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2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan

PAKISTAN (Tier 2)

The Government of Pakistan 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 Pakistan remained on Tier 2. These efforts included increasing prosecutions and convicting more traffickers – including for forced labor crimes, establishing an NRM, referring more victims to protection services, and establishing a national anti-trafficking hotline. The government also launched an integrated system to collect national anti-trafficking data. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Efforts to criminally investigate, prosecute, and convict bonded labor and domestic servitude and proactively identify and assist such victims remained inadequate compared to the scale of these crimes and inspection efforts remained insufficient to effectively enforce labor laws. Victim protection services, especially shelter, remained inadequate and there were reports of re-victimization. The 2018 Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTPA) continued to allow a fine in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking crimes. For a fifth year, the government did not take adequate action against credible reports of official complicity in trafficking crimes, which also continued to create a culture of impunity and inhibited anti-trafficking efforts. In Sindh, local officials continued to perpetrate bonded labor with impunity in brick kilns and on farms.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Using the SOPs for victim identification and referral to care, systematically and proactively identify trafficking victims, including among vulnerable populations, such as transgender individuals, migrants and refugees, and individuals in industries known for bonded labor, including domestic

servitude and brick kilns, and refer them to care. * At both the federal and provincial levels, increase prosecutions and convictions of all forms of trafficking under the PTPA, including bonded labor, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, including complicit officials, local influential figures, and individuals exploiting victims in domestic servitude, which should involve significant prison terms. * Ensure labor inspectors have sufficient resources to conduct inspections, including brick kilns and the agriculture sector, and have the mandate to report potential trafficking cases to law enforcement. * Amend the PTPA to remove penalty provisions that allow fines in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking crimes. * Implement measures to address corruption in law enforcement and take steps to shield trafficking investigators and prosecutors from external influence. * Continue to train officials, including law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, and labor inspectors at the federal and provincial levels, on the implementation of the PTPA. * Train law enforcement, labor inspectors, and social services on SOPs and the NRM; and ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, such as immigration violations. * Expand services for bonded laborers, including vocational training and job placement support, debt and injury restitution, shelter, provision of identity documents, and legal assistance. * Ensure bonded laborers are informed through awareness campaigns that the law discharges all bonded laborers from any obligations to render such labor. * Increase registration of brick kiln and farm workers to ensure their access to services and government relief, especially in response to sudden-onset disasters due to climate change. * Expand efforts to raise awareness on all forms of human trafficking, particularly in domestic servitude, forced begging, brick kilns, and agriculture, among the general population, in both urban and rural areas. * Increase the quality and availability of trafficking-specific services, including for males, and increase dedicated funding for services and staff training. * Implement a systemic victim-witness assistance program to increase protective services for victims participating in criminal justice proceedings and train law enforcement and judicial officials to use victim-centered approaches during investigations and court proceedings. * Train officials at the federal and provincial level on the use of the integrated management information system and ensure the participation reporting of data by province and type of trafficking, including bonded labor. * Take steps to eliminate all recruitment fees charged to workers, lift restrictions on female migrants, and increase protections of migrant workers in destination countries.

PROSECUTION

The government increased law enforcement efforts. Various Pakistani laws criminalized sex and labor trafficking. The 2018 PTPA, as amended, criminalized sex and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment, a fine of up to 1 million Pakistani rupees (PKR) (\$3,620), or both, for trafficking crimes involving adult male victims, and penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment, a fine of up to 1 million PKR

(\$3,620), or both for those involving adult women or child victims. These penalties were sufficiently stringent. By allowing for a fine in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking, however, these penalties were not commensurate with those for other grave crimes, such as rape. The government continued to use other sections of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) that criminalized some forms of human trafficking. For example, Section 371A and 371B criminalized the buying and selling of a person for prostitution and prescribed penalties of up to 25 years' imprisonment and fines. Section 374 criminalized unlawful compulsory labor and prescribed penalties of up to five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both. Section 366A criminalized procurement of a girl younger than 18 and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine. Section 370 criminalized buying or disposing of any person as a slave and prescribed penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment and a fine, and Section 371 criminalized habitual dealing in slaves and prescribed penalties of up to life imprisonment and a fine if the imprisonment was less than 10 years. The federal Bonded Labor System Abolition Act (BLSA) criminalized bonded labor, with prescribed penalties ranging from two to five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both; these penalties were sufficiently stringent. Provincial governments have adopted their own labor laws, including anti-bonded labor laws, under a devolution process that began in 2010, and federal laws apply until provinces enact corresponding laws.

The government reported investigating 1,588 trafficking cases under the PTPA (282 for sex trafficking, 1,035 for forced labor and 271 for unspecified forms of trafficking), compared with 1,936 trafficking cases in the previous year (856 for sex trafficking, 988 for forced labor, and 92 for unspecified forms of trafficking). Authorities prosecuted 1,432 individuals for trafficking under the PTPA (231 for sex trafficking, 1,093 for forced labor, and 108 for unspecified forms of trafficking), compared with 1,236 individuals in the previous year (509 for sex trafficking, 677 for forced labor, and 50 for unspecified forms of trafficking). Authorities convicted 351 traffickers under the PTPA (four for sex trafficking, 337 for forced labor, and 10 for unspecified forms of trafficking), compared with 105 convictions the previous reporting period (eight for sex trafficking, 89 for forced labor, and eight for unspecified forms of trafficking). The government reported investigating 18,461 cases (15,022 sex trafficking and 3,439 forced labor), prosecuting 6,178 cases (2,961 sex trafficking and 3,217 forced labor), and convicting 10 sex traffickers under the PPC; however, the government did not report which provisions were used, resulting in the possibility some cases contained elements inconsistent with the international law definition of trafficking. The government increased overall efforts to combat forced labor; however, efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict bonded labor and domestic servitude remained insufficient. Observers previously reported victims often do not trust law enforcement and may decide not to cooperate in investigations. Law enforcement officials often blame victims for their situations and overlooked their vulnerability. Activists reported major challenges in the

implementation of the PTPA, significant gaps in the evidence collection, and the need for better collaboration between investigators and prosecutors. Observers noted rotational assignments in Pakistan's law enforcement institutions, including the Federal Investigative Agency (FIA), compounded challenges. Experts noted a lack of knowledge on trafficking and the PTPA among law enforcement, prosecutors, and judiciary, including distinguishing trafficking from migrant smuggling; however, observers highlighted an overall increased knowledge of trafficking among police. The FIA and provincial law enforcement agencies allocated a total of 1.07 billion PKR (\$3.87 million) for investigations, including for trafficking cases; 22 million PKR (\$79,650) for the FIA, 497 million PKR (\$1.8 million) for Sindh police, 274 million PKR (\$977,550) for Punjab police, 182 million PKR (\$685,940) for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police, and 91 million PKR (\$329,470) for Balochistan police. Authorities collaborated with Azerbaijani authorities in a case resulting in the arrest of two Azerbaijani sex traffickers exploiting Azerbaijani victims in Pakistan and the identification of two victims.

The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions under the BLSA. Labor Departments conducted 42,348 inspections and referred 478 cases of suspected forced labor to the police for criminal investigation in 2023, compared with 442 such referrals in the previous year. District Vigilance Committees (DVCs), which operated in each province to ensure implementation of the BLSA including reporting and filing cases, met multiple times. Observers reported inaction from DVCs to fulfill their mandate, including by refusing to investigate or refer cases of bonded labor to police due to lack of resources and evidence. The government relied on often illiterate bonded labor victims to recognize their debt bondage violated the BLSA and provincial legislation, proactively leave their landowners, and file their own cases in court. Even when bonded laborers did so, often assisted by local NGOs, the courts either did not act on the claims or handled them administratively by freeing the laborers without any punishment for their employers. Civil society organizations noted local authorities sometimes registered cases under older laws carrying lesser penalties, instead of using the PTPA, with some local officials acknowledging an increase in trafficking cases was damaging for the country's "image." Observers noted a lack of anti-trafficking legislation at the provincial level hindered law enforcement as provinces did not always enforce the national anti-trafficking law.

The FIA remained the government's lead reporting and coordinating entity on human trafficking and had field offices dedicated to trafficking in each of its provincial headquarters. The agency focused on transnational crimes, while provincial police generally investigated domestic human trafficking cases. Law enforcement were required to file First Information Reports (FIR) to launch a criminal investigation, including for trafficking crimes. The FIA had a national trafficking unit to coordinate efforts across the country and 20 Anti-Human Smuggling and Trafficking Circles (AHTCs)

in seven provincial zones. Observers reported AHTCs lacked training, particularly in evidence gathering. In 2023, the FIA established a unit within border control at Islamabad International Airport to identify crimes, including potential human trafficking cases. The FIA signed an MOU with the Greek national police on cooperation in combating crimes, including trafficking. The FIA and provincial police continued providing anti-trafficking training, including in collaboration with international organizations and NGOs, to officials, including police; the FIA trained 2,064 officials from various departments, compared with 2,318 in 2022. Provincial governments trained 35,649 officials on anti-trafficking enforcement (33,820 in Punjab, 165 in Sindh, 225 in KP, and 1,439 in Balochistan), compared with 36,850 in 2022 (22,290 in Punjab, 2,853 in Sindh, 510 in KP, and 64 in Balochistan). Despite training efforts, NGOs noted a continued lack of capacity to address trafficking crimes, and more training was needed for law enforcement, including in understanding human trafficking, anti-trafficking law, and on completing FIRs. Officials from the Islamabad Capital Territory Police reported training for new recruits focused on interrogating perpetrators but lacked a complementary component on interviewing witnesses and victims using a victim-centered approach. The FIA reported close collaboration with border officials in combating transnational crime, including trafficking.

The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes, including the endemic perpetuation of bonded labor; however, corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns and created a culture of impunity, inhibiting law enforcement action. The wife of a civil judge in Islamabad was charged under the PTPA for the forced labor of a 14-year-old girl in domestic servitude. The case was brought to law enforcement's attention by the victim's parents following severe physical abuse. Initially, law enforcement charged the accused under various sections of the penal code, excluding the PTPA; however, after strong advocacy from civil society, media attention, and further investigation, the accused was also charged under the PTPA. Observers noted charging the accused under the PTPA set an important precedent for similar future cases. Police often reportedly acted against trafficking cases only when pressured by media and activists, often in cases with severe physical abuse or loss of life. Punjab is the only province that has banned children from working in private homes; however, child domestic work, at times involving forced labor, continued with impunity according to media reports. Civil society reported many children became victims of forced labor as a result of their parent's debt bondage to landlords. In Sindh province, a feudal system persisted, where bonded laborers experienced exploitation and traffickers continued to act with impunity as many landlords had political connections. Some landlords used their influence to prohibit policies in favor of laborers. It was previously reported that when bonded laborers attempted to escape or seek legal redress, police refused to file a case and returned bonded

laborers to their traffickers. Observers alleged some police and influential landlords harassed civil society organizations and journalists attempting to protect victims and raise awareness of bonded labor crimes. Observers noted police and labor officers sometimes accepted bribes from perpetrators and demanded bribes from victims in order to register crimes. Observers noted women victims might be hesitant to report crimes to avoid harassment, including by law enforcement, which could prevent the identification of trafficking cases. It was previously reported some landowners restricted the movement of victims with armed guards or sold bonded laborers for the price of their debts and some police reportedly assisted in kidnapping bonded laborers that authorities or NGOs had previously removed from exploitation. Some bonded laborers in brick kilns were also victims of sexual exploitation and domestic servitude in the homes of landlords. Officials were reluctant to investigate cases of potential bonded labor when wealthy and influential individuals were the alleged perpetrators due to pressure from politicians and landowners. Some garment factories reportedly paid monthly bribes to Labor Department officials to avoid inspections; some factories in Sindh reportedly prevented government officials from conducting inspections. Four domestic workers filed a case against Pakistani diplomats serving at Pakistan's Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, alleging withheld wages and corollary forced labor indicators; consequently, Swiss authorities suspended visas for domestic workers employed by the Pakistani Mission until resolution of the dispute, as the investigation was ongoing.

PROTECTION

The government maintained protection efforts. The government reported identifying 29,113 trafficking victims, compared with 35,309 trafficking victims in 2022. These included 20,809 sex trafficking victims (3,033 men, 16,855 women, and 921 children), 7,966 forced labor victims (2,932 men, 3,986 women, and 1,048 children), and 338 victims of unspecified forms of trafficking (148 men, 112 women, and 78 children); two of the sex trafficking victims were Azerbaijani citizens. Civil society organizations reported identifying 992 victims, including 238 sex trafficking victims (179 women and 59 children) and 754 forced labor child victims. While the government did not have uniform SOPs for victim identification and referral, federal and provincial departments, including law enforcement, labor inspectors, child protection bureaus, and social welfare departments had SOPs to identify and assist victims of human trafficking and coordinate with relevant government departments, NGOs, and other stakeholders. The government reported training law enforcement on the SOPs, including in collaboration with international organizations; however, observers reported more training was needed. The FIA established an NRM to enhance coordination; however, it did not report what agencies were included or if civil society was part of the NRM. Experts reported the government's reliance on victims reporting to identify cases; however, many individuals were not aware they were trafficking victims. Experts

noted some forms of forced labor, particularly domestic servitude, were often not reported to law enforcement due to their normalization within society and those involving sexual exploitation were not reported due to social stigma. Observers noted authorities focused primarily on the prosecution of cases once trafficking was identified and placed less importance in the protection of victims, particularly foreign victims.

The government referred 25,617 trafficking victims, including 19,002 sex trafficking victims, 6,430 forced labor victims, and 185 victims of unspecified forms of trafficking to government or NGO services, compared with 22,597 trafficking victims in the previous reporting period. The government reported 17,178 victims received services, including 14,485 sex trafficking victims (1,068 men, 12,431 women, and 986 children), 2,348 forced labor victims (1,468 men, 97 women, and 783 children), and 345 victims of unspecified exploitations (76 men, 96 women, and 173 children). The government reported foreign victims were legally entitled to the same benefits as Pakistani citizens. The government reported victims received psychological services, legal assistance, financial aid, and educational training. Victim services were not available for many trafficking victims, with a lack of shelter and services in many regions, particularly for male victims; thus, the government often relied on NGOs for victim assistance. The government reported 105 shelters, welfare homes, and child protection units operated across the country that could aid trafficking victims, including for males and transgender individuals. The government also operated a center for irregular migrants in Balochistan that could assist trafficking victims. Trafficking victims were referred to both government-run shelters and NGO shelters for services. In some cases, victims' movement was reportedly restricted at the government shelters and some victims may have been pressured to return to their traffickers; there were reports of women exploited in sex trafficking in shelters. Due to limited availability of services, including employment and vocational training, some victims were re-victimized and may have returned to their exploitative situation. Child trafficking cases in which parents might have been complicit were of particular concern because authorities often returned potential child trafficking victims to their families immediately following identification without effective methods to ensure families would not subject their children to trafficking again. Both government and NGO contacts previously noted that, due to cultural norms, male victims were less likely to seek or accept assistance. Observers noted transgender persons, and marginalized minorities, including Christians and Hindu Dalits, often faced discrimination when seeking assistance from law enforcement or government services. Although Section 6 of the PTPA provides trafficking victims with some protection from criminal liability for trafficking crimes, in part due to cultural sensitivities, authorities may have penalized unidentified sex trafficking victims for moral crimes committed as a direct result of being trafficked. The provincial governments allocated 433.5 million PKR (\$1.57 million) for victim protection and assistance; Punjab allocated 132.3

million PKR (\$479,000), Sindh allocated 50 million PKR (\$181,030), KP allocated 114.1 million PKR (\$413,110); and Balochistan allocated 137 million PKR (\$496,020), compared with 420 million PKR (\$1.52 million) the previous reporting period (Punjab – 257 million PKR (\$930,490), Sindh – 50 million PKR (\$181,030), KP – 113 million PKR (\$409,120), and no funding in Balochistan).

Observers previously reported limited government oversight of brick kilns, coupled with their remote locations, allowed landlords to prevent workers from formally registering with the government, which restricted their access to social welfare benefits guaranteed under provincial laws. NGOs noted most cases of bonded labor ended with financial settlement in lieu of criminal prosecution. Those who lacked identity documents were even more vulnerable since they could not access government services. Recent floods and subsequent limited government assistance forced bonded laborers to accumulate more debt with landlords as many were out of work for months. Civil society organizations reported individuals experienced physical and sexual violence in shelters after the floods, leading many to return to debt bondage. Civil society organizations reported a large number of trafficking victims, including in bonded labor, did not have a National Identity Card; many were illiterate and lacked the ability to register and subsequently receive government resources. Observers previously noted landlords restricted the movement of brick kiln workers with accumulated debts, furthering their lack of access to humanitarian assistance and their dependence on continued accrual of debt.

Government policy included witness protection for those cooperating in trafficking-related investigations; however, the government did not report providing this support. Victims were not obligated to participate in investigations in order to receive protective services. The FIA operated a system for witnesses to provide video statements, but there were no reports of its use. Observers reported victims often do not file complaints due to fear of retaliation and some are disinclined to participate in the criminal procedures due to the length of the process. Victims expressed reluctance to testify against traffickers due to threats of violence against them and their families. The PTPA and sections of the PPC allowed courts to provide trafficking victims with restitution; no court orders were reported. The provincial governments allocated funding to provide free legal aid for victims; however, there were no reports of victims receiving this assistance. Pakistan's Social Welfare Departments provided lawyers to assist victims at women shelters with free legal assistance; 5,031 victims received legal services, but the government did not specify if any were trafficking victims.

PREVENTION

The government maintained efforts to prevent trafficking. National and provincial stakeholders, comprised of the National Coordination

Committee on Trafficking in Persons and led by the Minister of the Interior, met once. Provincial and district Anti-Human Trafficking and Anti-Bonded Labor Monitoring Committees had responsibility to coordinate anti-trafficking efforts, increase general public awareness, collect data on law enforcement efforts and victims identified, and provide recommendations to inform future legislation; however, there were no reports on the effectiveness of these committees across these goals. The government maintained implementation of the 2021-2025 NAP and every province designated a point of contact to work with the FIA on its implementation. Observers reported continued challenges in coordination and data collection across provincial governments and between provincial and federal agencies. The FIA established an integrated management information system to collect national anti-trafficking data, including on law enforcement and victim identification and referral efforts; however, provincial government participation was unclear. The government, including at the provincial level, continued to conduct awareness campaigns, in collaboration with international organizations. The government increased collaboration with NGOs and international organizations on anti-trafficking efforts, including by signing an MOU with an NGO on awareness raising. The FIA launched a national anti-trafficking hotline in collaboration with an international organization. The government, including provincial governments, operated several hotlines to assist on trafficking inquiries. Officials identified a child victim in a bonded labor case after a call to the Sindh Child Helpline.

Labor inspectors remained the front-line officials to inspect and identify forced labor – including bonded labor – in several sectors, including brick kilns, farms, and factories. In the absence of policy guidance regarding agricultural inspections, officials often did not inspect farms. Observers reported limited statistical data on the extent of bonded labor as an obstacle to understanding the size of the problem. Labor departments had SOPs to carry out inspections under the PTPA. However, labor inspectors received inadequate training to identify trafficking indicators and had insufficient funding and resources to conduct inspections; access to worksites was often limited. Observers reported the agriculture, brick kiln, fisheries, poultry, mining, construction, domestic labor, and carpet making industries often did not follow labor laws and had little to non-existent government oversight. Small and medium size businesses, which often had child labor, were not subject to inspections; additionally, observers emphasized the critical need for unannounced inspections. Punjab conducted 85,188 child labor inspections (53,058 in 2022), which resulted in 791 FIRs (1,101 in 2022) and 87 arrests. Separately, Punjab conducted 85,188 inspections under the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labor at Brick Kiln Act, which resulted in 771 FIRs and 34 arrests (217 FIRs and 60 arrests in 2022). Observers reported inspectors often used their own personal resources to carry out inspections and factory owners often denied inspectors access to facilities. Moreover, inspectors did not have the authority to remove children or bonded laborers from exploitative

situations. Inspectors were not authorized to assess labor law infraction penalties – they were responsible for taking note of the infractions, and labor courts assessed the penalties. Observers noted some inspectors avoided inspecting farms owned by elite landlords. Despite estimates of more than 264,000 child domestic workers in Pakistan and reports of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and forced labor by employers, provincial labor laws and protections did not extend to adult or child domestic workers.

Provinces continued to use labor laws to investigate, prosecute, and convict offenders for child and exploitative labor crimes at brick kilns. However, because such laws only prescribed fines and authorities did not refer these cases to police for criminal investigations, suspected traffickers did not receive sufficiently stringent sentences. The federal and provincial governments continued their nationwide child labor survey for a fourth year – the first since 1996 – that will reach approximately 250,000 households.

The Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment Issued licenses to private employment promoters and monitored workers who migrated through licensed agencies. The Emigration Ordinance of 1979 prohibited unregulated and unregistered sub-agents; however, sub-agents continued to operate widely with impunity. The government allowed licensed employment promoters to charge migrant workers for all costs associated with overseas employment, as well as a service fee of 15,000 PKR (\$54.30) for a welfare fund to compensate workers' families in case of the workers' death abroad. While the government stipulated employers should provide workers with a receipt for these costs, the government did not specify any cost limit and did not consistently review migrant workers' receipts. The government continued to ban women migrant workers younger than 35 from migrating for domestic work. Such bans on the lawful migration of women both increased the likelihood such women would migrate irregularly and their vulnerability to trafficking.

The government continued to host approximately 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees and as many as 3.7 million Afghans in total. Observers reported Afghans faced abuse and harassment by Pakistani authorities, including the destruction of identity documents before expelling them back to Afghanistan. International organizations reported hundreds of thousands of Afghans, including thousands of registered refugees and those awaiting resettlement in other countries, returned or were deported to Afghanistan as a result of the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan; many of these returnees were vulnerable to trafficking – the government did not report if these individuals were screened for trafficking indicators. The government did not report any efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. The government reported providing pre-departure briefings on human trafficking to all its peacekeeping

officers. The government reported providing anti-trafficking training to its diplomatic personnel.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Pakistan, and traffickers exploit victims from Pakistan abroad. The country's largest human trafficking problem is bonded labor, in which traffickers exploit an initial debt assumed by a worker as part of the terms of employment and ultimately entrap other family members, sometimes for generations; bonded labor disproportionately affects religious and ethnic minorities. Experts estimate 4.5 million workers nationwide are trapped in bonded labor, primarily in Sindh and Punjab provinces. Traffickers, including local government officials, force men, women, and children to work primarily in bonded labor in Sindh in agriculture and in both Sindh and Punjab in brick kilns, and also in forced begging and the coal and carpet industries. Traffickers also force men, women, and children to work to pay off exaggerated debts in other sectors in Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, and KP in agriculture and brick kilns and, to a lesser extent, in fisheries, mining, and the manufacturing of textiles, bangles, and carpets. In agriculture, traffickers force workers to labor in the agricultural sectors of wheat, cotton, and sugarcane, among other areas. Traffickers often do not provide workers with access to their expenditure and earnings receipts, so traffickers control how much money they earn, the accrual of interest on their debt, and when they have repaid the debt. Landlords exploit widespread illiteracy among workers and manipulate accounting records to continue the cycle of bonded labor. Many feudal landlords and brick kiln owners employing bonded laborers are local government officials or use their affiliation with political parties to protect their involvement in bonded labor. Some landlords use armed guards to restrict bonded laborers' movements, and others buy and sell workers among one another. In some kilns employing entire families, kiln owners sell bonded laborers to repay a family member's outstanding debt. Observers reported employers in Sindh are moving carpet- and bangle-making productions into private homes to further increase the difficulty in monitoring labor conditions. Reports estimate more than 70 percent of bonded laborers in Pakistan are children, predominately working in brick kilns and agriculture, with some children forced into domestic work in landowners' houses. According to NGO estimates, there are 700,000 children in bonded labor in Sindh's agricultural sector. Many families take loans from their employers and subject their children to bonded labor until the debt is paid back. Traffickers also target lower-caste Hindus, Christians, and Muslims specifically for forced and bonded labor. Observers reported climate change, including sudden-onset disasters such as floods, increases poverty, displacement, food insecurity, and loss of work in Pakistan; bonded labor has been exacerbated by recent floods, as bonded laborers accumulate increased debt from landlords; flood mitigation efforts sometimes cause internal displacement. The number of

children in domestic work increased as a result of flooding in March to July 2023.

Traffickers buy, sell, rent, and kidnap children for forced labor in begging, domestic work, work in small shops, agriculture, cotton, brickmaking, fishing, and child sex trafficking, and some children are at risk of trafficking in food stalls, restaurants, construction, street vending, the coal industry, and scavenging at garbage dumpsites. According to an international report, there are 8.5 million domestic workers in Pakistan, including many children, and a 2022 report notes one in every four households employs a child in domestic work. Civil society reported families often make their children work to support them. Media report cases of employers forcing children as young as age 7 into domestic work, where they are often subjected to severe physical abuse, including torture, and sexual abuse; several government officials were among the suspected perpetrators. Some children are forced to work in the agricultural sector due to their parent's debt bondage to landlords. According to civil society, the majority of children working in the streets of Pakistan are subjected to forced begging, including children with disabilities, and are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking. According to media estimates, there are 1.5 million children who are experiencing homelessness in Pakistan, with a third of those in Sindh province, that are often forced to beg by organized criminal groups. Begging ringmasters sometimes maim children to earn more money and sometimes force children to steal. The high rate of out-of-school children and the lack of access to schools, which was exacerbated by recent floodings and economic hardships caused by the pandemic, leave many children vulnerable to trafficking throughout the country. Due to the consistent lack of law enforcement efforts against those who exploit children experiencing homelessness, traffickers operate openly and with impunity. Traffickers subject children to sex trafficking around hotels, truck stops, bus stations, and shrines. Observers reported online child exploitation for the purpose of child pornography, including potential child sex trafficking crimes. Traffickers force Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani children into drug trafficking, drug production, contraband production, and smuggling of goods in border areas and in urban centers. In previous years, widespread sexual exploitation of boys in one coal mining community in Balochistan was reported. Boys as young as six years old from Balochistan, KP, and Afghanistan, are purportedly lured to work in the mines but subjected to sex trafficking; in some cases, parents are complicit in sending their children to the mines for sex trafficking. Within Pakistan, NGOs and police report some employers, including restaurants and factories, require boy child laborers to provide sexual favors to obtain a job with the employer, to keep the job, and/or for accommodation. An NGO previously reported multiple cases of forced labor of students in government-run schools. Some observers reported non-state armed groups recruit children, both forcefully and through radicalization.

Some factories pay monthly bribes to labor department officials to avoid inspections. Illegal labor agents charge high recruitment fees to parents in return for employing their children, some of whom are subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Some police accept bribes to ignore prostitution crimes, some of which may include sex trafficking, and some police may have refused to register cases of child sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, without a bribe, according to NGOs. Some Pakistani traffickers lure women and girls away from their families with promises of marriage, create fraudulent marriage certificates, and exploit women and girls in sex trafficking, including in Iran and Afghanistan. Traffickers target impoverished Christian communities to send women and girls to the People's Republic of China (PRC) for arranged marriages. Upon arrival in the PRC, hundreds of Pakistani women reported their "husbands" forced them into commercial sex. PRC nationals employed in Pakistan at worksites affiliated with the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative are vulnerable to forced labor. In other cases, traffickers and some extra-judicial courts, use girls as chattel to settle debts or disputes. Some traffickers force sex trafficking victims to take drugs and exploit the addiction to maintain control.

Pakistani men and women migrate overseas voluntarily, particularly to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, other Gulf states, and Europe for employment – often through irregular channels, increasing their vulnerabilities to exploitation. The majority of Pakistani migrants seek employment in agriculture, domestic service, transportation, and construction work. Traffickers exploit some of them in labor trafficking, including via false or misleading job offers, through sham recruitment agencies, falsely advertised terms or conditions of employment, fake modeling advertisements, and high recruitment fees charged by illegal labor agents or sub-agents of licensed Pakistani overseas employment promoters, who in several instances have entrapped Pakistanis in bonded labor or sex trafficking, including in Gulf countries. Pakistani nationals are recruited via false offers to work in Thailand and are then subjected to forced criminality in online scams in Burma. In 2021, foreign countries had thousands of Pakistanis detained abroad, a large number of them in Saudi Arabia, for criminal or immigration violations. In many cases, observers alleged foreign law enforcement had arrested workers for fraudulent documents procured by recruitment agents or for lack of documents because their employers had withheld them – indicators of forced labor. Traffickers have exploited Pakistani girls in sex trafficking in Kenya and have forced Pakistani adults, including those with disabilities, to beg in the UAE. Pakistani boys are vulnerable to sex traffickers in Greece. Some traffickers, including organized criminal groups, subject Pakistani adults and children to forced labor in domestic work, construction, and begging in Iran; some traffickers target Pakistanis with disabilities for forced begging.

Pakistan is a destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor, particularly from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Traffickers exploit women and girls – and, to a lesser extent, boys – from Afghanistan, Iran, and other Asian countries in sex trafficking in Pakistan. LGBTQI+ individuals, particularly transgender persons, face violence and discrimination, as the law criminalizes same-sex conduct, and are at high risk of trafficking. Civil society reported largescale discrimination and violence against women and girls, including “honor killing,” which makes them more vulnerable to trafficking and less likely to report trafficking cases. Refugees from Afghanistan and stateless persons, particularly of Bengali, Bihari, and Rohingya ethnicities, as well as religious and ethnic minorities such as Christians, Hindu Dalits, and Hazaras, are particularly vulnerable to traffickers in Pakistan, particularly in bonded labor. Afghans without formal documentation often rely on informal networks for basic needs and have limited access to legal protections; many seek work in the informal economy, increasing vulnerabilities to trafficking. Afghans, including irregular migrants and registered refugees, face increased vulnerabilities due to harassment from authorities and fear of deportation. The government does not recognize the existence of stateless persons, despite international organization estimates of hundreds of thousands of stateless persons facing increased vulnerabilities due to their lack of access to identity documents and services in the country. Traffickers exploit Rohingya ethnicity stateless persons and Afghans in forced labor in Pakistan.

Pakistan

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