



2016 Trafficking in Persons Report - Mali

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MALI: Tier 2 Watch List

Mali is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Internal trafficking is more prevalent than transnational trafficking; however, boys from Guinea and Burkina Faso are subjected to forced labor in artisanal gold mines, and women and girls from other West African countries, particularly Nigeria, are exploited in prostitution throughout Mali. Women and girls are forced into domestic servitude, agricultural labor, and support roles in artisanal gold mines and subjected to sex trafficking. Boys are subjected to forced labor in agriculture, artisanal gold mines, domestic work, transportation, and the informal commercial sector. Men and boys, primarily of Songhai ethnicity, are subjected to debt bondage in the salt mines of Taoudenni in northern Mali. Some members of Mali's black Tuareg community are subjected to slavery practices rooted in traditional relationships of hereditary servitude. Malian boys and other West African nationals are forced into begging by unscrupulous *marabouts* (religious teachers) in Mali and neighboring countries. NGO reports indicate Malian children endure forced begging in Senegal and Guinea and forced labor on cotton and cocoa farms in Cote d'Ivoire. Other Africans transiting Mali to Europe, primarily via Algeria and Libya and less so Mauritania, are vulnerable to trafficking. Malian women and girls are victims of sex trafficking in Gabon, Libya, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Reports allege corruption is pervasive throughout the security forces and judiciary, which impedes government efforts to prosecute crimes in general, including trafficking.

In early 2012, rebel and Islamic extremist groups invaded and occupied northern Mali. During their 2012-2013 occupation of the north, these terrorist organizations and armed groups recruited and used children, mostly boys, in combat, requiring children to carry weapons, staff checkpoints, guard prisoners, and conduct patrols. These groups reportedly used girls for sexual exploitation, including sex slavery through forced marriages to members of these militias. These armed groups purportedly forced some families to sell their children to the groups. Although the number of child soldiers continued to decrease during the reporting year, NGOs and international organizations reported some children remain involved with armed groups. Although there is no evidence the Malian military recruits or uses child soldiers, poor military recordkeeping systems and the ready availability of fraudulent birth certificates impeded the government's ability to verify the precise age of all Malian soldiers. The unstable security environment in and extremely restricted access to northern Mali, where the government exercises limited territorial control, limited the availability of comprehensive reporting.

The Government of Mali does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. Despite these measures, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing anti-trafficking efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore, Mali is placed on Tier 2 Watch List for the fourth consecutive year. Per the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, Mali was granted a waiver from an otherwise required downgrade to Tier 3 because its government has devoted sufficient resources to a written plan that, if implemented, would constitute significant efforts to meet the minimum standards. While the government, in partnership with NGOs, identified and referred 63 victims to protective services during the reporting year, and distributed 600 copies of its anti-trafficking law to the judiciary, it did not convict any trafficking offenders and did not conduct any national awareness campaigns.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MALI:

Significantly increase efforts to investigate and prosecute trafficking offenses, and convict and punish traffickers; train judicial personnel on how to effectively use the 2012 anti-trafficking law; develop standardized mechanisms to identify potential trafficking victims and refer them to care; train law enforcement on effective case investigation techniques and how to develop standardized identification and referral procedures; expand and strengthen implementation of programs for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former child combatants that address specific needs of child ex-combatants; fully implement the 2015-2017 national action plan to combat trafficking; and increase efforts to raise public awareness about trafficking.

PROSECUTION

The government slightly increased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. Law 2012-023 Relating to the Combat against Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices prohibits all forms of trafficking of adults and children. The law prescribes penalties of five to 10 years' imprisonment, and a maximum of 20 years' imprisonment for cases involving aggravating circumstances, which are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those for other serious crimes, such as rape. In an unprecedented effort to apprise judicial personnel on the 2012 anti-trafficking law, the ministry of justice distributed 600 copies of the 2012 law to judges and magistrates for dissemination to all courts nationwide. The justice minister also issued a decree instructing all judicial personnel to prioritize prosecutions of cases under the anti-trafficking law. The government investigated three potential trafficking cases during the reporting period, compared to one case investigated during the previous period, which was dismissed for lack of evidence of trafficking indicators. It did not convict any traffickers. The government, in conjunction with an international organization, facilitated four trafficking-specific training workshops for 135 officials, including law enforcement personnel, labor inspectors, and prosecution and judicial officials. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking offenses.

PROTECTION

The government sustained minimal efforts to protect trafficking victims. Government officials and NGO partners identified 63 trafficking victims, compared with 48 during the previous reporting period. The government provided nominal assistance to victims, including familial reunification and travel documentation, but continued to rely solely on privately-funded NGOs and international organizations to provide victims with shelter, counseling, food, repatriation, and reintegration services. The government did not provide financial support to NGOs that assisted victims. The government did not report identifying or assisting any victims of traditional slavery in areas where these practices are prevalent. The government remained without standardized

mechanisms to identify potential trafficking victims and refer them to care. Mali offers legal alternatives to removal to countries in which victims would face retribution or hardship.

While reports of child soldiering declined during the reporting period, international organizations reported viewing children among the ranks of rebel militias and terrorist organizations in the north. According to an international organization, five children remained in government detention for suspected association with armed groups. The government referred two formerly-detained children to rehabilitation centers. The government adopted an inter-ministerial protocol in 2013 to require liberated child soldiers to be transferred to rehabilitation centers rather than prison, and continued to follow that procedure.

PREVENTION

The government made modest efforts to prevent trafficking. Malian officials allocated 250 million FCFA (\$430,000) toward the three-year national action plan (2015-2017) to combat trafficking and took some steps to implement it in 2015. The national committee, charged with coordinating government anti-trafficking efforts, met infrequently during the reporting period. The government designed an awareness-raising theatrical piece for broadcast by television and radio, but it did not air the sketch by the end of the reporting period. During the year, the government trained 21 labor inspectors on forced labor indicators; however, the labor inspectors remained without sufficient capacity to regulate the informal sector, where most cases of forced labor occurred. The government made no efforts to decrease the demand for forced labor or commercial sex acts in Mali. It did not provide anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel and peacekeepers deployed abroad.

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