit approval. In some cases, traffickers exploit women in brothels disguised as guesthouses. Syndicates also recruit South African women to Europe, where traffickers force some into sex trafficking, domestic service, or drug smuggling. Mozambican crime syndicates use the eastern border of Kruger National Park in Mpumalanga, enabled by corrupt officials, to transport migrants to other parts of the country for forced labor, through the same routes used by syndicates to facilitate other crimes. Syndicates also exploit miners, both South African and foreign migrants, sometimes known as *zama zamas*, in illegal gold, diamond, and coal mining; miners are exposed to dangerous conditions and sometimes killed by gangs vying for control of mines. Traffickers operating in South Africa are

mostly from Nigeria and South Africa; however, there were reports of traffickers from Bangladesh, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, and the PRC.

Undocumented children, including child trafficking victims from Mozambique, the DRC, and Zimbabwe, are unable to access education and government services, which increases their risk of statelessness and vulnerability to trafficking. Recruiters entice women from the Middle East, Asia, and countries bordering South Africa with offers of legitimate employment but, upon arrival, some subject the women to domestic servitude or forced labor in the service sector. Traffickers exploit Basotho women in sex trafficking and domestic servitude and men in labor trafficking, particularly in the mining and textile sectors, in South Africa. Traffickers exploit foreign male victims aboard fishing vessels in South Africa's territorial waters. Asian workers may travel to South Africa via commercial flights to disembark on fishing vessels where they are exploited. Traffickers subject Pakistanis and Bangladeshis to forced labor through debt-based coercion in businesses owned by their co-nationals. Owners of privately-owned PRC businesses exploit PRC nationals, South African, and Malawian adults and children in factories, sweatshops, and other businesses. There were 432 Cuban medical workers in South Africa at the end of 2022. Authorities continued to partner with the Government of Cuba to hire medical professionals to provide services in all provinces. South African officials indicated workers were in control of their passports and credentials and reported contracting and paying workers directly. However, it was unclear if Cuban workers controlled their own bank accounts and there was no information on the contracts the workers signed with the Cuban government. In 2022, a credible international NGO published a global report on the Cuban labor export program, in which 18 former workers provided testimony on the conditions faced in South Africa. According to the report, 45 percent were under surveillance, 48 percent were subjected to movement restrictions, 80 percent reported exploitation, 72 percent reported threats and violence, and 50 percent reported being forced to enroll in the program by Cuban authorities.

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