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Trafficking in Persons Report 2016 - Country Narratives - Egypt

EGYPT: Tier 2

Egypt is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Egyptian children are vulnerable to sex trafficking and forced labor in domestic service, street begging, and agricultural work. Individuals from the Persian Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait, purchase Egyptian women and girls for “temporary” or “summer” marriages for the purpose of commercial sex, including cases of sex trafficking, as well as forced labor; these arrangements are often facilitated by the victims’ parents and marriage brokers, who profit from the transaction. Child sex tourism occurs primarily in Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor. Egyptian men are subjected to forced labor in construction, agriculture, and low-paying service jobs in neighboring countries. In 2015, media reported migrant Egyptian children, including unaccompanied minors in Italy observed selling goods in marketplaces and streets, are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and forced labor.

Men and women from South and Southeast Asia and East Africa are subjected to forced labor in domestic service, construction, cleaning, and begging. Foreign domestic workers—who are not covered under Egyptian labor laws—from Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia are highly vulnerable to forced labor, experiencing excessive working hours, confiscation of passports, withheld wages, denial of food and medical care, and physical and psychological abuse. Women and girls, including refugees and migrants, from Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East suffer sex trafficking in Egypt. Syrian refugees who have settled in Egypt remain increasingly vulnerable to exploitation, including forced child labor, sex trafficking, and transactional marriages of girls—which can lead to sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, and forced labor. Irregular migrants and asylum-seekers from the Horn of Africa, who transit Egypt en route to Europe, are increasingly vulnerable to exploitation along this migration route. From 2011 to 2013, instances of forced labor and sexual servitude, smuggling, abduction, and extortion of African migrants in the Sinai Peninsula occurred at the hands of criminal groups; however, international organizations observed the flow of these migrants into the Sinai nearly ceased in 2015, due in part to continued Egyptian military operations. Anecdotal reports, however, suggest these criminal groups have relocated from the Sinai to Egypt's border with Libya, where migrants remain vulnerable to the same abuses, including trafficking.

The Government of Egypt does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. Although the government identified a substantially higher number of trafficking victims compared to the previous reporting period, protection services declined. The government's only trafficking-specific shelter permanently closed in May 2015, and it was unclear if identified trafficking victims received adequate protection services at other government-run facilities. Nonetheless, more than 300 identified victims were referred by government officials to and received services at government operated reception centers or NGO-run shelters. Many officials failed to identify victims systematically among vulnerable groups, and the government had no written procedures to do so. As a result, authorities continued to treat unidentified trafficking victims as criminals and punished them for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being subjected to human trafficking. The government continued to prosecute trafficking offenders and convicted three offenders in 2015; however, many trafficking cases continued to be settled out of court, failing to adequately punish offenders. Although the government made some efforts to prevent trafficking, budget shortfalls impeded the government's efforts to effectively protect victims and combat trafficking, for which it relied on international donor assistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EGYPT:

Increase investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of all forms of trafficking and adequately punish offenders; allocate adequate resources for the provision of victim services to fund government-run facilities and to support the efforts of NGOs on which the government relies for this purpose; provide a clear legal basis for NGOs to provide victim services; provide adequate legal protections for domestic workers; implement standard operating procedures for officials to use the national victim referral mechanism to identify and refer trafficking victims among vulnerable groups, including individuals arrested for prostitution, street children, and foreign migrants; continue to increase training for all government officials on the anti-trafficking law and victim identification and referral procedures; ensure trafficking victims are not punished for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being subjected to human trafficking; encourage trafficking victims

to assist in investigations and prosecutions of their traffickers; and increase ongoing nationwide awareness campaigns.

PROSECUTION

The government made some progress in anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. The 2010 anti-trafficking law prohibits all forms of human trafficking and prescribes penalties from three to 15 years' imprisonment and fines, which are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. The child law prohibits sex trafficking and forced labor of children and prescribes sentences of at least five years' imprisonment, which are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes. Articles 80 and 89 of the constitution prohibit sex trafficking, compulsory exploitation, and forced labor. The government continued to conduct a nationwide data call to gather information on trafficking cases in 2015. The government reported conducting 13 potential trafficking investigations in 2015, half the number reported in the previous reporting period. The government reported initiating 21 prosecutions under the anti-trafficking law involving sexual exploitation and forced begging crimes. Three of these cases resulted in a conviction with life imprisonment under the anti-trafficking law and one resulted in an acquittal; the rest of the cases remained pending at the end of the reporting period. These efforts represented an increase from the 15 prosecutions and zero convictions in the previous reporting period. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking offenses. Law enforcement and judicial officials lacked understanding of trafficking and how to enforce the anti-trafficking law. Some trafficking cases were settled out of court, resulting in a lack of adequate punishment for trafficking offenders. To assist prosecutors in prosecuting traffickers and obtaining convictions, the Ministry of Justice's Center for Judiciary Studies provided compulsory training on human trafficking for newly appointed prosecutors as a part of its curricula. In 2015, the government provided 141 anti-trafficking trainings for 4,645 law enforcement and judicial officials, social workers, civil society, and the media.

PROTECTION

The government demonstrated increased efforts to identify trafficking victims, but its efforts to provide adequate protection services to victims declined. Through the government's anti-trafficking hotline, it identified more than 300 potential trafficking cases in 2015, some of which included organized begging and sexual exploitation; all of these cases were referred to one of the nine government-run reception and aid centers from which victims were often referred to informal, community-based or NGO-run shelters. The government also identified and referred at least five potential trafficking victims through its child abuse hotline in 2015. Although Ministry of Manpower inspectors are trained to investigate employers suspected of child labor or trafficking crimes, it did not report identifying any potential trafficking cases during routine inspections in 2015. The more than 300 identified victims is a significant increase from the 68 victims the government identified in the previous reporting period. Nevertheless, the government did not adopt written procedures to guide officials in the proactive identification of trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, including domestic workers, street children, foreign migrants, and women and girls in prostitution. The national victim referral mechanism, which included counseling and legal assistance to those who called the national anti-trafficking hotline, continued to lack clear standard operating procedures. The lack of trafficking awareness among police, security, and judicial officials outside urban areas, as well as ineffective victim identification procedures,

contributed to punishment of some victims for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being subjected to human trafficking. Authorities continued to treat and punish some unidentified trafficking victims like criminal offenders, while foreign trafficking victims remained vulnerable to detention and deportation for illegal immigration or employment violations.

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), the government body leading anti-trafficking efforts, continued to have inadequate funding, which hindered its ability to provide adequate protection services to victims. The government continued to rely on international organizations and civil society to fund victim assistance, but it did not—in turn—provide financial assistance or support to these organizations, which affected their ability to offer continued provision of protective services to trafficking victims. Moreover, the NGO law hindered legal approvals and registrations for NGOs operating in Egypt, thereby impeding their efforts to provide essential services to victims. The government's shelter for female and child trafficking victims—jointly operated with an international organization since 2011—closed in May 2015 due to lack of funding. Prior to its closing, the shelter hosted 38 trafficking victims in 2015; these victims were provided assistance through local communities once the shelter closed. During the reporting period, NCCM worked with local communities and families to host and rehabilitate trafficking victims, but it was unclear how many trafficking victims they assisted in 2015. The government continued to operate numerous facilities that could assist trafficking victims. For example, NCCM operated nine reception centers for abused women, including potential trafficking victims, which provided psycho-social support and referral to NGO-run shelters; however, it was unclear how many trafficking victims received assistance at these centers in 2015. The Ministry of Health—with international assistance—continued to operate a medical recovery unit for foreign and domestic, male and female trafficking victims at a Cairo hospital; however, the government did not report if any trafficking victims received assistance at this unit in 2015. The government-run rehabilitation center for victims of abuse provided at-risk children, including potential child trafficking victims, psycho-social counseling and rehabilitation; however, it was unclear how many trafficking victims the center assisted in 2015. In February 2016, the Ministry of Justice established a 24-hour clinic for female and child victims of sexual and physical abuse, including potential trafficking victims, staffed by female doctors trained in victim protection and evidence collection for potential criminal proceedings; the government did not report how many—if any—trafficking victims received assistance at this clinic since it was established. Despite the availability of services provided by the government and NGOs, some victims sought refuge at their respective embassies. Although the government rarely granted temporary residency to foreign trafficking victims, it reportedly provided this benefit to a Somali trafficking victim during the reporting period. Foreign trafficking victims were not offered legal alternatives to removal to countries in which they faced hardship or retribution. The anti-trafficking law guarantees protection of witnesses of trafficking crimes, but the government did not report if it provided protection to any witnesses during the reporting period.

PREVENTION

The government made some efforts to prevent human trafficking. The government continued to work on a draft national strategy to combat and prevent trafficking, which was developed to provide a comprehensive national framework to address trafficking issues for 2015-2020, but it was awaiting endorsement by the Cabinet at end of the reporting period. The government continued to operate and publicize a telephone hotline to report trafficking abuses and also created a child abuse hotline in 2015; both of these hotlines included live counseling and legal aid, as well as referrals to law enforcement and NGOs for victim assistance. NCCM conducted online anti-trafficking public

awareness campaigns during the reporting period. In 2015, the government assumed an active role as a leader in multiple regional committees and initiatives that addressed migration, smuggling, and human trafficking issues affecting the Horn of Africa and Europe. In December 2015, President Al-Sisi ordered that 500 million Egyptian pounds (\$70 million) be directed to addressing street children and their vulnerabilities to abuse, including trafficking; however, it was unclear if the funding was allocated to the relevant ministries by the end of the reporting period. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts or forced labor, but it raised awareness of the problem of child sex tourism. In 2015, the government held more than 70 symposiums reaching approximately 3,000 people in Cairo, Giza, and Fayoum governorates on the dangers of child marriage and temporary “summer marriage.” The government offered anti-trafficking training for Egyptian troops before their deployment on international peacekeeping missions. The government provided anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel.

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