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2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan

PAKISTAN: Tier 2 Watch List

The Government of Pakistan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included finalizing implementation rules for the 2018 Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTPA), adopting a new five-year national action plan to combat trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling crimes, and referring more potential trafficking victims for care than the previous reporting period. The province of Punjab reported more overall convictions for trafficking than the previous reporting period. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period, even considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity. The government decreased investigations and convictions of sex traffickers, and authorities in Punjab province, where more than half of the population resides, continued to disproportionately report nearly all anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts, including all convictions. Law enforcement efforts against labor trafficking also remained inadequate compared to the scale of the problem, and authorities identified significantly fewer bonded labor victims. In Sindh, local officials continued to perpetrate bonded labor in brick kilns and on farms with impunity. For the second year the government did not take adequate action against credible reports of official complicity in trafficking. The government continued to lack overall adequate resources for victim care. Therefore Pakistan remained on Tier 2 Watch List for the second consecutive year.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

At both the federal and provincial levels, increase prosecutions and convictions of both sex trafficking and forced labor, including cases allegedly involving complicit officials, and stringently punish perpetrators. • Instruct labor departments to refer all suspected bonded labor cases to police for criminal investigation. • Increase the number of bonded labor victims identified and referred to rehabilitation services through training of provincial police, labor inspectors, and social services on standard operating procedures (SOPs). • Cease support to non-state armed groups that recruit and/or use child soldiers. • Amend the PTPA to remove penalty provisions that allow fines in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking offenses. • Train officials on the implementing rules for the PTPA. • Ensure victims are not penalized for acts traffickers compelled them to commit. • Increase the quality and availability of trafficking-specific services, including for males. • Designate specialized prosecutors and judges to hear trafficking cases. • Expand services for bonded laborers, including shelter, identity documents, and legal assistance. • Inspect brick kilns in accordance with relevant laws regulating factories and refer suspected bonded labor to law enforcement. • Take steps to eliminate all recruitment fees charged to workers. Lift restrictions on female migration while negotiating female worker protections with destination country governments. • Improve efforts to collect and accurately report anti-trafficking data. • Accede to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained overall law enforcement efforts; it decreased sex trafficking investigations and convictions, although slightly increased labor trafficking prosecutions and convictions. Various Pakistani laws criminalized sex and labor trafficking. The 2018 PTPA criminalized sex and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment, a fine of up to 1 million Pakistani rupees (PKR) (\$6,260), or both for trafficking offenses involving an adult male victim, and penalties of between two and 10 years' imprisonment, a fine of up to 1 million PKR (\$6,260), or both for those involving adult female or child victims. These penalties were sufficiently stringent. However, with regard to sex trafficking, by allowing for a fine in lieu of imprisonment, these penalties were not commensurate with those for other serious 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 "minor girl under 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. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape. The federal Bonded Labor

System (Abolition) Act (BSA) criminalized bonded labor, with prescribed penalties ranging from two to five years’ imprisonment, a fine, or both; these penalties were sufficiently stringent. The 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.

Punjab investigated 15 cases under the PTPA and prosecuted 14 cases involving 19 defendants but did not report the conviction of any traffickers under the law during the reporting period, compared with five investigations involving 85 suspects, an unknown number of prosecutions, and 14 convictions the previous year. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KP) initiated six investigations and six prosecutions involving eight defendants under the PTPA, which were ongoing at the close of the reporting period. The government reported data on trafficking investigations, prosecutions, and convictions under the PPC by province and special administrative area. Overall, law enforcements and judiciaries investigated 800 sex trafficking cases and initiated prosecutions in 756 cases and convicted 91 sex traffickers—compared with 916 sex trafficking investigations, 567 prosecutions, and 131 convictions in the previous reporting period. The vast majority of sex trafficking investigations and convictions took place in Punjab, where more than half of Pakistan’s population resides. The majority of the cases were tried under PPC Section 371A for the buying and selling of a person for prostitution. The government did not report sentences for the convictions. Punjab continued to comprise the vast majority of law enforcement efforts against sex trafficking; of the national statistics on sex trafficking, Punjab reported 90 percent of the investigations and prosecutions, as well as all of the convictions.

The government’s law enforcement action on labor trafficking, especially bonded labor, remained inadequate. Despite the existence of the BSA, bonded labor persisted, largely due to ineffective enforcement of the law and powerful local officials as perpetrators. Punjab was the only province to investigate, prosecute, or convict traffickers under the BSA. Punjab authorities investigated 192 cases of bonded labor, prosecuted 174 cases, and convicted 20 traffickers, an increase from 77 investigations, 20 prosecutions, and 16 convictions in the previous reporting period. The Punjab Department of Labor (DOL) additionally filed 461 First Information Reports (FIRs) under the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labor from Brick Kilns Act, leading to 174 arrests. An international organization stated authorities did not adequately enforce the BSA primarily due to police inaction on complaints and lower court judges’ lack of understanding of the law. Moreover, in many provinces, including Sindh, the DOL handled bonded labor cases and could at most administer financial penalties. Punjab did not initiate any investigations for forced labor under PPC Section 374, unlawful compulsory labor. Sindh authorities initiated 26 investigations and 25 prosecutions under PPC Section 371 for habitual dealing in slaves, a significant increase from four investigations and three prosecutions in the previous reporting period. While Sindh police removed at least 3,084 bonded laborers from the location of their exploitation during the reporting period, it did not initiate criminal investigations. Despite police and prosecutors’ responsibility to pursue cases, some authorities reported they did not do so because victims could not afford to pay for investigations and prosecutions. The government also reported data on several penal code sections that criminalized labor trafficking and other non-trafficking crimes but did not disaggregate the data to specify which cases under these sections were for labor trafficking versus non-trafficking offenses.

Sindh courts intervened sporadically on trafficking cases to remove victims from perpetrators but did not criminally prosecute alleged traffickers for bonded labor offenses. While Sindh passed legislation criminalizing bonded labor in 2015, it continued to lack civil or criminal procedures to facilitate its implementation. While the BSA mandated the creation of District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) in each province to ensure implementation of the BSA, including reporting and filing cases, the government relied on often illiterate bonded labor victims to have knowledge of the BSA, proactively leave their landowners, and file their own cases in the court. Even when bonded laborers did so, the courts either did not act on such claims or handled them administratively. As a result, trafficking victims who came forward often faced retaliation from their exploitative employers.

The Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) remained the government’s lead reporting and coordinating entity on human trafficking. The agency focused on transnational offenses, while provincial police generally investigated internal human trafficking cases. While FIA and provincial police coordinated on an ad hoc basis, overall collaboration remained weak and complicated law enforcement efforts and data collection. FIA investigated human trafficking and migrant smuggling cases through its 24 anti-trafficking law enforcement joint task forces at the federal, provincial, and local levels. FIA officials, including all newly inducted officers, received regular training on countering trafficking, including differentiating between human trafficking and migrant smuggling, although official statistics did not always distinguish between the crimes. Through increased training, FIA top officials worked during the reporting period to instill this understanding at the operational level, build capacity, and increase interagency coordination. Foreign governments and international organizations funded trafficking-specific trainings for police, investigators, prosecutors, and FIA officials; and government agencies contributed in-kind support to some of the trainings. FIA operated satellite offices at three embassies abroad in Greece, Iran, and Oman and collaborated with each government on possible trafficking cases. In Oman, FIA assisted with the repatriation of possible victims and corresponding arrests in Pakistan of alleged traffickers associated with a case of two women exploited in Dubai. NGOs noted provincial police were reluctant to file FIRs—required to launch criminal investigations—into many crimes, including trafficking. Furthermore, overburdened prosecutors and judges, who frequently lacked adequate training, contributed to lengthy trafficking trials and low conviction rates, a problem endemic throughout the justice system. The government maintained bilateral law enforcement cooperation mechanisms with multiple countries, as well as working closely with INTERPOL.

Official complicity in trafficking remained a significant concern, impeding anti-trafficking efforts during the reporting period. Despite sustained reports, for a second year the government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions into officials allegedly complicit in human trafficking offenses. However, the

government reported it disciplined two Punjab and seven Islamabad FIA officials suspected of complicity in trafficking in persons for alleged human trafficking violations, including the permanent removal of one official. The government did not report initiating criminal investigations in these cases. During the reporting period, the government provided material support to non-state armed groups that recruited and used child soldiers. The government did not report investigating, prosecuting, or convicting individuals for child soldiering offenses. In July 2019, a 14-year-old child domestic worker reported substantial indicators of trafficking by her employer, a parliamentarian in Punjab, including sexual abuse and torture. While police registered the charges, they did not arrest the parliamentarian, allegedly because the provincial government did not allow them to do so. The government did not report taking any action on the case during the reporting period. In October 2018, police removed a 10-year-old domestic worker from the house of a Pakistani army major after allegations of torture and domestic servitude and arrested the army major’s husband. The government did not report whether the case against the employers continued or whether it began investigating an assistant sub-inspector of police, whom it had initially suspended for failing to file a police report in the case.

The government did not report any efforts to address local government officials’ reportedly endemic perpetuation of bonded labor, which created a culture of impunity for offenders. Feudal landlords and brick kiln owners used their political connections to facilitate their use of forced labor. In some cases, when bonded laborers attempted to escape or seek legal redress, police refused to file a case and returned bonded laborers to their traffickers. NGOs continued to report some police colluded with farm and brick kiln owners to create fake criminal cases against victims who attempted to escape from situations of bonded labor. Some police reportedly assisted employers in kidnapping bonded laborers that authorities or NGOs had previously removed from exploitation. Police were reluctant to investigate cases of potential bonded labor when wealthy and influential individuals, such as local politicians, were the alleged perpetrators. Some police reportedly acted against trafficking cases only when pressured by media and activists. Observers alleged police accepted bribes to ignore prostitution crimes, some of which may have included sex trafficking, and border officials might have facilitated human trafficking. NGOs also reported police refused to register cases of child sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, unless victims paid a bribe. Some garment factories reportedly paid monthly bribes to DOL officials to avoid inspections, some factories in Sindh prevented government officials from conducting inspections.

PROTECTION

The government maintained protection efforts overall; it reported identifying more victims during the reporting period, but its efforts to identify and assist bonded labor victims remained severely inadequate. Provincial police reported identifying 32,022 trafficking victims in 2020, a significant increase from 19,954 in 2019. The government did not report what accounted for the large increase. This included 15,255 women, 9,581 men, 6,937 children, and 249 transgender victims. Only 30 bonded labor victims were identified in 2020, a significant decrease from 760 in 2019. The government reported some law enforcement, immigration, and social service personnel had SOPs to identify trafficking victims, but it was unclear how widely officials disseminated and employed these SOPs. In January 2021, the Cabinet approved implementation rules for the 2018 PTPA, which outlined procedures for law enforcement investigations and awareness efforts, but it most prominently outlined protection procedures, including trafficking indicators for identification and services to victims. The rules also outlined minimum standards for NGOs providing victim services on a wide array of parameters including safety and confidentiality.

Provincial police referred 11,803 trafficking victims to the government or NGOs for care, including 3,744 men – a significant increase from 799 trafficking victims referred to care in the previous reporting period though still inadequate compared with the total number of victims identified. Police reported some victims declined to avail themselves of government services. Victim services were not available for many trafficking victims, with a lack of available shelter and services in many regions, particularly for male victims. Government-run shelters for women experiencing a range of difficult circumstances, including trafficking, were the most predominately available service. Punjab operated women’s shelters in each of its 36 districts; Sindh operated five women’s shelters in its 29 districts and four centers that offered women in distress medical and legal aid and shelter for up to 72 hours; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa operated women’s shelters in six of its 26 districts and 10 welfare homes for exploited children; Balochistan operated one women’s shelter and one shelter for destitute male citizens among its 32 districts; and the Islamabad Capital Territory had one family and rehabilitation center that served women and children. NGOs and local politicians continued to note the low quality of victim care at many of these shelters, including their lack of basic resources such as showers. Moreover, some of the government shelters only provided short-term services, leading some victims to return to their abusers, including traffickers. Child trafficking cases in which parents might have been complicit were of particular concern, since 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. Boys could access government shelters in many provinces, and the government had seven victim shelters in the country that could house male victims of trafficking. The government also had “Panargah” shelters that could house victims of crime of all genders, including trafficking victims. Punjab province reported providing shelter for 378 male trafficking victims during the reporting period. Both government and NGO contacts noted that, due to cultural norms, male victims were less likely to seek or accept assistance. Civil society continued to provide victim services without government support. In part due to cultural sensitivities, authorities may have charged unidentified sex trafficking victims with moral crimes.

Provincial child protection units (CPUs) were active in Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and KP, and identified and referred children in exploitative or vulnerable labor situations to NGO and government care. However, some CPUs faced staffing gaps that affected the availability and appropriateness of care. There were 14 CPUs in KP, but these

lacked child protection officers; while the local government claimed the pandemic prevented the filling of these positions, NGOs reported they have been vacant for years. In prior reporting periods, the Punjab Child Protection and Welfare Board operated reception centers which identified and registered children living on the street. They were closed during the reporting period due to lack of funds and a perception that the program was ineffective.

The BLSA required districts to establish DVCs to ensure implementation of the BLSA and provide assistance to bonded labor victims. Punjab had DVCs in all 36 districts, and they conducted 188 meetings during the reporting period—a decrease from 259 meetings the previous year. While Sindh reported it had 29 DVCs, the government did not report any specific meetings but noted some conducted raids and released bonded laborers, including children. Balochistan was in the process of forming DVCs, and authorities in Gilgit-Baltistan created a Directorate of Labor, which operates as a covering the region, during the reporting period. Some officials believed DVCs frequently lacked the motivation, information, and resources necessary to combat bonded labor. Some officials also contended district deputy commissioners, charged with leading the DVCs, failed to prioritize bonded labor among their portfolios and did not convene meetings as mandated. Instead, some provincial governments may still rely on bonded labor victims to seek social services. Punjab and KP could provide free legal aid to bonded laborers who requested assistance. NGOs previously reported that because provincial DOLs, including in Sindh, have not registered hundreds of brick kilns, the corresponding thousands of brick kiln workers could not receive the social welfare benefits guaranteed under provincial laws.

NGOs noted most cases of bonded labor ended with financial settlement in lieu of criminal prosecution, in part because police and the judiciary often ceased support for victims after authorities had removed the victim from exploitation and did not guide them through how to pursue a formal civil or criminal case. Bonded laborers whom authorities had released from exploitation frequently had no alternative employment or housing and sometimes returned to brick kilns or farms and assumed more debt. Those who lacked identity documents were even more vulnerable since they could not access government services such as health care and food stipends. Some NGO-run shelters could accommodate bonded laborers, including entire families, but often had insufficient resources to provide long-term housing. Government policy included protections for those cooperating in trafficking-related investigations; however, the government did not report how often it granted these protections. Victims expressed reluctance to testify against their traffickers due to threats of violence against them and their families. The PTPA and sections of the PPC allow courts to provide trafficking victims with restitution, but courts did not do so in any cases. During the reporting period, the government continued construction of a migrant reception center at its border with Iran to assist returned migrants, including trafficking victims. The Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) within the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development (OPHRD) employed 19 community welfare attachés in 14 destination countries to provide support and information to Pakistani migrant workers. BEOE assisted in the repatriation of more than 400,000 Pakistanis stranded abroad due to the pandemic in 2020, although they did not report screening for trafficking indicators or identifying victims among this population. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) had the authority to grant extensions for foreign victims to stay in the country until the Federal Review Board of the Supreme Court reached a decision on repatriation. Authorities did not identify any foreign trafficking victims within Pakistan; however, in October 2020, KP officials arrested four Afghan nationals on trafficking charges of 10 Afghan children. The Afghan Consulate in Peshawar facilitated the repatriation of the children to their parents in Badakhshan, Afghanistan.

PREVENTION

The government maintained efforts to prevent trafficking. MOI and FIA, in consultation with civil society stakeholders and an international organization, published the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling for 2021-2025. FIA's research and analysis center collaborated with an international organization to create quarterly newsletters on human trafficking and migrant smuggling, which were available on the FIA's website. In 2020, FIA transitioned from a paper-based system to a computerized case management system, allowing efficiencies in data collection and information sharing for law enforcement. While experts agreed bonded labor remained a significant problem in Pakistan, outside of Punjab, provincial governments lacked accurate data of the problem, which hampered targeted efforts to address key exploitative districts and industries. Labor inspectors remained the front-line officials to inspect and identify forced and bonded labor in several sectors, including brick kilns, farms, and factories. However, inspectors had inadequate training to identify indicators of trafficking, insufficient funding to conduct inspections, and a lack of standard procedures to refer potential forced and bonded labor cases to police. Moreover, inspectors did not have the authority to remove children or bonded laborers from exploitative situations. Despite high incidences of child and forced labor in agriculture and domestic work, the majority of provincial labor laws did not allow labor inspectors to inspect these worksites for infractions. In late 2019, the Chief Minister of Punjab announced labor inspections of factories would continue as normal throughout 2020, after a ban in 2019; however, officials did not report the identification of labor violations or indicators of trafficking through such efforts. Despite estimates of more than 264,000 child domestic workers in Pakistan and commonplace 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. However, during the reporting period, the Islamabad government outlawed child domestic labor by adding it to the list of occupations defined as hazardous work under the 1991 Employment of Children Act. The Balochistan government banned employment of children younger than the age of 15 in coal mines via a notification to the provincial Chief Inspector of Mines in September 2020. Brick kilns fall under the Factories Act of 1934 and are subject to the same regulations as other factories, including workers' rights provisions. In February 2020, the Lahore High Court ordered the Punjab labor department to register all brick kilns within six months; in response, the government created a publicly accessible online registry of most of the brick kilns by the end of the reporting period, although some remained unregistered.

Provinces continued to use labor laws to investigate, prosecute, and convict offenders for child and exploitative labor offenses at brick kilns. However, because such laws only prescribed fines and authorities did not refer these cases to police for criminal investigation, suspected traffickers did not receive sufficiently stringent sentences. Punjab reported prosecuting 3,953 brick kilns for lack of compliance with labor laws—the same number as in 2018—and imposed fines totaling 2.2 million PKR (\$13,770). This is a significant decrease from prosecution of 7,179 brick kilns in 2019, and a significant decrease in the amount of the penalties assessed, from 5.17 million PKR (\$32,360). Punjab continued to provide identity cards to brick kiln workers and birth registration for their children. KP, Punjab, and Sindh continued to fund and implement some multi-year programs focused on combating the worst forms of child labor and other labor abuses. The federal and provincial governments continued their nationwide child labor survey for a second year—the first since 1996—that will reach approximately 250,000 households. The governments allocated funds for the survey, and international organizations assisted with implementation. The labor survey has been delayed due to the pandemic.

BEOE issued licenses to private employment promoters and monitored workers who migrated through licensed agencies. The Emigration Ordinance of 1979 prohibited the role of unregulated and unregistered sub-agents; however, sub-agents continued to operate widely with impunity. The government allowed licensed employment promoters to charge migrant workers a service fee of 6,000 PKR (\$37.55) for a welfare fund to compensate workers' families in case of the workers' death abroad, and workers to pay all the costs associated with overseas employment. 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. BEOE cancelled licenses of 10 registered employment promoters and suspended 21, compared with the cancellation of 28 licenses during the previous reporting period; BEOE did not provide details of the agencies' violations. In addition, BEOE reported sharing the information about 178 cases of illegal recruiters with the FIA. It was unclear on what charges BEOE registered these cases. The government continued to ban female migrant workers younger than 30 from migrating for domestic work and required females 30-35 to obtain special approval from OPHRD. The UN and members of civil society argued any ban on female migration increased the likelihood such women would migrate illegally and therefore heighten their vulnerability to human trafficking. BEOE required migrant workers to attend a pre-departure briefing at one of its seven offices that included information on what to do if the migrant worker encountered problems; however, observers asserted these centers did not provide sufficient information on the risks of, and assistance to combat, trafficking. Due to pandemic-related reductions in flights, fewer people traveled abroad for work.

In April 2019, the military announced it would bring more than 30,000 religious schools, including *madrassas*, under the government's control, some of which non-state armed groups used to forcibly recruit child soldiers. The government continued to host approximately 2.3 million Afghans with varying levels of legal protection. Through June 30, 2020, the government provided 878,000 with Afghan Citizen Cards (ACCs), which provided temporary legal protection from deportation under Pakistan's Foreigners' Act, and 1.4 million with an extension of proof of registration (POR) cards. The government did not extend the validity of either ACCs or PORs past June 2020. While the government issued a directive that agencies should not harass ACC and POR holders and should continue to honor the POR cards while the government decided whether to grant another extension, card holders reported hardships. For example, banks refused to allow refugees to conduct financial transactions, universities refused to enroll refugee students, and provincial authorities prevented refugees from crossing provincial borders. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. Pakistan is not a party to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

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 entraps other family members, sometimes for generations. The practice remained widespread. 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. Traffickers also force men, women, and children to work to pay off exaggerated debts in other sectors in Sindh and Punjab and in Balochistan and KP in agriculture and brick kilns and, to a lesser extent, in fisheries, mining, and textile-, bangle-, and carpet-making. In agriculture, traffickers force workers to labor in wheat, cotton, and sugarcane, among other goods. Traffickers often did 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, who are traffickers that employ 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 laborer's movements, and others buy and sell workers among one another. In some kilns that employ entire families, kiln owners have sold 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. Traffickers also target lower-caste Hindus, Christians, and Muslims specifically for forced and bonded labor.

Traffickers buy, sell, rent, and kidnap children for forced labor in begging, domestic work, and small shops and in sex trafficking. According to an international report, there are 8.5 million domestic workers in Pakistan, including many children. Media reports cases of employers forcing children as young as 7 years old 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. According to a prominent child rights NGO, the majority of children working in the streets in Pakistan are subjected to forced begging and are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking. Begging ringmasters sometimes maim children to earn more money and sometimes force children to steal. Organized criminal groups force children into drug trafficking in Sindh and Balochistan. Due to the consistent lack of law enforcement efforts against those who exploited street children, including in forced labor and sex trafficking, traffickers operated openly and with impunity. Traffickers subject boys to sex trafficking around hotels, truck stops, bus stations, and shrines. Traffickers have forced Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani children into drug trafficking in border areas and Karachi. In previous years, widespread sexual exploitation of boys in one coalmining community in Balochistan was reported. Boys as young as 6 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 in 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 reported multiple cases of forced labor of students in government-run schools.

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 the women and girls in sex trafficking, including in Iran and Afghanistan. Traffickers targeted impoverished Christian communities to send females to China for arranged marriages. Upon arrival in China, hundreds of Pakistani women reported their “husbands” forced them into commercial sex. In other cases, traffickers, including some extra-judicial courts, use girls as chattel to settle debts or disputes. Some traffickers force victims to take drugs and exploit the drug addiction to keep them in sex trafficking.

The government provided material support to non-state armed groups that operated in Pakistan and Afghanistan and recruited and used child soldiers. Non-state militant groups kidnap children as young as 12, buy them from destitute parents, coerce parents with threats or fraudulent promises into giving their children away, or recruit children from *madrasahs*; these armed groups force children to spy, fight, and conduct suicide attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Traffickers have promised Pakistani boys admittance to Afghan religious schools but sold them to members of the Afghan security forces for *bacha bazi*.

Pakistani men and women migrate overseas voluntarily, particularly to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), other Gulf states, and Europe, for low-skilled employment such as agriculture, domestic service, driving, and construction work; traffickers exploit some of them in labor trafficking. False job offers, including fake modeling advertisements, sham recruitment agencies, and high recruitment fees charged by illegal labor agents or sub-agents of licensed Pakistani overseas employment promoters entrap Pakistanis in sex trafficking and bonded labor, including in Gulf countries. In 2020, foreign countries had more than 11,000 Pakistanis detained abroad, including more than 3,400 in Saudi Arabia. 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 their documents—indicators of forced labor. Traffickers have exploited Pakistani girls in sex trafficking in Kenya and have forced Pakistani adults, including 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 have targeted 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. Chinese men working in construction may be vulnerable to forced labor in Pakistan. Traffickers exploit women and girls—and, to a lesser extent, boys—from Afghanistan, Iran, and other Asian countries in sex trafficking in Pakistan. Refugees and stateless persons from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Burma, as well as religious and ethnic minorities such as Christians and Hazaras, are particularly vulnerable to traffickers in Pakistan. Traffickers exploit Rohingya refugees in forced labor in Pakistan.

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Austrian Red Cross Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)	Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583 F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589 info@ecoi.net	Contact Imprint & Disclaimer F.A.Q. Data Protection Notice
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