

2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Italy

ITALY (Tier 2)

The Government of Italy 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, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Italy remained on Tier 2. These efforts included identifying more trafficking victims, including the first ever Italian national victims of enslavement; increasing funding for NGOs providing services to trafficking victims; and adopting a NAP. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government conducted fewer trafficking investigations under the three articles of the penal code associated with severe sex and labor trafficking crimes, prosecuted fewer suspects, and convicted fewer traffickers under those penal code articles. Gaps in victim identification systems persisted; the government identified very few children, despite high estimates by civil society of trafficking among children. The government did not report compensation or restitution to any victims.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking cases and convict and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Increase proactive victim identification by improving and consistently implementing the NRM across the country, including for Italian nationals and vulnerable populations such as foreign migrants and children.
- Continue efforts to screen for labor trafficking through inspections and training of labor inspectors to spot trafficking indicators and refer victim to services.
- Given significant concerns about forced labor indicators in Cuban international work programs, screen Cuban overseas workers, including medical professionals, and refer them to appropriate services.
- Strengthen interagency coordination and partnership with civil society.
- Continue to increase migrant worker protections by consistently enforcing strong regulations and oversight of labor recruitment agencies and labor brokers, including investigating and prosecuting for labor trafficking.
- Ensure labor trafficking is investigated and prosecuted as a trafficking offense and not pursued as an administrative labor code violation or other lesser crime.
- Consolidate data among different ministries, and make public a database on investigations, prosecutions, and convictions, including sentencing data.
- Implement a licensing and accreditation process for massage parlors and increase oversight.
- Increase awareness of, and trafficking survivor access to, compensation and increase prosecutors' efforts to systematically request restitution for survivors during criminal trials.
- Continue to increase international cooperation with source and transit countries on information sharing and countering human trafficking.
- Improve security standards in and around reception centers to limit contact between traffickers and victims or potential victims.
- Continue screening migrants and asylum-seekers aboard rescue vessels docked in Italian ports for indicators of trafficking, referring identified victims to services, and

working with international organizations to protect potential trafficking victims from refoulement.

- Continue to ensure funding and in-kind contributions to foreign governments' operations to address irregular migration are not used to support criminal activities, including human trafficking.
- Continue to strengthen international law enforcement cooperation to prevent and investigate child sex tourism.
- Ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.
- Appoint a national rapporteur to provide an independent review of government efforts.
- Increase survivor engagement, including by establishing accessible mechanisms for receiving and providing compensation for survivor input when forming policies, programs, and trainings.
- Increase efforts to pursue financial crime investigations in tandem with human trafficking cases.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained uneven law enforcement efforts. Article 601 of the penal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of eight to 20 years' imprisonment, which increased by one third to one half if the crime involved a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with penalties prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Authorities utilized additional penal code provisions to prosecute trafficking crimes. Article 600 criminalized placing or holding a person in conditions of slavery or servitude, and Article 602 criminalized the sale and purchase of slaves – both prescribed the same penalties as Article 601. Additionally, Article 600-bis criminalized offenses relating to child sex trafficking and prescribed punishments of six to 12 years' imprisonment and a fine.

The government did not disaggregate between sex and labor trafficking for investigations, prosecutions, or convictions for Articles 600, 601, or 602, making law enforcement efforts on labor trafficking indeterminate. In 2022, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) reported investigating 184 persons under Articles 600, 601, and 602, a decrease compared with 214 in 2021, 200 in 2020, and 323 in 2019. The government prosecuted 95 suspects under articles 600, 601, and 602, a decrease compared with 121 in 2021, 106 in 2020, and 202 in 2019. In 2022, trial courts convicted 66 traffickers and appellate courts upheld the convictions or overturned previous acquittals of 89 traffickers for a total of 155 convictions under articles 600, 601, and 602, a decrease compared with 204 total convictions in 2021 (81 trial and 123 appellate) and 175 in 2020 (80 trial and 95 appellate). While the government did not report comprehensive sentencing data in a format that allowed for an assessment of the significance of sentencing, it reported the average sentence for traffickers convicted under article 601 was 9.6 years in 2022, compared with 9.1 years reported in 2021. The government reported 79 final, unappealable sentences issued in 2022 for articles 600, 601, and 602 (68 in 2021 and 33 in 2020). Of these final sentences, the minimum term of imprisonment issued was 18 months; two sentences were suspended. The government confirmed at least 51 percent of convicted traffickers in 2022 received significant sentences of one year or longer imprisonment. Law enforcement and courts continued to report that diverting resources to address pandemic-related crimes affected capacity to combat other crimes, including trafficking, while a significant increase in asylum claims due to a 56 percent increase in irregular migration further strained judicial capacity.

The government did not maintain a consolidated database on investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and sentencing of traffickers, or of their victims, a deficiency GRETA noted, though the MOJ and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs met regularly to improve data-sharing procedures. Specialized anti-mafia units of prosecutors and judiciary police handled trafficking prosecutions; ordinary investigators referred cases with clear evidence of trafficking to an anti-mafia unit. Anti-mafia units continued to prioritize investigations of criminal networks over individual cases, citing

limits on available resources. Non-specialized prosecutors sometimes charged suspects with crimes other than trafficking rather than refer the case to an anti-mafia unit to prevent delays in prosecution and victim assistance, as the specialized units would have to relaunch the investigation and consequently extend the timeframe for prosecution and trial. Lack of a sufficient number of interpreters, especially for West African dialects, continued to limit law enforcement arrests and investigations, as well as diminish the benefits of investigators' wiretapping capability. Italian prosecutors and police continued to cite insufficient cooperation in investigations from officials in source and transit countries; with many transnational cases, this hindered prosecutions and convictions.

Law enforcement agencies received training on victim identification and investigation of trafficking crimes within their standard curriculum. The government did not report details on the number of trainings for law enforcement and front-line officials in 2022. In October 2022, a total 34 countries across Europe, including Italy, and supported by EU agencies and international organizations, took part in several large-scale coordinated actions focused on sex trafficking, forced begging, and forced criminality; the coordination actions resulted in the identification of 115 suspected traffickers and 910 potential trafficking victims. The government provided training to foreign police on combating trafficking. The government continued to provide funding to an international organization for an anti-trafficking project across Africa, part of which focused on improving international judicial cooperation between Italy and Nigeria. In 2022, the national anti-mafia prosecutor's office established a working group to discuss a memorandum of understanding with its Nigerian counterparts to combat trafficking. Between 2017 and 2022, the government allotted €8.7 million (\$9.29 million) to seven projects to combat trafficking in Nigeria, Niger, and other west African countries.

The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes. In March 2023, a UN fact-finding mission in Libya report documented numerous crimes against humanity, including trafficking and slavery, committed by Libyan government or state-affiliated actors. The report criticized the EU's ongoing support to these actors and urged member states, including Italy, to ensure funds supporting the EU mission did not contribute to these crimes. NGOs expressed concern about an MOU between the Italian and Libyan governments to address migrant smuggling in the Mediterranean, which was renewed during the reporting period. The Italian government reported it conducted thorough checks in an effort to ensure that funds went to legitimate Libyan Coast Guard officers rather than to smuggling rings.

PROTECTION

The government increased protection efforts. The government identified 576 new victims in 2022, an increase compared with 493 in 2021 and 536 in 2020. Of the victims identified, 313 were sex trafficking victims and 232 were labor trafficking victims, a number which included 214 victims of forced labor, seven victims of forced criminality, two victims of domestic servitude, and nine victims of forced begging. Thirty-one of the 576 victims were exploited in trafficking abroad or in transit to Italy. For the first time, the government identified two Italian national victims of enslavement. The government also identified 207 persons at migration centers whom the government believed were likely to become trafficking victims but had not yet been exploited in Italy. The government focused its victim identification efforts on migrants and asylum-seekers arriving at designated points of entry and reception centers; undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers continued to make up the majority of identified trafficking victims, as migrant arrivals surged. NGOs and international organizations reported gaps in authorities' proactive victim identification efforts persisted during the reporting period. By focusing efforts on individuals newly arrived in the country, potential victims who did not encounter their traffickers until after their arrival may have gone unidentified. The government identified very few children (less than 2

percent). In 2022, authorities and NGOs reported the increased use of private residences and online platforms continued to hinder their identification of sex trafficking victims.

The government cooperated with NGOs and international organizations to provide shelter and services to victims. In 2022, the government provided victim assistance through 21 projects submitted by regional and local authorities and nine submitted by NGOs from across Italy and allocated €27.2 million (\$29.06 million) to these projects over a period of 17 months; in 2021 the government allotted €24 million (\$25.64 million) for 12 regional/local and nine NGO projects over a period of 15 months. NGOs reported high standards of assistance programs across regions, with occasional localized differences in quality. In 2022, the city of Rome allocated €1.3 million (\$1.39 million) to an NGO partnership for the creation of four shelters and one-stop victim services centers. NGOs reported the Department of Equal Opportunity (DEO), which coordinated protection efforts, was not sufficiently funded or staffed to consistently monitor assistance programs nationally. In 2022, the DEO reported government-funded NGOs assisted 1,325 trafficking victims, including 815 sex trafficking victims, 472 labor trafficking victims (including 427 forced labor victims, 19 forced criminality victims, 17 forced begging victims, and nine domestic servitude victims), and 38 victims exploited in trafficking abroad or in transit to Italy. This was similar to the 1,369 trafficking victims assisted in 2021, 1,456 assisted in 2020, and assisted 1,516 in 2019. The number of labor trafficking victims identified and assisted has increased in recent years. The government also assisted 10 witnesses and 433 persons at migration centers whom the government believed were likely to become trafficking victims but had not yet been exploited in Italy. Statistics pertaining to the number of victims assisted by the government included victims assisted for the first time in 2022 as well as ongoing assistance to victims identified in prior years. The government had a formal and comprehensive NRM that addressed all forms of trafficking, which was codified in the 2022-2024 NAP, although NGOs noted it was implemented unevenly throughout Italy during the reporting period. Both NGOs and the government could identify trafficking victims. NGOs recognized inconsistencies in the efficiency and effectiveness of the referral process between regions and found quality standards were lower in the south. The government also had an NRM specifically for labor trafficking and exploitation in agriculture, which included minimum standards, standard procedures, and available assistance for victims. Insufficient availability of interpretation services for lesser-known African dialects, with victims coming from as many as 15 different language groups, remained a significant challenge. Trustworthy interpreters were also difficult to secure, as reportedly many interpreters came from the same communities as accused traffickers.

While the government had a victim identification and referral mechanism for some forms of child trafficking and children within the asylum system, it remained without a separate national mechanism that included all forms of child trafficking. In its 2019 report, GRETA recommended establishing a separate NRM specifically for the specialized needs of children. One NGO estimated in 2020 that 13 percent of trafficking victims in Italy were children. NGOs welcomed increased scrutiny by authorities of age-claims, and authorities more often sent victims into child protection if unable to confirm adulthood. In September 2022, the government signed an MOU with an NGO to develop assistance programs for children, including unaccompanied children and potential trafficking victims, and to support the identification of potential victims. Foreign child victims automatically received a residence permit until age 18 and accommodations in a general children's center or a designated center for trafficking victims who were also asylum-seekers. Children received counseling and were enrolled in public schools with the support of mentors.

The government reported observing standard UNHCR procedures to screen for trafficking victims among the approximately 105,131 asylum-seekers, unaccompanied children, and undocumented migrants that arrived by sea in 2022. Civil society coordinated with law enforcement and immigration officials at both the arrival points and the longer-term reception centers, and an international organization reported providing information on potential trafficking victims to local officials responsible for assigning migrants to migration centers and trafficking victims to shelters. However, NGOs in 2020 and 2021 asserted authorities did not properly identify many trafficking victims upon arrival, potentially leaving some victims unidentified within the system and classified them instead as asylum-seekers or undocumented migrants and therefore subject to deportation. A 2020 report further stressed the need for more time to screen refugees and migrants at arrival ports

to ascertain victim status more accurately, but they acknowledged conditions were not conducive to a stay at the ports beyond one or two days. During the reporting period, local committees continued to utilize national guidelines for asylum-seekers to adjudicate asylum applications to identify trafficking victims among applicants; however, inconsistencies in implementation persisted.

The law allowed for an initial three to six months of government assistance to all trafficking victims. After initial assistance, foreign victims were eligible to obtain temporary residency and work permits and had a path to permanent residency; additionally, foreign victims were eligible for six months of shelter benefits, renewable for an additional six months only if the victim obtained a job or enrolled in a training program. However, in some cases, the government housed victims and potential victims with undocumented migrants, and such housing lacked adequate security against traffickers seeking to recruit victims or remove those already under their control. The government did not report how many temporary residence permits it issued in 2022, compared with issuing some kind of immigration permission to 493 potential trafficking victims in 2021, 108 temporary residence permits in 2020, and 155 permits in 2019.

The government reported that foreign and Italian nationals were entitled to the same benefits and that the law entitled all crime victims to free legal assistance. Italian criminal law lacked a provision specifically prohibiting punishment of trafficking victims for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, but rather prosecutors and judges had discretion on whether to prosecute a trafficking victim based on the principle of the “state of necessity.” Current law required proof that the unlawful act was committed as a result of being trafficked, usually via the conviction of the trafficker, which left victims and potential victims at risk of prosecution and conviction when a court did not first convict the perpetrators. Although Italy’s highest penal court upheld the principle of non-punishment of trafficking victims in two separate rulings in prior reporting periods, in some cases courts convicted unidentified trafficking victims of crimes because they had not yet been identified as trafficking victims. Furthermore, defense attorneys sometimes requested fast-track criminal proceedings that would result in convictions with reduced penalties; victims who may have eventually been identified as such were convicted before this could happen. GRETA and other experts urged the government to adopt a legal provision explicitly preventing inappropriate penalization of victims for unlawful acts committed solely as a result of being trafficked. The government did not require victims to cooperate with law enforcement to obtain assistance like shelter, medical care, or a residence permit. The government reported it often had difficulty prosecuting trafficking cases because victims were unwilling to cooperate with law enforcement; NGOs urged the government to adopt a victim-centered approach.

The government continued to lack comprehensive statistics on restitution and damages awarded to victims and did not require prosecutors to systematically request restitution during criminal trials. The government could offer a single payment of €1,500 (\$1,600) to victims for compensation, although GRETA and NGOs noted the process to claim it was overly complex, the amount insufficient, and very few victims ever received compensation. The government did not report granting compensation to any victims during the reporting period. GRETA further recommended the government increase the use of existing legal remedies to provide restitution to victims and more proactively seize assets and pursue forfeiture against perpetrators. The government did not award restitution from criminal cases or damages from civil suits to any trafficking victims.

PREVENTION

The government increased prevention efforts. The DEO, as coordinator of the interagency steering committee on trafficking, was responsible for drafting Italy’s first-ever NAP (for the period 2022-2025), coordinating programs for prevention and victim assistance, and submitting a biannual anti-trafficking report. The committee met twice in 2022. The government remained without a national rapporteur to provide independent analysis of government efforts to combat human trafficking;

NGOs urged the government to establish such a body. Civil society reported that the DEO was not effective at steering and coordinating national anti-trafficking efforts. NGOs urged the government to strengthen interagency coordination and partnership with civil society and to adopt a victim-centered approach. While the government adopted an anti-trafficking NAP for 2022-2025, the NAP did not include: a separate budget for federal ministries to implement the actions within it; a timeline for completion of action items; or a ministry designated with the authority to enforce its implementation. The government did appoint a technical committee to monitor the assistance programs. The inter-ministerial working group on labor exploitation, which focused on the agricultural sector and illicit labor brokers, met twice in 2022 and continued to implement its three-year plan (2020-2022) to combat labor exploitation in agriculture. The working group carried out a survey on foreign workers living in informal encampments with limited access to basic services and promoted measures to guarantee housing and better living conditions. The government focused awareness efforts on sectors where exploitation was common, including agriculture, and funded an international organization to provide cultural mediators to raise awareness of labor trafficking and exploitation among migrant workers. In 2022, this collaboration resulted in the identification of 252 victims of labor exploitation, an unknown number of whom were labor trafficking victims. The government did not report any national-level public awareness campaigns but funded local NGO-led efforts.

The government continued to provide funding to international organizations for anti-trafficking related projects, primarily in Africa. The government continued to cooperate with Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and the Government of Libya to manage irregular migration from Libya. However, many NGOs criticized this coordinated effort because it often resulted in the occupants of vessels identified in the Libyan search and rescue area being returned to Libyan shores; a March 2023 UN report cited severe security and human rights concerns inside Libya and Libyan detention centers – including sex and labor trafficking – for the more than 12,000 undocumented migrants forced to remain in the detention centers. In March 2023, the government issued a decree aimed at addressing human trafficking and migrant smuggling in the Mediterranean. The decree increased penalties on human traffickers and migrant smugglers and amplified channels for legal migration. Experts and NGOs, however, expressed concern that it narrowed the range of individuals who qualify for special protection and exempted migrants rescued in certain conditions from some international protections, which could increase their vulnerability to trafficking and re-trafficking.

Labor inspectors did not have the authority to identify trafficking victims, but could refer them to police and NGOs; however, in 2022, the government did not report whether any labor inspectors did so. Labor inspectors collaborated with international organizations to strengthen inspection and outreach efforts through the use of cultural mediators and local multidisciplinary task forces. The government had a labor exploitation working group at the national level and local task forces in various regions to address labor exploitation. Experts estimated that as many as 200,000 agricultural workers, especially seasonal workers, and 500,000 undocumented migrants were at risk of labor trafficking and exploitation in Italy. In December 2022, the government adopted a decree intended to provide residence permits to an additional 82,570 foreign workers in 2023; experts expected many employers to use these permits to register informally employed migrant workers. Ukrainian refugees fleeing Russia's war against Ukraine remained vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. There were several documented cases of exploitation among the more than 170,000 Ukrainian refugees in Italy; in April 2022, police arrested a suspect for illegal cigarette production, involving the labor exploitation of several Ukrainian refugees.

Fraudulent labor recruitment and passport retention remained concerns. Although illegal, employers or labor recruiters sometimes charged a placement fee to employees, which increased their risk of trafficking. The government had a licensing and accreditation system for labor brokers and labor recruitment agencies. However, there was a lack of regulation, including a licensing or accreditation system, and oversight on massage parlors, which remained likely locations for sex trafficking. In 2022, the government continued efforts to hold labor recruiters accountable for illicit labor mediation by arresting 74 suspects (48 in 2021 and 67 in 2020), prosecuting 591 suspects (523 in 2021 and 271 in 2020), and convicting 171 criminals (163 in 2021 and 109 in 2020). Illicit labor mediation did not meet the threshold for labor trafficking; however, law

enforcement efforts in this sector helped prevent and reduce the demand for forced labor. Authorities often arrested suspects for crimes that could potentially reach the threshold of labor trafficking. In 2022, they investigated 1,170 recruiters “who provided workers to work for third parties under exploitative conditions, taking advantage of the workers’ state of need” and arrested 48 suspects. GRETA recommended the government intensify efforts to screen for trafficking victims more effectively through increased labor inspections, expanded training of inspectors, and in monitoring of recruitment practices including in agriculture, domestic labor, hospitality, and food service.

The law required businesses to submit reports on their actions to minimize the risk of forced labor and prohibited the purchase of products made with forced labor. The DEO continued to operate its 24-hour hotline for victims of human trafficking, available in 12 languages, through a contract with the Veneto regional government. In 2022, the hotline received 3,469 calls, of which 1,624 were relevant, a significant increase over 1,359 relevant calls in 2021 and 1,226 in 2020. More than 59 percent of the relevant calls received in 2022 regarded cases of sexual exploitation, while the rest regarded labor exploitation. Approximately 21 percent of all relevant calls came from potential trafficking victims, representing an 11 percent increase over 2021, and an 80 percent increase over 2020. The Ministry of Labor maintained a digital platform to provide legal counseling and access to local services to victims of labor exploitation. The government had a help desk dedicated to victims of labor exploitation, including trafficking; the help desk included a hotline, social media accounts, a website, and a chat function. The government did not report national efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex. The government did not report making efforts to reduce the demand for participation in international sex tourism by its citizens and did not report further efforts regarding the two investigations initiated in 2020.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit foreign and, to a lesser degree, domestic victims in Italy. Victims originate primarily from Brazil, Bulgaria, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Cote d’Ivoire, the Gambia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, and Romania, including ethnic Roma. The majority of identified sex trafficking victims are women, although transgender individuals, children, and, to a lesser extent, men are also vulnerable. The increased use of private residences instead of brothels or clubs and online recruitment for commercial sex, begun during the pandemic, exacerbates vulnerabilities for sex trafficking victims. Sex traffickers are increasingly using online platforms, like social networks, mobile applications, and the dark web, to recruit, exploit victims, and book apartment rentals to make their illicit operations difficult to track; this was exacerbated by the pandemic. In 2022, Ukrainian refugees, predominantly women and children fleeing Russia’s war against Ukraine, are vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. LGBTQI+ individuals, many from Brazil and other Latin American countries, are vulnerable to sex trafficking and forced criminality in Italy. Traffickers, often part of criminal networks run by PRC nationals, systematically exploit women from the PRC in sex trafficking in apartments, beauty centers, clubs, and massage parlors, as well as labor trafficking in a variety of PRC national-owned businesses, sometimes forcing drug addiction on victims. Massage parlors are frequently used as fronts for the purchase of commercial sex, raising concerns about sex trafficking. Of an estimated 40,000 to 45,000 individuals involved in commercial sex on the streets, NGOs reported approximately 60 percent (or 24,000 to 27,000) are trafficking victims or at risk of trafficking and between 5 and 8 percent are children (or approximately 2,000 to 3,600). Nigerian women and unaccompanied children remain extremely vulnerable to trafficking because of the continued operation of organized Nigerian trafficking networks. Trafficking networks and gangs continue to grow more sophisticated, organized, and violent, particularly Nigerian gangs linked to the Black Axe, Supreme Viking Confraternity, and the Eiye syndicate. Several Nigerian trafficking networks have expanded operations across Italy and reportedly receive protection from Italian crime syndicates. Traffickers continue to subject Nigerian women and girls to sex trafficking through debt-based coercion and voodoo rituals. Authorities report traffickers encourage Nigerian victims

to claim asylum to obtain legal residency and facilitate their continued exploitation. NGOs report most Ivorian women who migrate to Italy do so with the help of organized criminal gangs, increasing their vulnerability to trafficking; some are subjected to domestic servitude and sex trafficking en route to Italy. Traffickers sometimes exploit migrant women in sex trafficking in and around migration centers.

Some Italian citizens engage in child sex tourism abroad. Children in Italy are exploited in child sex trafficking, forced to commit crimes or beg, and forced to work in the agricultural sector, shops, bars, restaurants, and bakeries. Ethnic Roma children are at risk for trafficking, including forced begging and child sex trafficking. “Lover boy” gangs recruit girls in Eastern Europe, especially Romania, via social media and exploit them in Italy in child sex trafficking. Traffickers frequently target unaccompanied children, who are especially vulnerable to trafficking. The government reported the number of seaborne, unaccompanied children increased in 2022 to approximately 13,386, predominantly from Bangladesh, Egypt, and Tunisia; compared with 10,053 in 2021, 4,631 in 2020, 1,680 in 2019, 3,534 in 2018, and 15,731 in 2017. NGOs reported that, while many unaccompanied children identified among seaborne arrivals in the past five years were younger than 15, the majority of unaccompanied children assisted in 2022 were 16-17 years old.

Labor traffickers operate in agriculture, predominantly in southern Italy, construction, household labor, hospitality, and restaurants. The pandemic exacerbated vulnerabilities for trafficking victims, including increased isolation of migrant and seasonal workers. Cuban medical professionals working in Italy during the pandemic in 2020 may have been forced to work by the Cuban government. On December 28, 2022, the Cuban government sent 50 medical workers to Italy’s Calabria region – these workers may have been forced to work by the Cuban government; media reported that the agreement between the regional governor and a Cuban-state owned company stipulated that the workers would receive 25 percent of their pay, while the company would seize the remaining 75 percent. Following a public outcry, the Calabrian regional government restructured the contracts so the medical workers each received their entire salary in an Italian bank account without any percentage diverted to the Cuban company; however, observers noted the possibility that the Cuban government may still exploit the medical workers in the future. Italy has an estimated 1.5 million unregistered workers and 3.7 million undocumented workers in the informal market who are at risk for labor trafficking. Specifically for the agricultural sector, experts estimated that as many as 200,000 workers in 2021, particularly seasonal workers, are at risk for forced labor and exploitation in Italy. Employers in the agricultural sector will sometimes submit falsified forms pertaining to their workers, which impedes labor inspections and the potential identification of trafficking victims. Italy had approximately 500,000 undocumented migrants in 2022, many of whom are at risk for trafficking. Italy received approximately 105,129 undocumented migrant arrivals by sea in 2022 – a significant increase compared with 67,500 in 2021, 34,154 in 2020 and 11,471 in 2019; through the first four months of 2023, irregular migration was up approximately 300 percent compared with the same period in 2022. Many set sail from Libya, where some migrants are subjected to extortion, torture, human trafficking, and rape by militias or traffickers while awaiting passage to Italy. In 2019, of the roughly 31,000 persons requesting asylum, authorities estimate up to 30 percent were at risk for sex trafficking or forced labor while waiting for adjudication of their petitions. Traffickers target migrant centers to recruit and later exploit asylum-seekers, sometimes claiming to be family members to gain access to the centers. Asylum-seekers may legally work beginning two months after filing their applications, although many seek illegal employment immediately in informal sectors, increasing their risk for trafficking.