

2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Senegal

SENEGAL (Tier 2)

The Government of Senegal 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 with the previous reporting period; therefore, Senegal remained on Tier 2. These efforts included providing anti-trafficking trainings to front-line officials and implementing a new anti-trafficking database. The government identified more trafficking victims and drafted a new NAP for 2024-2026. It conducted a public awareness campaign focused on child forced begging and continued certifying and supporting Quranic schools (daaras) that met child protection standards, including provisions banning child begging. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. It did not consistently implement SOPs on the identification and investigation of trafficking cases, and anti-trafficking training for front-line officials, including law enforcement, the judiciary, and protection actors, remained insufficient. Shelter services, especially outside of Dakar, remained inadequate, and, in some cases, the lack of shelters delayed law enforcement operations to remove victims from trafficking situations. Although the government demonstrated increased efforts to address child forced begging, most traffickers exploiting victims in forced begging continued operating with impunity, and efforts to protect child forced begging victims remained insufficient. Officials did not consistently use the 2005 anti-trafficking law to prosecute alleged traffickers and continued applying penalties inconsistent with those prescribed by the law.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase efforts to investigate and criminally prosecute trafficking crimes, especially child forced begging cases, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Increase efforts to proactively identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, such as children exploited in forced begging, women in commercial sex, women traveling abroad for domestic work, migrants, and domestic and foreign workers on fishing vessels owned by Chinese nationals, and refer trafficking victims to services.
- In partnership with NGOs, expand access to protective services, including shelter, for trafficking victims, especially adult victims and victims located outside of Dakar.
- Bolster anti-trafficking law enforcement cooperation with other governments, especially Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, and Nigeria, in the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking crimes, including child forced begging and within the mining sector.
- Implement and train front-line officials on the SOPs for the identification and investigation of trafficking cases, including victim identification and referral procedures.
- Increase funding for the Division for the Fight against the Smuggling of Migrants and Related Practices (DNLT) and expand its presence outside of the capital.
- As part of the government's daaras modernization initiative, enforce child protection standards, including measures banning begging, and inspect and close daaras that do not meet the standards.
- Strengthen efforts to ensure trafficking crimes are tried under the 2005 anti-trafficking law and not as misdemeanor crimes, and ensure trafficking cases are referred to investigative judges in the criminal courts.
- Institutionalize anti-trafficking training for law enforcement and judicial officials.
- Ensure all Senegalese peacekeepers receive mandatory pre-departure anti-trafficking training; in collaboration with the United Nations, investigate all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving Senegalese peacekeepers and hold complicit peacekeepers accountable.

- Significantly increase data collection and sharing on law enforcement and victim identification efforts.
- Increase efforts to investigate and prosecute fraudulent labor recruiters, prohibit worker-paid recruitment fees, and raise awareness of labor exploitation and workers' rights abroad.
- Expand efforts to raise awareness on all forms of human trafficking, especially child forced begging.
- Screen any North Korean workers for signs of trafficking and refer them to appropriate services in a manner consistent with obligations under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2397.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts.

Senegal's 2005 Law to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Related Practices and to Protect Victims criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking. The law prescribed penalties of five to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine for sex trafficking and labor trafficking – except forced begging – and prescribed lesser penalties of two to five years' imprisonment and a fine for forced begging. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with penalties prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape. While the 2005 anti-trafficking law criminalized forced begging, provisions in the penal code that allowed seeking of alms under certain conditions hampered law enforcement officials' ability to distinguish traditional alms-seeking from exploitation through forced begging. Officials also reported the 2005 law did not clearly distinguish human trafficking from migrant smuggling. Revised anti-trafficking legislation remained pending before the ministry council.

The government initiated investigations into 82 suspects in an unspecified number of cases, compared with investigating an unspecified number of suspects in 24 cases during the previous reporting period. In data collected from each of Senegal's 14 regions, the government reported prosecuting 254 alleged traffickers and convicting 147 traffickers; this compared with prosecuting 91 alleged traffickers and convicting 30 traffickers, with data collected from nine regions, during the previous reporting period. Courts issued sentences ranging from three months' to three years' imprisonment. The government did not report the number of traffickers that received less than one year's imprisonment; at least one trafficker received a fully suspended sentence. This did not serve to deter or adequately reflect the nature of the crime. The government prosecuted and convicted two traffickers for child forced begging, sentencing one trafficker to two years' imprisonment, including six months for forced child begging, and other trafficker to three months' imprisonment for organization of begging. This was a decrease compared with prosecuting and convicting four traffickers during the previous reporting period. The government prosecuted potential trafficking crimes as lesser misdemeanor crimes, such as "pimping," which carried significantly lower penalties. A lack of institutional capacity and resources, as well as limited law enforcement presence in some regions, hampered law enforcement efforts. Observers reported investigative magistrates lacked training to identify trafficking cases, including forced labor, leading to potential misclassification of trafficking crimes and application of lower penalties than those prescribed in the anti-trafficking law. Over-crowded prisons posed a significant challenge to the judicial system, sometimes resulting in courts issuing fines for suspected lower-level offenses in trafficking cases.

The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking crimes; however, corruption and complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action. Although not explicitly reported as human trafficking, an international organization reported there were six new allegations submitted in 2024 of sexual exploitation with trafficking indicators by Senegalese personnel deployed to the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) between 2014 and 2024. There were also ten open cases of alleged sexual exploitation by Senegalese peacekeepers deployed to CAR, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) reported

between 2020 and 2024. The government had not yet reported the accountability measures taken, if any, for the open cases at the end of the reporting period. Observers alleged officials sometimes refused to investigate trafficking cases or pressured the judiciary to drop cases, especially those involving Quranic teachers. When officials identified a child forced begging victim, they often issued administrative penalties to the alleged perpetrators instead of criminally investigating and prosecuting the case, in part due to public pressure associated with the social influence of Quranic teachers; such penalties failed to deter future exploitation. Officials reported some families returned their children to traffickers after they were removed from situations of forced begging.

The gendarmerie and the judicial police investigated serious crimes, including human trafficking, throughout the country. The DNLT oversaw transnational trafficking investigations. The government had SOPs for law enforcement on the identification and investigation of trafficking cases; however, observers reported officials did not consistently implement the SOPs and required additional training on their use. Border police implemented and regularly trained officials on a manual with SOPs on border management, including trafficking screening procedures; officials reported the free movement of ECOWAS citizens complicated law enforcement's ability to detect trafficking cases at the border. The government collaborated with foreign counterparts on law enforcement activities and cooperated with INTERPOL on trafficking investigations. The Senegalese and Mauritanian governments signed a declaration of intent to cooperate on combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking. However, officials reported additional cooperation with foreign law enforcement counterparts was needed. The government reported partnering with international organizations to provide anti-trafficking training to front line officials, including magistrates, police, members of the gendarmerie, immigration officials, and social workers. In August 2024, the government implemented a new anti-trafficking database ("SYSTRAITE"); however, the government's capacity to collect anti-trafficking statistics and comprehensively report on law enforcement action remained severely limited. The government, in collaboration with an international organization and foreign donor, continued piloting a database to collect court case data, including trafficking cases, in six regions.

PROTECTION

The government increased efforts to identify and protect trafficking victims.

The government identified and referred to services at least 786 trafficking victims, including 573 child forced begging victims and 54 sex trafficking victims, a majority of whom were minors. Officials identified and referred an additional 601 vulnerable children, including potential child trafficking victims, to care. The government also reported providing outreach and care to 760 vulnerable children, including potential child trafficking victims. This compared with identifying and referring to care 622 trafficking victims (583 of whom were children), including 487 forced begging victims, and 501 vulnerable children during the previous reporting period. NGOs reported providing services to 1,479 individuals, which included potential trafficking victims. The government's ability to track victim-related statistics continued to be limited.

The government's SOPs for law enforcement included victim identification screening procedures and, within the Dakar region, procedures for referring victims to services; however, officials did not consistently implement the procedures. Law enforcement, immigration, and social services personnel each had separate procedures for proactively identifying trafficking victims among vulnerable populations and referring them to services. However, authorities inconsistently applied the procedures, and they were not used in all regions of the country. Law enforcement, civil society, and community protection groups generally referred children to the government or NGOs for social services, including repatriation assistance for foreign child victims. Authorities generally referred victims identified along Senegal's borders to an international organization and government center for victim interviews before referring them to NGO or government protective services. The government referred foreign adult victims to their respective embassies and coordinated with NGOs and international organizations to provide repatriation support. Observers reported law enforcement

officials generally do not attempt to arrest traffickers until they can secure space for the victim at a shelter for fear of compromising the victim's safety.

The Ministry of Family and Solidarity (formerly the Ministry of Women, Family, and Child Protection) referred the majority of the identified victims, primarily children, to its shelter (the Ginddi Center) for care. The Ministry of Family expended 225 million West African CFA francs (FCFA) (\$359,585) for victim services, including the center's operations, a decrease compared with 296 million FCFA (\$472,843) for victim services in 2023. The Ginddi Center provided children with meals, shelter, basic medical care, psycho-social services, clothing, family reunification, vocational training, and assistance in obtaining identification documents. The Ginddi Center continued to lack sufficient space, limiting the number of victims authorities could assist and their length of stay. As a result, the government sometimes sent victims to the Ginddi Center for immediate services and then to NGOs or to partner daaras, where children received follow-on support services until family reunification. The government certified all government and NGO shelters providing child victim services met safety and childcare standards; however, some observers reported a lack of inspectors to conduct quality control in shelters. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) operated 12 shelters across six regions for child victims of crime, child victim-witnesses, and children in emergency situations, which child trafficking victims could access. Observers reported a lack of facilities for women victims and a need for additional psychological support for victims. The Ministry of Family is building a center where adult victims of violence against women, including trafficking victims, can access medical, psychological, and legal services in Dakar. Several NGOs operated shelters for trafficking victims throughout the country. International observers reported NGOs often provided critical shelter and victim services outside of Dakar due to a lack of government resources. Shelter and services for adult victims remained severely inadequate. Observers noted the lack of shelter services, especially for adult victims, sometimes delayed law enforcement operations and removal of victims from trafficking situations. Due to limited reintegration assistance, observers reported some child victims reunified with their families were vulnerable to re-trafficking.

Foreign national and Senegalese victims were eligible for the same services. The government, in collaboration with civil society and foreign governments, repatriated foreign trafficking victims exploited in Senegal. Foreign victims who faced hardship or retribution in their country of origin could apply for temporary or permanent residency, but authorities did not report granting these protections to any victims. Access to victim services was not conditioned on cooperation with law enforcement proceedings. The government provided victim-witness assistance, including shelter, legal support, and psycho-social services, to support participation in investigations and prosecutions. The 2005 anti-trafficking law included victim-witness protection provisions, such as allowing videotaped testimony in trials. NGOs were also able to provide legal services to trafficking victims. The law allowed victims to obtain restitution; however, the government did not report ordering any traffickers to pay restitution. Victims could file civil suits against traffickers, but no victims reportedly did so. Authorities screened for trafficking indicators among vulnerable populations, including undocumented migrants and individuals in commercial sex. However, due to inconsistent screening, the government did not take effective measures to prevent the inappropriate penalization of potential victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. Authorities sometimes detained and fined individuals participating in commercial sex for lack of required documentation without screening for sex trafficking.

PREVENTION

The government increased prevention efforts.

The national unit to combat human trafficking (CNLTP) coordinated the government's anti-trafficking response and met regularly. The government's previous NAP ended in 2023; during the reporting period, the government drafted and implemented an updated NAP for 2024-2026 with support from an international organization. The government allocated 60 million FCFA (\$95,847) to the CNLTP in 2024, the same amount allocated the previous year. During the previous reporting

period, the government adopted a decree elevating the CNLTP's status to a committee and expanding its responsibilities; however, for the second consecutive year, the government did not formally appoint a committee chair, limiting the CNLTP's ability to implement decree provisions such as referring cases to the MOJ for prosecution and establishing a dedicated victims' fund. The government worked with an international organization to map the number of daaras in the country and study conditions of children living in the daaras. The government did not report continuing a public awareness campaign focused on child forced begging. The Ministry of Family operated a hotline for women and child crime victims. The hotline was available in three languages; the government identified more than 12,000 women and children as victims of violence from hotline calls during the reporting period but did not report further details.

Draft legislation that would modernize daaras and establish child protection standards for the daaras to meet has remained pending before the National Assembly since 2018. However, the Ministry of Education (MOE) conducted a series of consultations with Quranic teachers across the 14 regions of the country to collect inputs before the draft legislation goes to the National Assembly for adoption. The government did not operationalize the national daaras committee under the office of the presidency created in the previous reporting period; while this initiative gave the government authority to establish and enforce child protection and educational standards at daaras, the government did not report inspecting or closing any existing daaras for health or safety violations. However, the MOE continued certifying and providing financial and in-kind support to daaras that met certain child protection and educational standards, including provisions banning begging; the government allocated 6 billion CFCA (\$9.6 million) to support these certified daaras. The MOE opened 23 government-supported daaras with support from an international organization; officials also provided consultation to existing daaras to improve school conditions. Four municipal governments within Dakar had regulations prohibiting child begging as well as provisions developed with an international organization to increase oversight of daaras and provide food, hygiene, and medical services to the children. With support from an international organization, the MOE provided trainings on child protection to Quranic teachers. The CNLTP continued to participate in the West Africa Network for the Protection of Children, a sub-regional referral mechanism for vulnerable children, including trafficking victims, comprised of NGOs and officials from neighboring countries; the network met to discuss protection and reintegration strategies for migrant children within the ECOWAS region.

The government regulated labor recruiters and brokers, but did not report any investigations involving fraudulent recruitment. The law did not prohibit worker-paid recruitment fees, which increased labor migrants' vulnerability to trafficking. The government made some efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts that equated to child sex trafficking, but it did not make efforts to reduce demand for other forms of commercial sex. Tourism police units continued to monitor the resort areas of Saly and Cap Skirring for indicators of extraterritorial child sexual exploitation and abuse, although they did not report identifying any cases. The government provided anti-trafficking training to its troops prior to their deployment as peacekeepers.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

Trafficking affects all communities. This section summarizes government and civil society reporting on the nature and scope of trafficking over the past five years. Human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Senegal, and traffickers exploit victims from Senegal abroad. Forced begging is the most prevalent form of trafficking in Senegal. Some corrupt Quranic teachers and men who claim to be Quranic teachers force students, called "talibes," as young as 4 years old from Senegal and neighboring West African countries, especially Guinea-Bissau, to beg in Dakar and other major cities in Senegal. Senegal is a major destination for many forced begging child-trafficking networks due to the belief that talibes can earn more money in Senegal than in other countries. Observers report the forced begging child-trafficking networks, particularly from Guinea-Bissau, have become more sophisticated in recent years, taking on the character of an established criminal network. Some corrupt teachers set daily begging quotas enforced by beatings, and, in some cases, observers report teachers have shackled talibes to prevent them from running

away. Government and civil society estimate tens of thousands of children living in residential daaras across Senegal are compelled to beg. The boys can be exposed to disease due to neglect and unsanitary living conditions, and older talibes, typically older teens or young men, in some cases physically and sexually abuse younger students. Former talibes are vulnerable to forced labor when they age out of daaras due to lack of education or economic alternatives. Corrupt Quranic teachers under investigation launch social and political intimidation campaigns.

Traffickers fraudulently recruit victims through the pretext of traditional cultural practices called “confiage,” in which parents send children to live with family or acquaintances in order for the children to have better access to education and economic opportunities; traffickers subsequently exploit the children in forced labor and sex trafficking. Some secondary school teachers sexually exploit girls, at times through sex trafficking, soliciting sex in exchange for money, goods, or good grades. Observers report some tourists exploit children in sex trafficking in the cities of Dakar and Saint Louis, and to a lesser extent in Cap Skirring and La Petite Côte. Traffickers exploit Senegalese children in domestic servitude and gold mining. Children working in fishing, street vending, and agriculture are also vulnerable to exploitation.

Traffickers exploit women and girls as young as 12 years old in sex trafficking throughout the southeastern gold mining region of Kedougou; most victims are from Nigeria, but traffickers also exploit victims from Senegal and Mali, as well as Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and China. Organized Nigerian trafficking networks fraudulently recruit victims for employment and subsequently exploit them in sex trafficking in Kedougou, often through debt bondage. The traffickers confiscate victims’ identity documents and charge the victims travel fees ranging from 1.7 million FCFA to 2.3 million FCFA (\$2,700 to \$3,650). Observers report victims’ families are sometimes complicit and receive payments from traffickers. A research study estimated one in five individuals in commercial sex in Kedougou are sex trafficking victims. An NGO report attributes some of the increased demand for sex trafficking in mining communities to cultural and religious beliefs correlating sex and illicit activities with increased chances of finding gold. Observers report a “secondary economy” has emerged around sex trafficking in Kedougou, which has led some in the local population to resist identifying trafficking victims. Traffickers also exploit boys from neighboring countries in forced labor in artisanal gold mines. Growing insecurity in Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger, coupled with porous borders, has made it easier for traffickers to cross borders and exploit the socio-economic vulnerability of affected populations. Chinese national-owned and operated fishing vessels flagged to Senegal may exploit West African men, including Senegalese, and Chinese nationals in forced labor. Observers have reported the presence of Chinese national-owned massage parlors in urban and touristic areas with sex trafficking indicators. North Korean nationals working in Senegal may be operating under exploitative working conditions and display multiple indicators of forced labor.

Economic insecurity and regional instability have generated a surge in illegal migration to Europe, including Spain; these migrants are vulnerable to trafficking. Traffickers fraudulently recruit Senegalese men and women for employment abroad and subsequently exploit them in forced labor and domestic servitude, especially in the Middle East. Traffickers exploit Senegalese victims in forced criminality in online scam operations abroad. Organized criminal networks and migrant smugglers fraudulently recruit Senegalese boys to play professional soccer in North Africa or Europe; once they arrive, they are vulnerable to forced labor. Senegalese migrants in Libya are vulnerable to trafficking, where there are widespread reports of officials subjecting detained migrants to violence and abuse, including trafficking.