

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	608
Land:	Libanon
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	Trafficking in Persons Report 2019 - Lebanon
Udgivet:	20. juni 2019
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	27. juni 2019

Document #2010848

USDOS – US Department of State

2019 Trafficking in Persons Report: Lebanon

LEBANON: Tier 2

The Government of Lebanon 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 to the previous reporting period; therefore Lebanon remained on Tier 2. These efforts included increasing investigations of suspected trafficking cases and identifying an increased number of trafficking victims. The government also strengthened its partnerships with NGOs, including through improved cooperation to screen for potential victims in a government-run migrant detention center. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) reported that collection of judicial data across the country remained a serious challenge, thus officials reported they were unable to provide complete judicial statistics on trafficking cases. The government did not fully implement victim identification and referral procedures, which resulted in the potential for some victims to face arrest, detention, or deportation for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit. Moreover, Lebanon’s sponsorship system, which places a significant amount of power in the hands of employers of foreign workers, continued to create vulnerabilities for the exploitation of migrant workers and remained a significant impediment to authorities identifying and protecting trafficking victims. In addition, the government did not report identifying or referring any victims of labor trafficking, despite several cases being addressed by law enforcement.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop and implement procedures to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, such as illegal or detained migrants, women holding *artiste* visas, domestic workers, and Syrian refugees and subsequently refer them to protection services. • Increase efforts to ensure trafficking victims are not arrested, detained, or deported for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, such as immigration or prostitution violations. • Increase prosecutions and convictions of offenders under the anti-trafficking law, and investigate employers and recruitment agents who withhold workers’ passports, travel documents, or wages for potential trafficking crimes. • Strengthen and expand efforts to reform the sponsorship system to ensure all foreign workers, including domestic workers and *artiste* visa holders, are not bound to abusive employers, and allow workers full freedom of movement. • Screen all detained domestic workers for potential trafficking victims in detention centers and refer those victims to care. • Take concrete steps to establish greater oversight over *artiste* visas, a program

that largely contributes to the vulnerability of women to sex trafficking. • Ensure the judiciary coordinates with the Directorate of General Security (DGS) to consistently apply Lebanon's anti-trafficking law by granting temporary residency permits for trafficking victims and allowing victims to work. • Increase efforts to train judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, and diplomatic personnel about the crime of trafficking and application of the anti-trafficking law. • Continue to work in partnership with NGOs to screen for, identify, and provide protection services to victims, including witness support during criminal proceedings. • Improve the judiciary's capacity to collect, compile, and track data and outcomes of trafficking cases from all courts. • Formally establish the victim assistance fund. • Adopt and implement the draft national action plan. • Enact the labor law amendment extending legal protections to all foreign workers, including domestic workers and *artiste* visa holders. • Launch an awareness-raising campaign.

PROSECUTION

The government increased investigations of suspected trafficking cases, but the government's judicial data was incomplete due to limitations in data collection and management. The 2011 anti-trafficking law criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of five to seven years' imprisonment and fines if the offense involved an adult victim, and 10 to 12 years' imprisonment and fines for those involving a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. The government did not have a law that prohibited or penalized confiscation of workers' passports or travel documents by employers or labor agents. Government officials and NGOs continued to report that some judges lacked understanding of the anti-trafficking law and knowledge of best practices for handling trafficking cases.

In 2018, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) investigated 45 cases of suspected sex trafficking and child trafficking, involving 151 victims. DGS investigated 167 suspected trafficking cases involving migrant domestic workers and women holding *artiste* visas. The 212 investigations in total represented an increase from the 134 total investigations initiated by both the ISF and DGS in the previous reporting period. The DGS reported that 124 of the 167 cases resulted in the following outcomes: referral to judicial or law enforcement authorities for further investigation, payment of back wages to workers, and repatriation of migrant workers. The MOJ reported its judicial data was incomplete due to limitations and challenges in collecting country-wide data. Nevertheless, during the reporting period, the MOJ reported that public prosecutors referred at least 38 cases to investigative judges, who charged and prosecuted 69 alleged traffickers under the anti-trafficking law; these cases involved sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and forced child begging. Sixty-five of these prosecutions remained pending at the end of the reporting period; these cases, like many in Lebanon's overworked judicial system, took significant time to resolve. During the previous reporting period, the MOJ reported more comprehensive judicial data reflecting that public prosecutors referred 109 trafficking cases to investigative judges. During this reporting period, the government convicted and sentenced four traffickers, three involving forced child begging and one involving sex trafficking; these traffickers received sentences that ranged from three to

15 years’ imprisonment. In the previous reporting period, in late March 2018, the government convicted and sentenced four traffickers, each of whom received five-year jail sentences. Officials generally sought to resolve trafficking cases involving foreign workers through mediation between the employer and worker, rather than referring them for criminal prosecution. Additionally, government officials continued to report security forces were reluctant to arrest parents for subjecting their children to trafficking, usually in forced begging, due to a lack of social services available should the child be removed from the family. The government did not report investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking offenses during the reporting period; however, NGOs continued to report a common perception that DGS officers allegedly accepted bribes to protect adult nightclubs or issue *artiste* visas—a visa program that sustained a significant commercial sex industry in Lebanon and enabled sex trafficking.

The ISF anti-trafficking unit remained understaffed and underfunded, with only 23 officers covering Lebanon and no field offices outside of Beirut, which continued to limit the ISF’s work and ability to recruit and train new officers for the unit. The ISF, DGS, and MOJ occasionally included training and awareness of trafficking issues as a part of their curriculum for personnel. Additionally, during the reporting period, the ISF trained 24 officers at the ISF Academy on victim protection and investigative techniques for cases of trafficking and sexual exploitation. The government also continued to encourage and allow officials to participate in anti-trafficking trainings provided by NGOs.

PROTECTION

The government increased efforts to identify trafficking victims, but authorities continued to arrest, detain, and deport potential trafficking victims. The government did not formally adopt draft procedures for the identification and referral of victims to NGO services; in practice, officials continued to identify and refer trafficking victims to care on an ad hoc basis. Through the course of investigations during the reporting period, the ISF identified 149 victims of sex trafficking, as well as three newborns who traffickers allegedly attempted to exploit; this represented a substantial increase from the 55 victims the ISF identified in the previous reporting period. The ISF referred seven of the 149 identified victims to protection services, while the DGS referred an additional 25 victims to care. Although the ISF did not report if the remaining 142 identified victims received appropriate care, ISF and NGOs reported that some sex trafficking victims preferred or requested not to receive shelter or other protective services. In addition, the government reported a DGS-operated hotline received 660 calls that resulted in the repatriation of 97 female *artiste* visa holders—some of whom may have been unidentified trafficking victims—following DGS investigations. The government did not directly provide protection services to trafficking victims but continued to work in cooperation with NGOs to provide essential victim services. NGO-run victim care facilities in Lebanon were dedicated only to female and child victims of trafficking; there were no services available or government resources dedicated to male trafficking victims, even though men among the Syrian refugee population remained vulnerable to trafficking. Pursuant to a longstanding memorandum of understanding between the government and an NGO, the DGS referred female victims to an NGO-run safe house

and provided security for the location; victims were not allowed to work while receiving assistance at the safe house. In 2018, the safe house assisted 201 trafficking victims. The Ministry of Social Affairs continued to coordinate and fund the provision of protection services to child trafficking victims through contractual agreements with NGOs. During the reporting period, the government continued to collaborate with an NGO through a committee dedicated to drafting a handbook that outlined best practices and legal requirements for the protection of trafficking victims and witnesses during investigations and trials.

The government continued to arrest, detain, and/or deport unidentified victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, such as domestic workers who fled abusive employers, out-of-status or irregular migrant workers, women holding *artiste* visas, and persons in prostitution. Under Lebanon’s sponsorship system, foreign workers—including foreign trafficking victims—who left their place of employment without permission from their employer forfeited their legal status, thereby increasing the risk of arrest, detention, and deportation. Women holding *artiste* visas were subject to immediate deportation upon arrest for prostitution violations, and foreign workers without valid residence and work permits were subject to detention for one to two months—or longer in some instances—followed by deportation. The DGS continued to operate a 750-person detention center where authorities detained foreign domestic workers for violating the terms of their work contracts or visas. However, the DGS continued to implement procedures for identifying and referring trafficking victims in the detention center to care facilities. For the past 18 years, the DGS has allowed an NGO to operate a permanent office inside the detention center that allowed their staff unhindered access to detainees to provide medical and psycho-social services. The DGS also continued to permit the NGO to interview detainees to identify trafficking victims among the detention center population; the NGO identified and assisted 25 victims in the center in 2018. The NGO continued to report an increased level of professionalism and sensitivity among DGS officials and investigators. The government did not adopt the draft labor law amendment extending legal protections to foreign workers or the draft law to increase labor protections for domestic workers.

Victims were able to file civil suits to obtain compensation. Victims were also allowed to reside in Lebanon during an investigation of a trafficking case upon a judge’s decision, but the government did not report if any judges issued such a decision during the reporting period. Investigations were impeded when victims chose voluntary repatriation rather than facing an often-lengthy trial process because they were not present in the country to testify against their traffickers. NGOs continued to report that foreign victims preferred quick administrative settlements followed by repatriation rather than long criminal prosecutions because of the lack of protection services or resettlement options during the criminal proceedings. Except for cases involving Syrian refugees, whom the government did not deport, the government did not provide temporary or permanent residency status or other relief from deportation for foreign trafficking victims who faced retribution or hardship in the countries to which they would be deported.

PREVENTION

The government maintained modest efforts to prevent trafficking. The national anti-trafficking steering committee continued its monthly meetings during the reporting period. The government did not adopt its draft national anti-trafficking action plan, but relevant ministries continued to implement portions of the plan. The government did not report efforts to implement anti-trafficking public awareness campaigns during the reporting period. DGS, Ministry of Labor (MOL), and ISF continued to operate hotlines to receive reports of abuse and migrant worker complaints, including for trafficking crimes. During the reporting period, the municipality of Tripoli—in cooperation with an NGO—continued to operate a hotline to report cases of exploitative child street begging. DGS continued a program to inform *artiste* visa holders about restrictions and obligations of their visa status upon arrival to Beirut International Airport. Under the program, if the visa holder objected to the visa’s terms, she was free to return to her home country. Under a directive from the DGS, airport officers continued to return passports directly to foreign domestic workers upon their arrival in Lebanon; however, NGOs reported that many employers ultimately confiscated workers’ passports in private.

The government did not take steps to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts or address child sex tourism by Lebanese nationals abroad. The government maintained some efforts to reduce the demand for forced labor. The MOL had the authority to close or penalize employment agencies that exploited migrant workers, and it maintained a blacklist of an unknown number of recruitment agencies for committing fraudulent recruitment practices. In 2018, the MOL revoked the licenses of 13 employment agencies for either violating a regulation prohibiting agencies from withholding employees’ salaries or because of labor complaints filed against them. The government, however, did not report prosecuting any recruitment or employment agencies for potential trafficking crimes during the reporting period. The MOL and ISF continued to require Syrian refugees to hold work permits that bound them to their employers in some formal work sectors, such as in restaurants, grocery stores, and some forms of manual labor; this requirement created greater vulnerability to forced labor. The government continued to ease the ability of some UNHCR-registered refugees to work in three sectors without any work permit—agriculture, sanitation, and construction—by waiving the fee for residence permit renewals. Easing these restrictions reduced incentives for this vulnerable population to enter into illicit employment or engage in child street begging. Following an agreement signed in early 2017 between DGS, MOL, and the Farmers’ Union in Lebanon that addressed protections of foreign children—primarily Syrians—younger than the age of 16 from agricultural work, MOL continued to provide training to DGS officers and farmers in the Bekaa Valley. The government did not provide anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Lebanon, and traffickers exploit victims from Lebanon abroad. Women and girls from South and Southeast Asia and an increasing number from East and West Africa are subjected to domestic servitude in Lebanon. Lebanese government officials and NGOs report most employers withhold their workers' passports, putting workers at risk of trafficking, and NGOs report that abuse of domestic workers is typically underreported. Many migrant workers arrive in Lebanon through legal employment agencies, but are subsequently exploited or abused by their employers; some employment agencies recruit workers through fraudulent or false job offers. Women primarily from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Morocco, and Tunisia legally enter Lebanon to work as dancers in nightclubs through Lebanon's *artiste* visa program, which is valid for three months and can be renewed once. The terms of the *artiste* visa prohibit foreign women working in these nightclubs to leave the hotel where they reside, except to work in the nightclubs that sponsor them, and nightclub owners withhold the women's passports and wages and control their movement; these women also experience physical and sexual abuse and domestic servitude. The government reported 3,105 women entered Lebanon under this program in 2018, which was a significant decrease from 10,363 *artiste* visa holders that entered Lebanon in 2017.

Men, women, and children among the estimated 1.3 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon are at high risk of sex trafficking and forced labor. Restrictions on Syrians' ability to work legally in Lebanon and the enforcement of visas and residence permit laws increase this population's vulnerability to trafficking. Syrians are commonly involved in the exploitation of other Syrians in Lebanon, particularly targeting refugees fleeing the conflict. For example, Syrian traffickers hold Syrian refugee men, women, and children in bonded labor in order to pay for food, shelter, and the cost of transit to Lebanon, and contract out groups of refugees to work in the agricultural sector in the Bekaa Valley. Similarly, an international organization reports evidence of bonded labor within refugee communities where child labor is used in exchange for living in informal tented settlements. Child labor and forced child labor among the Syrian refugee population continues to increase, particularly in agriculture, construction, and street vending and begging. These children are highly vulnerable to labor trafficking, especially on the streets of main urban areas such as Beirut and Tripoli and in the agricultural sector of Bekaa and Akkar; for example, in 2019, international organizations anecdotally reported the presence of children working in illegal cannabis farms in the North Bekaa region. Furthermore, NGOs report that some Syrian refugee children are forced or coerced to conduct criminal activity. Syrian women and girls are highly vulnerable to sex trafficking. In March 2016, Lebanese authorities reported on an extensive sex trafficking ring exploiting primarily Syrian women and girls in Beirut; the majority of the women and girls were recruited from Syria with false promises of work and subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in which they experienced mental, physical, and sexual abuse and forced abortions. Family members or powerful local families force some Syrian refugee women and girls into commercial sex acts or early marriage in order to ease economic hardships; these women and girls are highly vulnerable to trafficking. Syrian LGBTI refugees continue to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation in Lebanon. An international organization reported in 2017 that some employers coerce Syrian refugee men to perform sex acts through threats of withholding their pay or terminating their employment. An international organization reported in 2016 that some Lebanese

children are involved in armed tribal violence in Bekaa and Tripoli, some of whom may be forced to conduct such activity. There is also evidence of children within the Syrian refugee community in Lebanon that are associated with armed groups, who have either fought in the Syrian conflict or intend to fight in Syria as child soldiers.

ecoi.net summary:

Annual report on trafficking in persons (covering April 2018 to March 2019)



Country:

Lebanon

Source:

USDOS – US Department of State [\(/en/source/11558.html\)](/en/source/11558.html)

Original link:

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report-2/lebanon/> (<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report-2/lebanon/>)

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

20 June 2019

Document ID:

2010848

Austrian Red Cross

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583

F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

