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USDOS – US Department of State

Trafficking in Persons Report 2018 - Country Narratives - Egypt

EGYPT: Tier 2

The Government of Egypt does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore Egypt remained on Tier 2. The government demonstrated increasing efforts by funding the recently established National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration (NCCPIM & TIP), which managed inter-ministerial anti-trafficking efforts, initiating more trafficking investigations and prosecutions, increasing awareness campaigns; establishing courts in four governorates and dedicating a group of prosecutors to focus exclusively on trafficking cases, and assisting through its special response teams a significant number of street children vulnerable to trafficking. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government did not report what services, if any, it provided to identified victims. The government did not implement guidance on victim identification and referral procedures, and as a result, authorities continued to penalize unidentified victims for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being subjected to human trafficking, such as immigration violations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EGYPT

Implement standard operating procedures (SOPs) to proactively identify and refer trafficking victims; ensure trafficking victims are not treated as criminals for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being subjected to human trafficking; provide and allocate adequate resources for protection service—including but not limited to—the national hotline and a dedicated shelter—for victims of all forms of trafficking; increase and track investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of all forms of trafficking and punish offenders, including complicit officials, with sufficiently stringent sentences; increase training for all government officials, including judges in the specialized trafficking courts, on implementation of the anti-trafficking law and victim identification and referral procedures; provide a clear legal basis for NGOs to provide victim services; further extend legal and employment protections to cover domestic workers; raise awareness of the specialized trafficking courts among judicial and law enforcement officials; encourage trafficking victims to assist in investigations and prosecutions of

their traffickers; increase ongoing nationwide awareness campaigns; and increase data collection for human trafficking which disaggregates sex, labor and other forms of trafficking.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained its anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. The 2010 anti-trafficking law criminalized sex and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties from three to 15 years imprisonment and fines, which were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Child Law No.12, as amended, also criminalized sex trafficking and forced labor of children and prescribed sentences of at least five years imprisonment. Articles 80 and 89 of the constitution prohibited sex trafficking, compulsory exploitation, and forced labor.

During the reporting period, the government investigated 144 cases of alleged human trafficking compared to 23 investigations in 2016 and 21 in 2015 but did not disaggregate types of trafficking. Officials referred 41 cases for prosecution for alleged trafficking, but did not provide case details. The government reported convicting three Egyptians in one case in 2017—a decrease compared to five convictions in 2016. Three defendants were each fined \$5,640 and sentenced to ten years, five years and four years in jail respectively for sex trafficking. The media and the government reported arrests of 13 government officials and others allegedly complicit in human trafficking offenses; however, the government did not report efforts to prosecute officials. The government reported firing the Egyptian passport control official allegedly complicit in a labor trafficking and bribery case in a prosecution initiated in the previous reporting period. The case involved two other Saudi Arabian nationals but it is not clear if any of the three defendants have been prosecuted. Some trafficking cases were settled out of court, resulting in a lack of adequate punishment for trafficking offenders. The government requested extradition of one individual from the Libyan government and cooperated with the Sudanese government to extradite several individuals; the government subsequently arrested the defendants in both cases. The government did not report the outcome of its request during the previous reporting period for the extradition of an Egyptian national from Jordan on a potential trafficking case.

The government added four more specialized courts to prosecute human trafficking cases, making a total of eight courts; however, the government did not report whether these courts or the three specialized courts established to prosecute human trafficking cases in the prior reporting period tried trafficking cases during the reporting period. In 2017, the prosecutor general assigned a specialized group of prosecutors trained in Egypt’s anti-trafficking law and relevant international conventions to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases. There were 41 trafficking related trainings provided by the government compared with 23 in the prior reporting period. The Ministry of Justice reported that it provided 11 trainings on human trafficking for 321 judges and sent 62 participants to three trafficking related conferences. The Ministry of Justice’s Center for Judiciary Studies provided compulsory training on human trafficking for newly appointed prosecutors as a part of its curricula; however, it did not report how many officials received this training. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) conducted 30 training

courses on countering trafficking and added trafficking as a topic within all courses at government-affiliated educational and training institutions, including those for MOI officials and for security forces from African Union countries. The prosecutor general conducted training courses on countering trafficking, migrant smuggling, and illegal migration but the number of anti-trafficking courses was not clear. The government also circulated a trafficking guidelines toolkit for prosecutors investigating trafficking, but did not report how many prosecutors received the kits. The government agency, the Cairo Center for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa (CCCPA) trained foreign nationals on trafficking issues but did not provide details on what nationals it trained or how it funded the training.

PROTECTION

The government maintained weak protection efforts. The government did not report how many trafficking victims it identified, referred, or assisted during the reporting period. The government did not complete the design of the national victim referral mechanism or report the outcome of efforts to complete guidelines or support training of officials on use of the mechanism, which were initiated in the previous reporting period. The government did obtain agreement from relevant agencies on the basic victim referral mechanism. Outside observers reported, however, that law enforcement and judicial sector employees informally identified victims and provided them access to non-governmental services. The government's anti-trafficking hotline identified 33 potential trafficking cases, a decrease from 65 in the prior reporting period. Observers reported calls to the hotline were often not answered during established operating hours. The government did not report if any of the victims in the 41 potential human trafficking cases sent to the prosecutor or from 33 trafficking hotline complaints were referred to or received protective care. The Ministry of Social Solidarity provided 4,004 street children with medical and psychological assistance and reintegrated 397 street children into their families during the reporting period. The government did not report how many of these children were trafficking victims or who funded the services. NCCPIM & TIP participated in five trainings about trafficking in persons and relevant laws for its new staff provided by an NGO.

Ineffective victim identification and referral procedures contributed to authorities punishing some victims for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being subjected to human trafficking, leaving victims vulnerable to detention and deportation for illegal immigration or employment violations. NCCPIM & TIP reported that the MOI allowed trafficking victims residency status and reinsertion within local communities, but did not report if any victims received this status during the reporting period. While the government waives all visa overstay fees for refugees and asylum-seekers, it has yet to implement such an exemption for trafficking victims. Law 64/2010 decriminalized trafficking victims for their actions and guarantees repatriation “in an expeditious and safe manner” (article 22). In certain cases involving foreign victims, while the government did not press legal charges for illegal immigration or unauthorized employment, it detained victims administratively until they were deported.

While the anti-trafficking law guaranteed protection of witnesses of trafficking crimes, observers reported that there is neither a formal witness protection program nor established witness protection procedures, so fear of reprisals and pressure from traffickers, especially family members, resulted in victims withdrawing charges. The government did not report if it provided protection to any witnesses during the reporting period. Continued funding constraints hindered the government’s provision of adequate protection services to victims. The government did not have shelter services specifically dedicated to trafficking victims in 2017, but the government-run women’s shelters were open to trafficking victims. However, observers noted that shelter services were poor and some were reluctant to place victims in those shelters due to safety concerns and fear of re-traumatizing the victim due to lack of staff training and victim protection. The Ministry of Social Solidarity expanded a program targeted at vulnerable children without shelter, including child laborers, by forming 17 mobile units with rapid response teams including medical emergency specialists to provide medical and psychological care as well as recreational services. The National Council for Women conducted a campaign to increase the number of women who had national ID cards, necessary to access government services.

The government continued to operate numerous facilities for victims of sexual and physical violence, but it did not report if these facilities assisted any trafficking victims during the reporting period. NGOs report that some law enforcement personnel contacted them for help with identifying potential trafficking victims and referring them to services, but these efforts were ad hoc rather than part of a formal process. The government continued to rely on international organizations and civil society to fund victim assistance, and in some cases, it publicly acknowledged and cooperated with NGOs in their efforts to assist victims, but it did not—in turn—provide financial assistance to these organizations, which affected their ability to offer protective services to victims. Moreover, Egypt’s Law on Non-Governmental Organizations hindered legal approvals and registrations for NGOs operating in Egypt, thereby impeding their efforts to provide essential services to victims.

PREVENTION

The government maintained efforts to prevent human trafficking. The government employed a whole-of-government approach against human trafficking through the NCCPIM & TIP using public awareness campaigns, trainings, and capacity building activities. In 2017, the government fully staffed and committed resources to the NCCPIM & TIP, which enabled it to begin planning systematic anti-trafficking efforts including awareness campaigns and trainings for staff in several ministries. NCCPIM & TIP conducted 35 training and awareness-raising campaigns which reached 1740 beneficiaries, including students, educators, and migrants. NCCPIM & TIP also distributed information booklets to government entities involved in identifying or providing services to trafficking victims, including an informational booklet for Egyptians departing for work abroad. Social media messaging from NCCPIM & TIP on the dangers of irregular migration and trafficking reached over 1 million persons during the reporting period, and it partnered with IOM to assess portrayals of trafficking in Egyptian media to better develop and target future awareness campaigns addressing the demand for forced labor and commercial sex acts. The government also provided

informational booklets on trafficking to potential migrant laborers and employers suspected of violating labor laws, including trafficking. Observers reported that information about the anti-trafficking hotline was not included in awareness campaigns and it was not reported if there were any referrals for criminal prosecution for labor or sex trafficking. Although the government licenses and oversees labor recruiters, enforcement is not tracked so it is not clear how many trafficking cases were identified or prosecuted. During the reporting period, the government inspected 3,388 establishments, issued formal warnings to 509, and filed police reports against 61 employers. The government continues to raise awareness of the problem of early child marriage but it is not clear if the government took any action against “temporary” or “summer” marriages of girls, primarily with tourists, for the purpose of commercial sex.

The government reported Egyptian diplomats were provided human rights training and information on labor laws and anti-trafficking guidance in their pre-departure courses. The Institute of Diplomatic Studies, a government entity, also held three lectures in its headquarters addressing trafficking topics. The government reported that it trains all soldiers on identifying and interacting with trafficking victims but did not report how these trainings were funded or how many soldiers were trained. The government provided mandatory anti-trafficking training to Egyptian nationals deployed abroad as part of peacekeeping missions.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, Egypt is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Egyptian children are vulnerable to sex trafficking and forced labor in domestic service, street begging, and agricultural work. Individuals from the Persian Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait purchase Egyptian women and girls for “temporary” or “summer” marriages for the purpose of commercial sex, including cases of sex trafficking, as well as forced labor; these arrangements are often facilitated by the victims’ parents and marriage brokers, who profit from the transaction. Child sex tourism occurs primarily in Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor. Egyptian men are subjected to forced labor in construction, agriculture, and low-paying service jobs in neighboring countries.

Men and women from South and Southeast Asia and East Africa are subjected to forced labor in domestic service, construction, cleaning, and begging. Foreign domestic workers—who are not covered under Egyptian labor laws—from Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia are highly vulnerable to forced labor, experiencing excessive working hours, confiscation of passports, withheld wages, denial of food and medical care, and physical and psychological abuse. Women and girls, including refugees and migrants, from Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East endure sex trafficking in Egypt. Syrian refugees who have settled in Egypt remain increasingly vulnerable to exploitation, including forced child labor, sex trafficking, and transactional marriages of girls—which can lead to sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, and forced labor. Irregular migrants and asylum-seekers from the Horn of Africa, who transit Egypt en route to Europe, are increasingly vulnerable to exploitation

along this migration route. Observers reported an increase in West African migrant trafficking victims, though it was unclear if this was the result of increased victim identification or an actual increase in numbers.

Until 2013, thousands of cases of forced labor and sexual servitude, smuggling, abduction, and extortion of African migrants in the Sinai Peninsula occurred at the hands of criminal groups. International organizations observed the flow of these migrants into the Sinai declined substantially in 2015, due in part to continued Egyptian military operations. Anecdotal reports suggested these criminal groups have relocated from the Sinai to Egypt’s border with Libya, where migrants remain vulnerable to the same abuses, including trafficking. However, Israeli NGOs reported that Bedouin groups in the Sinai resumed abuse—including trafficking crimes—against asylum-seekers on a limited scale in 2015. According to victim testimonies, Bedouin groups forced approximately 61 Sudanese asylum-seekers to work in agriculture, tree lumbering, and marijuana growing; these groups physically abused the victims, including beatings and deprivation of food and water and extorted money from them for their release. On average, the Bedouin held the victims captive for one month before releasing them.

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