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2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: China

CHINA: Tier 3

The Government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so, even considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore the PRC remained on Tier 3. Despite the lack of significant efforts, the government took some steps to address trafficking, including by continuing to prosecute and convict some traffickers and by maintaining consultative mechanisms with law enforcement counterparts in other countries. However, during the reporting period there was a government policy or pattern of widespread forced labor, including through the continued mass arbitrary detention of more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kyrgyz, and other Muslims in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang). Authorities continued to implement these policies in other provinces, targeted other religious minorities under their auspices, and sought the coerced repatriation and internment of religious and ethnic minorities living abroad through the use of surveillance, harassment and threats against them and their family members, and extradition requests. The government also reportedly placed ethnic Tibetans in vocational training and manufacturing jobs as part of an ostensible “poverty alleviation” and “labor transfer program” that featured overt coercive elements. Chinese nationals reportedly suffered forced labor in several countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe hosting Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects, within which PRC authorities exercised insufficient oversight of relevant recruitment channels, contracts, and labor conditions, and PRC diplomatic services routinely failed to identify or assist those exploited. For the fourth consecutive year, the government did not report identifying any trafficking victims or referring them to protective services.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Abolish the arbitrary detention and forced labor of persons in internment camps and affiliated manufacturing sites in Xinjiang and other provinces and immediately release and pay restitution to the individuals detained therein. • End forced labor in government facilities, in nongovernmental facilities converted to government detention centers, and by government officials outside of the penal process. • Cease all coercive labor transfer and vocational training programs targeting Tibetans and other ethnic minority groups. • Cease the use of harassment, threats, and illegal discriminatory immigration policies as measures to coerce the return to Xinjiang and subsequent forced labor of Chinese national ethnic and religious minorities living abroad. • Cease discriminatory hiring and targeted displacement policies that place Muslim and other minority communities at risk of trafficking. • Cease all forced urban resettlement and displacement programs, particularly those targeting Uyghurs, Tibetans, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups. • Respecting due process, vigorously investigate, prosecute, and impose prison sentences on perpetrators of forced labor and sex trafficking, including complicit government officials. • Criminalize all forms of sex trafficking and labor trafficking as defined under international law. • Institute and systematize proactive, formal procedures to identify trafficking victims throughout the country—including male victims, labor trafficking victims, Chinese national victims returning from abroad, and victims among vulnerable groups, such as migrant workers, Chinese national and foreign fishermen, foreign women, North Korean workers, and Chinese national women and children arrested on “prostitution” charges—and train front-line officers on their implementation. • In conjunction with receiving countries, increase oversight of recruitment, contracts, and working conditions associated with BRI project worksites; enforce bans on the imposition of worker-paid recruitment fees and security deposits; and train PRC consular services to identify and assist victims forced labor abroad, including in BRI projects. • Increase oversight of seafarer labor conditions in the PRC fishing industry, including by banning illegal and unregistered recruitment agencies; mandating international vessel registration; collecting and publishing information on vessel licensure, registered operating areas, and crew manifests; conducting random onboard inspections; and working with port country authorities to investigate and criminally prosecute distant water fleet (DWF) forced labor crimes. • Cease penalization of victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit and ensure authorities do not subject trafficking victims to extended detention, punishment, or deportation. • Immediately screen individuals suspected of prostitution offenses for sex trafficking indicators and refer identified victims to protection services. • Expand victim protection services, including comprehensive counseling and medical, reintegration, and other rehabilitative assistance for male and female victims of sex and labor trafficking. • Provide legal alternatives to foreign victims’ removal to countries where they would face hardship or retribution,

particularly North Korea. • Increase the transparency of government efforts to combat trafficking and provide disaggregated data on investigations and prosecutions, victim identification, and service provision, including by continuing to share relevant data with international partners. • Apply the 2000 UN TIP Protocol to Hong Kong.

PROSECUTION

The government decreased law enforcement efforts, including by continuing to apply extensive law enforcement and paramilitary resources toward the mass detention and forced labor of members of Muslim and other ethnic and religious minority groups. The criminal code criminalized some forms of sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Various provisions of the criminal code could be used to prosecute sex trafficking offenses. Article 240 criminalized “the abduction and sale of women or children,” which included abduction by deceit, kidnapping, purchasing, selling, sending, receiving, and transferring for the purpose of sale; however, unlike the definition of trafficking in persons under international law, Article 240 did not explicitly link these acts to a purpose of exploitation. Article 240 prescribed penalties of five to 10 years’ imprisonment and fines for the abduction and sale of women and children. If an abducted woman was then forced into prostitution, the penalties increased to 10 years’ to life imprisonment, fines, and confiscation of property. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and commensurate with the penalties prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Article 241 criminalized the purchase of abducted women or children and prescribed a maximum penalty of three years’ imprisonment, short-term detention, or controlled release; like Article 240, it did not require that the purchase be for the purpose of exploitation. Penalties under this provision were not alone sufficiently stringent; however, Article 241 stipulated that if an individual purchased an abducted woman or child and then subjected them to “forcible sexual relations,” they would face additional penalties under the criminal code’s rape provisions. Article 358 criminalized forced prostitution and prescribed penalties of five to 10 years’ imprisonment; if the offense involved a child under the age of 14, the penalties increased to 10 years’ to life in addition to fines or confiscation of property. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and commensurate with the penalties prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Article 359 criminalized harboring prostitution or luring or introducing others into prostitution, and it prescribed a maximum of five years’ imprisonment and a fine; if the offense involved a girl under the age of 14, it prescribed a minimum of five years’ imprisonment and a fine. These penalties were sufficiently stringent; however, the penalties prescribed for offenses involving girls 14 to 17 years of age were not commensurate with the penalties prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Labor trafficking offenses could be prosecuted under Article 244, which criminalized forcing a person “to work by violence, threat, or restriction of personal freedom” and recruiting, transporting, or otherwise assisting in forcing others to labor, and prescribed three to 10 years’ imprisonment and a fine. These penalties were sufficiently stringent.

Although the central government continued to prosecute and convict Chinese nationals for trafficking crimes, authorities did not collect or report comprehensive law enforcement data. Partial public records of anti-trafficking enforcement continued to feature crimes outside the definition of trafficking according to international law (including migrant smuggling, child abduction, forced marriage, and fraudulent adoption), making it difficult to assess progress. The government continued to handle most cases with indicators of forced labor as administrative issues through the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and seldom initiated prosecutions of such cases under anti-trafficking statutes. Some courts likely continued to prosecute trafficking crimes under laws pertaining to domestic violence, labor contract violations, and child abuse, all of which prescribed lesser penalties. For the fourth consecutive year, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) did not report the number of investigations initiated into possible trafficking cases (1,004 in 2016). Authorities concluded 546 cases of “women trafficking and child abduction,” 475 cases of “forced prostitution,” and 38 cases of forced labor, each under unknown legal statutes and involving an unknown number of total defendants (compared with 638 prosecutions of “women trafficking and child abduction,” 538 cases of “forced prostitution,” and 38 cases of forced labor, each involving an unknown number of total defendants, in 2019). The government did not provide data on convictions (compared with 2,355 convictions, in 2019). In prior years, authorities did not disaggregate conviction data by the relevant criminal code statutes, and courts reportedly prosecuted the vast majority of these cases under Article 358—especially for those involving commercial sexual exploitation—rather than under Article 240. The government again did not provide sentencing data, but media reports indicated penalties imposed in at least one case ranged from five to three years’ imprisonment (compared with five months’ to ten years’ imprisonment and fines of 74,000 renminbi (\$11,310) to the death sentence in prior years).

Authorities engaged in law enforcement cooperation with foreign governments to investigate cases of Chinese citizens subjected to trafficking abroad, although the government did not provide illustrative examples; in prior years, law enforcement bodies cooperated with counterpart authorities in South and Southeast Asia. The government maintained agreements with the five Lower Mekong countries to jointly address trafficking via the forced and fraudulent marriage of their citizens to PRC-based individuals. Authorities also reported maintaining coordinated anti-trafficking mechanisms with law enforcement and interior ministry counterparts in 27 countries. Some law enforcement personnel in neighboring countries continued to report their PRC counterparts were unresponsive to requests for bilateral cooperation on cross-border trafficking cases, while others reported the PRC’s cumbersome law enforcement bureaucracy hindered joint operations.

For the third consecutive year, the government did not provide data on specific law enforcement trainings. In previous reporting periods, the government allocated funding to co-host capacity-building training for law enforcement and judicial officials on investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases; the government did not report if this work continued. Chinese media outlets occasionally published accounts of corrupt officials arrested for allegedly shielding or profiting from criminal organizations engaged in commercial sex rings known to perpetrate sex

trafficking. In previous years, officials found guilty through this process reportedly faced expulsion from the Chinese Communist Party, termination of their official positions, fines, and referral to the judicial system. However, authorities did not provide statistics on the number of investigations, prosecutions, or convictions resulting from these efforts. Despite continued reports of law enforcement officials benefiting from, permitting, or directly facilitating sex trafficking and forced labor, the government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of law enforcement officials allegedly involved in the crime. Officials at multiple levels were also complicit in state-sponsored forced labor as part of the PRC’s mass detention, political indoctrination, and labor transfer campaign against members of Muslim minority groups, and some officials reportedly profited directly from this system; authorities reportedly subjected Tibetans and members of other ethno-religious groups to similar abuses.

PROTECTION

The government decreased efforts to protect victims. For the fourth consecutive year, the government did not report how many victims it identified, although media reports indicated authorities continued to remove some victims from their exploitative situations. The government delayed or altogether ceased the identification and repatriation of foreign trafficking victims while diverting law enforcement resources to pandemic mitigation measures during the reporting period. Based on media and NGO reports, authorities continued to prioritize the identification of women and girls in sex trafficking to the near total exclusion of efforts to identify forced labor victims. The overly narrow definitions inherent to China’s anti-trafficking statutes significantly limited the scope of victim identification among key demographics; in practice, authorities did not screen men or boys over the age of 14 for any signs of exploitation in sex trafficking or forced labor. NGOs reported identifying and repatriating 312 Burmese national women subjected to forced or fraudulent marriages to local men; it was unclear how many of these cases featured corollary trafficking indicators, or whether the government assisted in their protection. Authorities claimed to have used an app-based system to track and remove more than 4,600 missing children from exploitation, some of whom were likely victims of trafficking; however, unlike the previous year, authorities did not provide relevant statistics or information on identification or referral measures (compared with 120 victims identified among more than 4,000 children in 2019). The PRC lacked a standardized national referral mechanism, but MPS maintained written instructions promulgated in 2016 for law enforcement officers throughout the country aiming to clarify procedures for identifying trafficking victims among individuals in commercial sex and forced or fraudulent marriage. MPS officials reportedly maintained a procedure to screen for trafficking indicators among individuals arrested for alleged prostitution. Authorities reportedly worked with an international organization to begin formulating new victim identification guidelines; these remained in process at the end of the reporting period. A 2016 policy limiting the detention of individuals arrested for alleged criminal sex to 72 hours remained in place. Despite the existence of these procedures, and contrary to the aforementioned policy, law enforcement officials continued to arrest and detain foreign women on suspicion of prostitution crimes without screening them for indicators of sex trafficking—sometimes for as long as eight months—before deporting them for immigration violations. In previous years, rural border officials received reports involving the sex trafficking and forced labor of some foreign women and girls via forced and fraudulent marriage to Chinese national men, and officials provided them with temporary shelter and helped to fund and escort their repatriation. However, observers noted this assistance was ad hoc, often heavily bureaucratic, and less prevalent among front-line officers working farther inland, where some foreign victims escaped, reported these abusive circumstances to the authorities, and were summarily arrested and forcibly returned to their PRC “husbands”—sometimes in exchange for bribes from the men’s families. Because authorities did not universally implement identification or referral procedures across law enforcement efforts, it was likely police arrested and detained unidentified PRC trafficking victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit. Authorities may have detained some victims of sex trafficking—alongside individuals with drug addictions and men arrested for commissioning sex acts—in government “rehabilitation camps” known to feature forced labor conditions.

In prior years, the government reported maintaining at least 10 shelters specifically dedicated to care for PRC trafficking victims, as well as eight shelters for foreign trafficking victims and more than 2,300 multi-purpose shelters nationwide that could accommodate trafficking victims; it did not provide any information on these shelters for the second consecutive year. The Ministry of Civil Affairs, a nationwide women’s organization, and community-based NGOs could provide victims with shelter, medical care, counseling, legal aid, and social services, as well as rehabilitation services in some cases. Access to specialized care depended heavily on victims’ location and gender; experts noted ad hoc referral procedures and an acute lack of protection services in the south, and male victims were far less likely to receive care nationwide. The government did not report how many victims benefited from these services, and widespread stigma against victims of sex trafficking likely continued to discourage many from accessing protection services. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Services (MOHRSS) was reportedly able to provide compensation and some protection services to labor trafficking victims, but authorities did not report information on the number of victims MPS referred for these services. Implementation of a law placing foreign NGOs in the PRC under MPS supervision continued to impose burdensome requirements and restrictions on the activities of civil society organizations, including those able to provide services for trafficking victims and communities vulnerable to the crime. Foreign embassies in the PRC could provide shelter or other protective services to victims, but the extent to which this continued during pandemic mitigation measures was unclear. Authorities did not condition access to victim care on cooperation with law enforcement, but they did require victims to provide information to police. The law entitled victims to request criminal prosecution and claim compensation through civil lawsuits against their traffickers; the government did not report whether any victims benefited from this provision during the reporting period. Some forced marriage cases, many of which continued to demonstrate corollary indicators of sex trafficking and forced labor, were mediated at the village collective-level; these proceedings rarely culminated in a guilty verdict through which to grant restitution to the victims. MOJ officials

reportedly provided some *pro bono* legal assistance to an unspecified number of trafficking victims, but government-affiliated NGO observers noted some victims faced difficulties accessing these services or paying for their own representation. The judicial system did not require victims to testify against their traffickers in court and allowed prosecutors to submit previously recorded statements as evidence; however, authorities required some foreign victims to stay in the PRC to assist in police investigations until their conclusion.

The efficacy of the government’s previously reported victim assistance abroad—including its eight border liaison offices with Burma, Laos, and Vietnam, along with victim funds, hotlines, and government-to-government agreements to assist victims—remained unclear. The government did not report data on victim repatriation in 2020, but civil society groups confirmed authorities assisted in the repatriation of some Southeast Asian victims to their countries of origin. PRC officials operating in other countries may have facilitated the sex trafficking of Chinese nationals abroad through lax visa and immigration procedures. Authorities reportedly harassed, threatened, and attempted to discredit Uyghur and ethnic Kazakh forced labor survivors seeking asylum in retaliation for their contact with foreign media outlets.

The government did not report any measures to screen for or identify forced labor indicators among the thousands of vulnerable migrant seafarers employed on Chinese DWF vessels, nor within its extensive coastal offshore fishing fleet. PRC consular officials did not take steps to proactively identify, respond to, or assist Chinese nationals subjected to forced labor under the auspices of BRI projects overseas, including when victims reported abuses to local PRC diplomatic missions. Chinese-national fishermen subjected to forced labor were generally unable to report abuses to local authorities or access protection services when returning to China. The government did not undertake efforts to identify trafficking victims within its highly vulnerable North Korean migrant population, nor did it provide suspected North Korean trafficking victims with legal alternatives to repatriation. Although significantly fewer North Korean nationals transited China while seeking asylum in third countries due to pandemic-related border closures, authorities continued to detain North Korean asylum-seekers and forcibly return some to North Korea, where they faced severe punishment or death, including in forced labor camps; the government did not report screening these individuals for indicators of trafficking. The government continued to restrict access of UN agencies attempting to monitor and assist refugees near China’s border with North Korea.

PREVENTION

The government decreased efforts to prevent trafficking, including by perpetrating genocide and continuing to use emerging technologies to carry out discriminatory surveillance and ethno-racial profiling measures designed to subjugate and exploit minority populations in forced labor in internment camps under the pretext of combating violent extremism and other social ills. The PRC continued its policies of mass detention and political indoctrination against more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kyrgyz, and members of other Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang, and it continued to expand these policies through the transfer of at least 80,000 detainees into forced labor into dozens of other provinces, according to NGO estimates and media reports. Local governments and businesses received tax breaks and financial subsidies for establishing new manufacturing sites and accepting or transferring detainees for these purposes, and officials reportedly received promotions and other benefits for their role in the process. According to official PRC government documents, local governments at times arrested Muslims arbitrarily or based on spurious criminal charges and administrative violations, including violation of birth restrictions, in order to meet detention quotas established specifically for this internment system. Reports indicate authorities partially staffed internment camp facilities using forced labor, including among Mandarin language instructors. Many detained individuals approved to “graduate” from these facilities were sent to external manufacturing sites in close proximity to the camps or in other provinces and subjected to forced labor, while others were transferred and likely subjected to forced labor within a separate—and growing—formal prison system. In 2020, the government issued false reports that it released thousands of previously detained Uyghurs and other Muslims and closed the camps in which they had been confined. However, satellite imagery indicated many of the camps remained in operation or were expanded during the year; consistent with reports that the government had begun convicting and transferring thousands of interned Muslims on spurious terrorism charges, geospatial analysis pointed to a sharp increase in the construction of large, higher-security prison facilities elsewhere in the region. The government continued to transfer some members of non-interned minority communities designated arbitrarily as “rural surplus labor” to other areas within Xinjiang as part of a “poverty alleviation” program and exploit them in forced labor. Authorities also used the threat of internment to coerce members of some Muslim communities directly into forced labor in manufacturing. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to confiscate, cancel, or refuse to renew the Chinese passports of Uyghurs and other Muslims living abroad, including those with legal permanent resident status or citizenship in other countries, as a coercive measure to lure them back to Xinjiang and likely detain them within the camps. There were also reports that authorities threatened, detained, and forcibly hospitalized these individuals’ family members in Xinjiang in an attempt to silence them and/or coerce their return. The PRC continued to seek the extradition of Muslim individuals who fled Xinjiang human rights abuses, including forced labor, and sought asylum abroad. Several ethnic Kazakhs who spoke to journalists after fleeing Xinjiang and seeking protections in neighboring Kazakhstan experienced violent physical attacks that may have been coordinated by PRC security services. Nationwide, some school districts reportedly compelled ethnic Han students to participate in internship programs featuring forced labor indicators.

According to NGO observers, during the reporting period authorities placed more than 500,000 rural Tibetans in “military-style” vocational training and manufacturing jobs around the country under the auspices of a quota-based “surplus labor” transfer program ostensibly intended as a “poverty alleviation” measure. Although the program did not feature overt arrests or enforced disappearances, observers noted the system was likely highly coercive, given

individuals’ relative inability to refuse participation amid the central government’s pervasive system of social control in Tibetan areas. Some of these Tibetans were subsequently subjected to forced labor in manufacturing. PRC-owned companies continued to employ Chinese nationals at BRI project worksites in foreign countries; the government did not exercise adequate oversight into recruitment procedures, which often featured worker-paid fees driving indebtedness to unregistered brokers, nor did it take steps to ensure worker contracts were free of abusive provisions. In recognition of this insufficiency, authorities maintained policies and regulatory standards issued in 2017 barring the collection of recruitment fees or security deposits, banning the use of tourist visas for travel to work in BRI destination countries, and instructing companies on safeguarding labor rights; however, these were largely nonbinding, and the government did not report efforts to enforce them. In recent years, NGOs in countries receiving Chinese national migrant workers through other bilateral agreements reported the PRC government ignored abusive and potentially illegal contract stipulations, including fees and provisions requiring immediate repatriation for pregnancies or illnesses, which placed some Chinese national workers at higher risk of debt or punitive deportation as coercive measures to retain their labor; the government did not take steps to address these vulnerabilities during the reporting period. The PRC government’s exertion of political pressure and operating restrictions on NGOs in Hong Kong had a negative impact on anti-trafficking coordination with the local authorities there.

Unlike in previous years, the PRC government did not report holding an annual inter-ministerial meeting to coordinate anti-trafficking efforts during the reporting period. MPS continued to coordinate the anti-trafficking interagency process and led interagency efforts to implement the 2013-2020 National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking, including research into the efficacy of national efforts to combat the crime; the government did not provide updates on its next iteration, the draft of which was in process at the end of the previous reporting period. For the fourth consecutive year, the government did not report the extent to which it funded anti-trafficking activities in furtherance of the action plan (more than 55 million renminbi, or \$8.41 million, in 2016). It conducted media outreach campaigns on some forms of trafficking, although the content thereof generally focused on child abduction. MOHRSS operated and publicized three 24-hour hotlines that could benefit potential trafficking victims—one for labor issues, one for child protection, and one for gender-based violence—but authorities did not provide statistics on their use. Academics and experts noted the gender imbalance created by the previous One-Child Policy likely continued to contribute to trafficking crimes in the PRC. According to international media outlets and human rights groups, in 2020, the government intentionally underreported—or altogether excluded from statistical research—data on population demographics within Xinjiang, likely in an attempt to obfuscate evidence of the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity perpetrated there.

The government *hukou* (household registration) system continued to contribute to the vulnerability of internal migrants by reducing access to social services, particularly for Chinese national victims returning from exploitation abroad; however, the government relaxed some internal migration restrictions dictated by the *hukou* system during the reporting period. The government continued to address some of these vulnerabilities by requiring local governments to provide a mechanism for migrant workers to obtain residency permits. However, these residency permits were disproportionately unavailable to rural ethnic Han migrants and members of ethnic minority groups, exacerbating their constrained access to employment and social services. The government made no efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. The government did not report investigating or prosecuting any Chinese citizens for child sex tourism, despite widespread reports of the crime. While the PRC government included Macau in its succession to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol in 2010, it stated the protocol “shall not apply” to Hong Kong.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in China, and traffickers exploit Chinese victims abroad. Traffickers also use China as a transit point to subject foreign individuals to trafficking in other countries throughout Asia and in international maritime industries. Well-organized criminal syndicates and local gangs subject Chinese women and girls to sex trafficking within China. Traffickers typically recruit them from rural areas and take them to urban centers, using a combination of fraudulent job offers and coercion by imposing large travel fees, confiscating passports, confining victims, or physically and financially threatening victims to compel their engagement in commercial sex. China’s national household registry system (*hukou*) continues to restrict rural inhabitants’ freedom to legally change their residence, placing China’s internal migrant population—estimated to exceed 169 million men, women, and children—at high risk of forced labor in brick kilns, coal mines, and factories. Some of these businesses operate illegally and take advantage of lax government enforcement. Chinese nationals are subjected to conditions indicative of forced labor in BRI projects in several countries. African and Asian men reportedly experience conditions indicative of forced labor aboard Chinese-flagged and Chinese-owned, foreign-flagged fishing vessels operating worldwide in China’s DWF; men from other regions may be in forced labor aboard these vessels as well. Women and girls from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and several countries in Africa experience forced labor in domestic service, forced concubinage leading to forced childbearing, and sex trafficking via forced and fraudulent marriage to Chinese men. Traffickers target adults and children with developmental disabilities and children whose parents have left them with relatives to migrate to the cities—estimated at 6.4 million—and subject them to forced labor and forced begging. State bodies reportedly subject members of Muslim minority groups and Tibetans to forced labor as part of arbitrary mass detention, political indoctrination, and labor transfer schemes.

State-sponsored forced labor is increasingly prevalent in China. In 2013, the National People’s Congress ratified a decision to abolish “Re-education through labor” (RTL), a punitive system that subjected individuals to extra-judicial detention involving forced labor, from which the government reportedly profited. The government closed most RTL facilities by October 2015; however, the government reportedly converted some RTL facilities into state-

sponsored drug rehabilitation facilities or administrative detention centers where, according to civil society and media reports, forced labor continues. State-sponsored forced labor is intensifying under the government’s mass detention and political indoctrination campaign against Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang). Authorities have utilized discriminatory surveillance technologies and arbitrary administrative and criminal provisions to detain more than one million ethnic Muslims, including Uyghurs, ethnic Hui, ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kyrgyz, ethnic Tajiks, and ethnic Uzbeks in as many as 1,200 “vocational training centers”—internment camps designed to erase ethnic and religious identities. Camp authorities reportedly force some individuals to work in staff positions within the camps, including in Mandarin language instruction. During detention within—and following “graduation” from—these facilities, many of these individuals are subjected to forced labor in adjacent or off-site factories producing garments, footwear, carpets, yarn, food products, holiday decorations, building materials, solar power equipment polysilicon and other renewable energy components, consumer electronics, bedding, hair products, cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment face masks, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and other goods for domestic and international distribution. Coercive conditions reportedly include threats of physical violence, forcible drug intake, physical and sexual abuse, and torture. Local governments have reportedly used the threat of internment to coerce some members of these communities directly into forced labor. A small number of ethnic Han individuals and members of other religious minority groups, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, are also reportedly in detention within this system. Authorities offer subsidies incentivizing Chinese companies to open factories in close proximity to the internment camps and to receive transferred detainees at satellite manufacturing sites in other provinces, and local governments receive additional funds for each inmate forced to work in these sites at a fraction of minimum wage or without any compensation. The government has transported at least 80,000 of these individuals to other provinces for forced labor under the guise of poverty alleviation and industrial aid programs; authorities have formally convicted many more, perhaps hundreds of thousands, under spurious criminal charges and transferred them to more than 100 urban prisons throughout the country, where they suffer additional forced labor conditions.

Authorities in some localities also subject the families of men arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang to forced labor in their absence. Contacts report families separated by this system are more likely to fall below the poverty line and are therefore at higher risk of sex trafficking and forced labor. Authorities place the young children of interned Muslims in Xinjiang in state-run boarding schools, orphanages, and “child welfare guidance centers,” and force them to participate in political indoctrination activities and report on their families’ religious activities. Authorities reportedly place older children among these groups in vocational schools, where some may be victims of forced labor. Some Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani citizens are arbitrarily detained while visiting family in Xinjiang; their children, now unaccompanied abroad, are also at elevated risk of trafficking. NGOs report ethnic Han men may be increasingly able to force Uyghur and other Muslim women into marriages under the government’s discriminatory ethnic assimilation policies, placing them at higher risk of forced labor in domestic service and other forms of exploitation. Members of these Muslim minority groups attempting to seek asylum abroad are vulnerable to immigration-related administrative and criminal charges in destination countries, as well as to PRC extradition and refoulement.

Xinjiang authorities issued a notice in 2017 abolishing rural obligatory labor under the *hashar* system, in which thousands of Uyghur adults and children were reportedly subjected to forced labor in government infrastructure projects and agriculture each year. Despite this policy change, similar forms of state-sponsored forced labor continue in Xinjiang, including under the auspices of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (Bingtuan)—an economic and paramilitary organization with administrative control over several areas in the region comprising approximately 2.8 million personnel. According to NGO reports, Bingtuan regiments manage at least 36 agricultural prison farms throughout Xinjiang; unlike the aforementioned mass detention campaign, this system primarily subjects ethnic Han inmates—many of whom may be victims of arbitrary detention—to forced labor. Bingtuan authorities also force inmates to build new prison facilities in several areas of the province and may subject inmates to forced labor in coal, uranium, and asbestos mining, as well as in lead and zinc smelting and fertilizer production. Some Xinjiang residents are also subjected to forced labor in polysilicon mining and processing. The Bingtuan reportedly forces half a million Uyghur adults and children to pick and process cotton, tomatoes, sugar beets, and possibly apples and peanuts. The impact of formal discriminatory employment policies barring Uyghurs from jobs in many sectors—including in the annual cotton harvest—reportedly drives thousands of Uyghur farmers out of their communities in search of alternative work, placing them at higher risk of forced labor. The same is true of the government’s targeted forced-displacement programs, including the Bingtuan’s construction of new settlements designated for ethnic Han internal migrants, which reportedly disperses Uyghur communities and disrupts their livelihoods.

The government subjects some Tibetans to arbitrary detention featuring similar political indoctrination and forced prison labor practices in the Tibet Autonomous Region and in neighboring provinces. Authorities have placed more than 500,000 rural Tibetans in “military-style” vocational training and manufacturing jobs around the country under the auspices of a quota-based “surplus labor” transfer program ostensibly intended as a poverty alleviation measure. Although the program does not feature arrests or enforced disappearances, observers note the system is likely highly coercive, given individuals’ relative inability to refuse participation amid the central government’s pervasive system of social control in Tibetan areas. Reports indicate some of these Tibetans are subjected to forced labor in factories. Authorities also reportedly subject some Buddhist clerics to political indoctrination activities and forced labor in monasteries repurposed as factories. The government’s forced urban resettlement programs require Tibetans to bear a large portion of resettlement costs, placing many of them in debt and consequently at higher risk of forced labor. Elsewhere, religious and political activists held in legal education facilities continue to report forced labor occurring in pretrial detention and outside of penal sentences. The government subjects Christians and members of other

religious groups to forced labor as part of detention for the purpose of ideological indoctrination; survivors report having been forced to work in brick kilns, food processing centers, and factories manufacturing clothing and housewares. Law enforcement officials detain some Chinese national and foreign women on prostitution charges without due process in “custody and education” centers, where they are subjected to forced labor. International media report local authorities force children in some government-supported work-study programs to work in factories. Some school districts compel students into forced labor in manufacturing under the guise of mandatory internships. Although information is limited, Chinese nationals may experience conditions indicative of forced labor at large-scale rare earth mining operations within China, and rural communities displaced by these activities and by concomitant environmental contamination may themselves be vulnerable to sex and labor trafficking.

Some Chinese nationals employed in large-scale BRI construction projects, mining operations, and factories in African, European, Asian and Pacific, and Latin American and Caribbean countries experience conditions indicative of forced labor. These include deceptive recruitment into debt bondage; arbitrary wage garnishing or withholding; contract irregularities; confiscation of travel and identity documentation; forced overtime; resignation penalties; intimidation and threats; physical violence; denial of access to urgent medical care; poor working and living conditions; restricted freedom of movement and external communication; and retaliation for reported abuses, among others. Pandemic-related travel restrictions in many of these countries and reentry restrictions imposed by the PRC government compounded these vulnerabilities. Some Chinese nationals reportedly recruit local children from the communities in which some BRI projects are underway and subject them to forced labor in hazardous work.

Traffickers subject Chinese national men, women, and children to forced labor and sex trafficking in at least 80 other countries. They force Chinese national men, women, and girls to work in restaurants, shops, agricultural operations, and factories in overseas Chinese communities. Some are promised jobs abroad and confined to private homes upon arrival overseas, held in conditions indicative of forced labor, and compelled to conduct telephone scams. Traffickers also reportedly subject some Chinese nationals to forced criminality in the cultivation, processing, and distribution of recreational drugs. Chinese national men in Africa, Europe, and South America experience abuse in factories, at construction sites, in coal and copper mines, and in other extractive industries, where they face conditions indicative of forced labor, such as non-payment of wages, restrictions on movement, withholding of passports, and physical abuse. Chinese-owned manufacturing facilities in South Africa have reportedly subjected Chinese nationals to forced labor in the manufacturing of pandemic-related medical protective garments. Traffickers subject Chinese national women and girls to sex trafficking throughout the world, including in major cities, construction sites, remote mining and logging camps, and areas with high concentrations of Chinese national migrant workers. Companies operating under the auspices of the Japanese government’s “Technical Intern Training Program” have exploited Chinese nationals in forced labor in food processing, manufacturing, construction, and fishing. Traffickers also subject undocumented Chinese national seafarers to forced labor on board fishing vessels in Taiwan’s highly vulnerable Distant Water Fleet.

Chinese national traffickers operating abroad also subject local populations to sex trafficking in several countries in Africa, the Mediterranean region, and South America. Chinese national traffickers also subject women and girls in other Asian countries to sex trafficking and forced labor in sham businesses and entertainment establishments, including Chinese national-owned casinos, constructed in close proximity to large-scale PRC infrastructure and investment projects—at times under the auspices of the BRI—and in special economic zones with limited local government oversight. Chinese national-owned factories and agricultural plantations in Burma reportedly subject local and internal migrant populations to forced labor; the same may also be true for PRC-owned logging operations there. Chinese crime syndicates reportedly assist traffickers in Southeast Asian countries in the production of counterfeit travel documents to facilitate trans-border trafficking. Congolese men and boys experience conditions indicative of forced labor in Chinese national-owned mining operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Many men from countries in Africa, Asia—especially Indonesia and the Philippines—and other regions employed on many of the 2,900 Chinese-flagged DWF fishing vessels operating worldwide experience contract discrepancies, excessive working hours, degrading living conditions, severe verbal and physical abuse, denial of access to health care, restricted communication, document retention, arbitrary garnishing or nonpayment of wages, and other forced labor indicators, often while being forced to remain at sea for months or years at a time. This statistic does not include Chinese-owned DWF vessels that are flagged or registered through front companies in other countries; the true number of DWF vessels with Chinese beneficial ownership may therefore be much higher than reported. Many DWF crewmembers are recruited through unlicensed or poorly regulated informal brokerage networks within China and abroad, exacerbating their risk of indebtedness through the imposition of unregulated hiring fees, commissions, and expenses accrued while being forced to reside in dormitories in the months leading up to their deployment. Chinese fishing operators in turn require DWF crewmembers to pay “guarantee money” that places them at further risk of debt-based coercion. Some DWF senior vessel crew also force these fishermen to engage in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and smuggling—including in areas under the jurisdiction of other coastal states—making many victims vulnerable to unjust civil and criminal liabilities in port countries. Some Chinese-owned fishing vessels reportedly operate in violation of UN sanctions off the coast of North Korea while evading detection by maritime authorities; the crew aboard these ships are also vulnerable to forced labor in IUU fishing.

Chinese national traffickers subject women and children from neighboring Asian countries, Africa, and the Americas to forced labor and sex trafficking within the PRC. Traffickers promise African and South American women legitimate jobs in the PRC and force them into commercial sex upon arrival. The PRC government’s birth-limitation policy and a cultural preference for sons created a skewed sex ratio of 110 boys to 100 girls in the PRC, which observers assert continues to drive the demand for commercial sex and for foreign women as brides for Chinese national men—both of which may be procured by force or coercion. Traffickers kidnap or recruit women and girls

through marriage brokers and transport them to the PRC, where some are subjected to sex trafficking or forced labor. Illicit brokers increasingly facilitate the forced and fraudulent marriage of South Asian, Southeast Asian, Northeast Asian, and African women and girls to Chinese national men for fees of up to \$30,000. The men—sometimes in partnership with their parents—often incur large debts to cover these fees, which they attempt to recover by subjecting the “brides” to forced labor or sex trafficking. Some Chinese national men reportedly circumvent this brokerage system by traveling to Southeast Asian capitals and entering into legal marriages with local women and girls, then return to the PRC and compel them into commercial sex. There are also reports of Chinese national men and their parents deceiving Southeast Asian women and girls into fraudulent marriages in China, then confining them in forced concubinage involving rape leading to forced pregnancy. In cases where this forced pregnancy leads to childbirth, the men and their parents sometimes use the child as collateral to retain the women’s forced labor or sexual slavery or use the women’s immigration status as coercion to dissuade them from reporting their abuses to the authorities. Traffickers also reportedly lure women from Burma, Vietnam, and Cambodia to China under similar false pretenses and subject them to forcible artificial insemination in unregulated hospital facilities; they confine groups of these women in private residences until they give birth and then drive them across international borders to their home countries with impunity. A small number of Chinese national women are reportedly subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor via forced or fraudulent marriages to Taiwanese men. Mongolian boys are at high risk of forced labor and sex trafficking under visa regimes that enable them to work indefinitely as herders, horse jockeys and circus performers across the PRC border, provided they return with a chaperone once a month. African residents of the PRC displaced through discriminatory eviction policies related to the pandemic may be at higher risk of sex trafficking and forced labor due to ensuing homelessness and other economic hardships.

Many North Korean refugees and asylum-seekers living irregularly in the PRC are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Traffickers lure, drug, detain, or kidnap some North Korean women upon their arrival in the PRC and compel them into commercial sex in brothels and bars, through internet sex sites, or in relation to forced marriage. Traffickers also subject these women to forced labor in agriculture, as hostesses in nightclubs and karaoke bars, in domestic service, and at factories. According to media and NGO reports, the North Korean government subjects North Korean citizens to forced labor in China as part of its proliferation finance system, likely with the knowledge of PRC officials; this includes forced labor in hotels, restaurants, and in remote cyber operations. Chinese manufacturing facilities reportedly also subject North Korean workers to forced labor in the production of protective medical garments for international export.

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