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2019 Trafficking in Persons Report: Greece

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GREECE: Tier 2

The Government of Greece 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 Greece remained on Tier 2. These efforts included the anti-trafficking unit making robust investigative efforts, such as joint inspections with labor inspectors and social workers, and the government officially launching a multi-disciplinary national referral mechanism with appropriate standard operating procedures and written guidance. The Office of the National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking led whole-of-government anti-trafficking efforts, including a project to eliminate forced labor in local government supply chains. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Slow screening procedures and overcrowded facilities, including migrant and refugee camps, and shelters for unaccompanied minors, exacerbated vulnerabilities and, at times, led to re-victimization of survivors. In addition, the government lacked proactive identification efforts for forced labor and unaccompanied children, and some authorities

informally forcibly removed some migrants and asylum-seekers to Turkey, strongly discouraging victims from self-identifying or cooperating. Specialized support for victims remained inadequate or inaccessible, and court proceedings often lasted two to six years, which hindered cooperation from victims and key witnesses, and resulted in acquittals of suspected traffickers.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase proactive identification efforts for victims of forced labor and victims among vulnerable populations, such as unaccompanied children, migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers. • Strengthen specialized services including shelter and psycho-social support for all victims, including children, adult males, and victims in rural areas. • Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers. • Decrease the length of court proceedings for trafficking cases. • Encourage victims' participation in investigations and prosecutions by providing alternative methods to testify, including remote testimony or funding for travel and other expenses for victims to attend court hearings. • Develop policies for victim-centered prosecutions and implement witness protection provisions already incorporated into law. • Take concrete steps to expedite the official victim identification process and consistently include psychologists and social workers. • Provide training to judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement on trafficking investigations and prosecutions, particularly in rural areas and for non-specialized staff. • Train first responders on victim identification and the national referral mechanism. • Standardize data collection and produce accurate data on anti-trafficking efforts. • Consistently inform victims of their right to compensation. • Adopt and implement a national action plan for combating trafficking.

PROSECUTION

The government increased law enforcement efforts. Articles 323A and 351 of the criminal code criminalized sex and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine between €10,000 (\$11,470) to €50,000 (\$57,340)

for offenses involving an adult victim, and a minimum of 10 years' imprisonment and a fine between €50,000 (\$57,340) to €100,000 (\$114,680) for those involving a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those for serious crimes, such as rape. Police investigated 28 cases with 136 suspects (21 cases with 147 suspects in 2017); 27 were sex trafficking cases and one was a forced labor case (20 cases of sex trafficking and one case of forced labor in 2017). The government prosecuted 25 defendants (26 defendants in 2017), 22 for sex trafficking and three for forced labor (21 for sex trafficking and five for forced labor in 2017). First instance courts convicted 14 traffickers (37 traffickers in 26 cases in 2017), 11 for sex trafficking and three for forced labor (35 for sex trafficking and two for forced labor in 2017). Second instance courts convicted 25 traffickers (four in 2017), eight for sex trafficking and seventeen for forced labor (four for sex trafficking in 2017). Judges issued sentences ranging from two to 24 years' imprisonment with fines from €10,000 (\$11,470) to €75,000 (\$86,010).

The Hellenic Police Unit maintained an Anti-Trafficking Unit (ATU) within the Organized Crime Division composing two units with 37 officers in Athens and 10 officers in Thessaloniki that investigated trafficking and vice crimes and 12 smaller units across municipalities that investigated trafficking and organized crime. ATU officers conducted 1,426 joint inspections (206 in 2017) with labor inspectors and social workers from the National Social Solidarity Center (EKKA) on 5,984 individuals leading to 46 cases of various offenses. ATU regularly inspected brothels, bars, and massage parlors, but observers reported the 12 smaller units often consisted of three or four officers to handle trafficking cases among many other duties and lacked the resources and staff to conduct proactive investigations. NGOs continued to report good cooperation with law enforcement and excellent cooperation with ATU. The government maintained two specialized public prosecutors in Athens; one attached to the first instance court and the other to the appeals court. The government trained front-line officers on trafficking issues, but observers reported non-specialized police, prosecutors, and judges, particularly in rural areas and islands, lacked an understanding of trafficking. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in trafficking, but corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained

concerns. The government shared information with 13 European countries on trafficking cases.

PROTECTION

The government maintained victim protection efforts. The government identified 31 victims (38 in 2017); 30 were victims of sex trafficking and one of forced labor (35 sex trafficking and three forced begging in 2017); 22 were adults and nine children (24 adults and 14 children in 2017); 27 female and four male (34 were female and four male); five were Greek victims and 26 foreign victims (four Greeks and 34 foreign victims in 2017). Statistics included some but not all potential victims identified by non-law enforcement entities. ATU and civil society conducted proactive identification efforts, but other government efforts were largely reactive and reliant on self-identification. Hellenic Center for Disease Control and Prevention screened migrants and asylum-seekers for trafficking indicators at island Reception and Identification Centers (RIC); regional asylum offices identified two potential victims (three in 2017). However, some asylum-seekers waited over a month for their screening due to a lack of staff and resources, resulting in a trafficking survivor re-victimized in a migrant camp while waiting for legal documents and RIC screening procedures. Each RIC designated a trafficking focal point who collected information on potential trafficking cases, but many staff working at RICs were on short-term contracts, which limited their experience and training to identify victims. The government screened migrants, including unaccompanied children, upon arrival, but observers reported authorities did not screen migrants again when facing deportation. In addition, civil society reports indicated authorities assaulting and harassing migrants and conducting several informal forcible removals to Turkey, strongly discouraging victims from self-identifying or cooperating with authorities. GRETA reported a lack of identification efforts for victims of forced labor, particularly in the agriculture sector, cleaning and domestic service, and the tourism industry. Proactive identification among vulnerable unaccompanied children also remained inadequate, including for forced begging and forced criminality.

The government officially launched a multi-disciplinary national referral mechanism (NRM), including appropriate standard operating procedures and referral forms. The

government, separately and in cooperation with international organizations and NGOs, trained law enforcement, immigration officers, social service workers, labor inspectors, and health workers on victim identification and new referral procedures. The NRM required first responders to inform and coordinate with EKKA when potential victims were identified for victim care and placement. The law authorized public prosecutors to officially recognize victims based on information collected by law enforcement, or a psychologist and a social worker if a victim did not want to cooperate with law enforcement. Official victim status entitled foreign victims to a renewable one-year residence and work permit, but potential victims without this status had access to equal support and assistance. Observers reported inconsistent use of psychologists and social workers for identification procedures and procedures lasting up to two years for victims to receive official status. The government did not recognize potential victims who were exploited abroad but identified in Greece, creating obstacles in accessing support entitled by law. The government, in cooperation with NGOs, provided shelter, psycho-social support, medical care, legal aid, and reintegration support. The government was unable to determine how much funding was spent on victim protection and did not allocate funding to civil society, with the exception of projects co-financed by the EU and state budget funds. Furthermore, EKKA secured €631,840 (\$724,590) from EU security funds to support the NRM and signed a memorandum of understanding with an NGO to host a legal consultant and two anti-trafficking advisors for two months. Two agencies provided shelter and general support services to trafficking victims: the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) operated 19 shelters and 40 counseling centers for female victims of violence and EKKA operated two long-term shelters, an emergency shelter, and two Social Support Centers for vulnerable populations in need of assistance; EKKA assisted nine victims (seven in 2017). Central and local governments also maintained cooperation agreements with some NGOs to house, protect, and assist vulnerable children, including trafficking victims, and allocated buildings to use as shelters. However, observers reported a lack of specialized shelters for trafficking victims; only one NGO-run shelter provided shelter specifically for female trafficking victims and some police officers remained reluctant to refer victims to NGO-run support services. Victims in rural areas had little access to support services and were often accommodated in police stations, hospital wards, or received no assistance. An NGO-run shelter for sexually exploited

men or short-term government shelters for asylum-seekers or homeless persons could accommodate male victims. Adults could voluntarily leave the shelters unchaperoned. Government-run shelters, NGO-run shelters, and facilities for unaccompanied minors accommodated child victims but did not provide specialized support. Observers reported overcrowded facilities for child victims and GRETA reported authorities held unaccompanied children in police cells up to several months due to a lack of shelters. In addition, delays in payment to shelters for unaccompanied children further limited available spaces, exacerbating the vulnerabilities of 2,000 unaccompanied minors without adequate protection. Victims who did not apply for official recognition could receive a residence and work permit by applying for asylum or for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds; the government issued 10 residence permits and renewed an additional 13 for certified victims but the government did not provide statistics about residence permits or granting of asylum to victims who lacked official recognition. The process to receive residence permits was difficult without an attorney and took time, but the government granted victims a temporary document that prevented deportation or detainment.

The government may have deported, detained, or restricted freedom movement of some trafficking victims due to inadequate identification efforts. Experts reported a lack of victim-centered approaches, including cases of law enforcement conducting interviews described by victims as interrogations. There were also reports of authorities not adequately informing victims about court proceedings and lacking interpretation services for foreign victims. Court proceedings often lasted two to six years, which hindered cooperation from victims and key witnesses. For example, an appeals court unanimously acquitted 20 traffickers convicted of sex trafficking in November 2018 after the four victims that testified against them in lower courts did not attend court proceedings. The government did not provide funding for travel and other expenses for victims to attend court hearings and some suspected traffickers intentionally postponed court appearances to increase the chances of victims being unwilling to testify in court and/or may have paid bribes to repatriated victims to preclude them from testifying. In previous years, observers reported traffickers likely bribed state certified interpreters to alter the content of victim statements or influence their testimony. The law entitled victims to mental health professionals during court proceedings and the use of audiovisual technology for

remote testimony, but many courts lacked the capabilities to deploy these resources and judges did not allow it, even in cases where the lack of these benefits could cause re-traumatization. Observers reported judges lacked sensitivity and an understanding of the impact of psychological trauma on victims' ability to consistently and clearly relate the circumstances of their exploitation and inappropriately dismissed as unreliable victim testimony. The law provided for witness protection and non-disclosure of the witness' personal information; however, no trafficking victims received full witness protection privileges to date, only police escorts during trials, and courts sometimes revealed victims' identities during proceedings. The law entitled victims to file civil suits against traffickers for compensation but no victims to date had received compensation or received restitution from their traffickers. The government reported trafficking victims had never applied for compensation.

PREVENTION

The government increased efforts to prevent trafficking. The Office of the National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking (ONRHT) continued to coordinate government wide anti-trafficking efforts despite lacking sufficient resources. The government drafted a national action plan for 2019-2023, monitored anti-trafficking efforts, and made assessments publicly available. ONRHT continued the development of a national database for trafficking statistics and organized awareness campaigns targeting the general public, students, and teachers. ONRHT, in partnership with an international organization and the Athens Municipal government, started a pilot project to prevent forced labor in local governments' supply chains. The government provided free airtime for public service announcements for NGOs and agencies on trafficking issues. Labor inspectors inspected 37,270 businesses with 112,073 workers; the labor inspectorate fined 3,869 businesses with 5,689 undeclared workers a total of €58.86 million (\$67.5 million). Labor recruitment agencies could be subjected to inspection but the lack of competent staff to conduct such inspections resulted in limited oversight. The government made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts and forced labor. The government operated two hotlines:

one for female victims of violence and another for individuals in vulnerable situations.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Greece, and traffickers exploit victims from Greece abroad. Traffickers operating in Greece are primarily Greeks and other Western and Eastern Europeans but some are also from Central Asia. Traffickers subject some women and children from Eastern and Southern Europe, South and Central Asia, China, Georgia, Nigeria, and Russia to sex trafficking in unlicensed brothels, on the street, in strip clubs, in massage salons, and in hotels. Victims of forced labor in Greece are primarily children and men from Eastern Europe, South Asia, and Africa. Migrant workers from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are susceptible to debt bondage, reportedly in agriculture. Marginalized Romani children from Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania are forced to sell goods on the street, beg, or commit petty theft. The increase in unaccompanied child migrants in Greece has increased the number of children susceptible to exploitation. Unaccompanied children, primarily from Afghanistan, engage in survival sex and are vulnerable to trafficking. Refugee and migrant women, especially those living in the island RICs, were highly vulnerable to trafficking. Most migrants and asylum-seekers are believed to rely on smugglers at some point during their journey and in some instances are forced into exploitation upon arrival in Greece.

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