

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	348
Land:	Eritrea
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	Trafficking in Persons Report 2020 – Eritrea
Udgivet:	Juni 2020
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	28. september 2020

Foreign Affairs officials reported visiting the country's three prisons to interview foreign inmates to assess if any were victims of trafficking. The government reportedly screened individuals employed in the regulated commercial sex trade for trafficking indicators; however, officials did not report identifying any victims through these initiatives. Officials established a system to use government housing as temporary shelters for victims of trafficking and domestic violence, although authorities did not report referring any victims to these shelters.

The government increased its funding from \$50,000 to \$100,000 in 2019 for an NGO to provide services to female victims of trafficking and to raise awareness of the crime among vulnerable populations. The government had no formal policies to provide foreign trafficking victims legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they might face retribution or hardship. In 2019, there were no reports authorities penalized trafficking victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit; however, due to a lack of widely used formal victim identification procedures, some unidentified trafficking victims may have been deported or arrested. Unlike previous years, high-level interest and support for working-level officials led to an increasing understanding of trafficking principles across the government during the reporting period.

PREVENTION

The government increased efforts to prevent trafficking. Civil society and government officials' minimal awareness of the crime and the lack of a leading government entity to coordinate key actors' efforts historically have impeded the country's anti-trafficking efforts. To address the awareness deficiency, the government expanded its sensitization campaign in 2019 to all seven of the country's districts using direct person-to-person sessions, radio, television, and social media to increase Equatoguineans' understanding of human trafficking, reaching more than 65,000 users on Facebook alone. The Ministry of Labor complemented its existing web-based reporting platform by launching a hotline to increase the channels for individuals to report potential trafficking cases, and the Ministry of National Security created a hotline for victims to contact authorities; the government did not report how many individuals used the hotline or web-based reporting platform.

The government convened its anti-trafficking inter-ministerial committee multiple times during the reporting period and coordinated with international organizations, foreign governments, and civil society to begin to implement its 2019-2021 national action plan. Although officials did not disclose the total amount spent in support of the plan, the government allocated at least \$149,000 to implement trainings in line with its national anti-trafficking strategy, compared with not funding its plan in the previous reporting period. In November 2019, the Ministry of Interior hosted a televised roundtable with approximately 40 NGO representatives to discuss ways the government could more effectively collaborate with civil society actors to identify victims of trafficking. Additionally, the government established a monthly radio show during the reporting period dedicated to discussing human trafficking. The Ministry of Social Affairs coordinated with an international organization to train approximately 170 individuals—including teachers and community leaders—throughout the country on trafficking indicators and protocols to inform authorities and refer victims to resources.

The Ministry of Labor continued to implement regulations for all companies to sign formal labor contracts with their employees. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor continued to partner with the non-governmental General Director of the National Financial Research Organization to inspect businesses and ensure firms complied with labor laws. The Ministry of Foreign

Affairs instructed diplomats to avoid engaging in trafficking or trafficking-related practices and directed officials stationed abroad to screen for trafficking indicators when adjudicating visas. To decrease the number of undocumented migrants—a population vulnerable to trafficking—the Ministry of National Security increased efforts to more expeditiously issue residency permits. Commercial sex was legal in the country and, in an attempt to decrease exploitation of vulnerable individuals and demand for commercial sex acts, the government continued implementing regulations requiring all commercial sex establishments to register and provide contracts to their workers.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

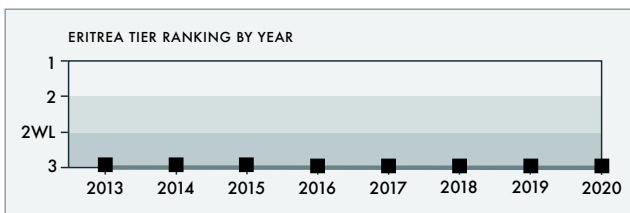
TRAFFICKING PROFILE: As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Equatorial Guinea, and traffickers exploit victims from Equatorial Guinea abroad. Most civil society members and government officials lack an understanding of trafficking in persons, hindering the country's ability to identify victims and address the crime. Equatoguineans exploit the majority of trafficking victims in forced labor in domestic service and commercial sex in the cities of Malabo, Bata, Mongomo, Ebebiyin, and to a lesser extent Oyala, where relative wealth and security attracts Central and West African migrant workers. Equatoguinean traffickers exploit local and foreign women in commercial sex in these cities, with the Malabo neighborhoods of Banapa, Paraiso, and the city center primary areas of concern. Experts noted the sustained economic downturn due to decreasing oil prices and oil production resulted in Equatoguineans in urban centers replacing some foreign domestic workers with children from rural areas in Equatorial Guinea, whom they then exploited in forced labor. Some business owners involved in the hospitality and restaurant sectors exploit hotel and bar workers in forced labor and commercial sex within the country's urban centers. Experts report LGBTI youth are often left homeless and stigmatized by their families and society, increasing their vulnerability to trafficking.

Equatoguinean business owners reportedly exploit children from nearby countries—primarily Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Togo, and Gabon—in forced labor as domestic workers, market laborers, vendors, and launderers. Observers reported Equatoguinean traffickers may exploit Latin American women in commercial sex in the country and intermediaries may exploit Equatoguineans in Spain. Traffickers recruit individuals from Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and other African countries, as well as temporary workers from Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela for work in Equatorial Guinea, and sometimes exploit them in forced labor or sex trafficking. Chinese firms recruit Chinese nationals to migrate to Equatorial Guinea for work or to engage in commercial sex; some of these businesses then confiscate workers' passports, which increases their vulnerability to forced labor or sex trafficking. North Koreans working in Equatorial Guinea may have been forced to work by the North Korean government. Companies in the construction sector, among others, also held the passports of foreign workers, increasing their vulnerability to forced labor. Experts reported some corrupt and complicit officials—including senior government officials—participated in trafficking-related crimes during the reporting period.

ERITREA: TIER 3

The Government of Eritrea does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so; therefore Eritrea remained on Tier 3. Despite the lack of significant efforts, during the reporting year

the government engaged in critical bilateral and multilateral partnerships to build its capacity for anti-trafficking initiatives. Officials also co-hosted with an international organization targeted training seminars for key government stakeholders and commenced contribution to a regional plan of action on combating trafficking. However, during the reporting period there was a government policy or pattern of forced labor. The government continued to exploit its nationals in forced labor in its compulsory national service and citizen militia by forcing them to serve for indefinite or otherwise arbitrary periods. The government did not report any trafficking investigations, prosecutions, or the identification and protection of any victims. The government did not report holding any complicit officials accountable for trafficking crimes. Authorities did not report the development of formal procedures for the identification and referral of victims to care, nor did the government report providing any services directly to victims.



PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Enforce existing limits on the length of active national service to 18 months as set forth in the Proclamation of National Service 11/199. • Extend existing labor protections to persons performing National Service and other mandatory citizen duties. • Enact and implement an anti-trafficking law that criminalizes all forms of trafficking and prescribes penalties that are sufficiently stringent and, with respect to forced labor, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes. • Develop and implement procedures to identify trafficking victims and refer them to services. • Provide protective services to trafficking victims. • Continue to provide training to all levels of the government on identifying and addressing trafficking crimes.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained negligible anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. The Eritrean Penal Code of 2015 criminalized some forms of trafficking in persons. Article 315 criminalized trafficking in women and young persons for sexual exploitation, which was punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment; these penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with punishments prescribed for other serious crimes, such as kidnapping. Article 297 criminalized enslavement and prescribed penalties of seven to 16 years' imprisonment, which were sufficiently stringent. Article 299 criminalized forced labor and prescribed penalties from six to 12 months' imprisonment or a fine of 20,000 to 50,000 nakfa (\$1,330- \$3,330). These penalties were not sufficiently stringent.

Similar to previous years, the government did not report investigating, prosecuting, or convicting suspected traffickers during the reporting period. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking. The government continued to enforce arbitrary limits to the National Service. Reports alleged some enterprises partially or wholly owned by the government employed National Service workers. During the reporting year, the government cooperated with international donors to provide at least two training seminars for law enforcement officials on countering trafficking, as well as a workshop with prosecutors,

magistrates, and banking officials on targeting illicit financial flows connected with trafficking and migrant smuggling. Additionally, the government co-hosted with an international organization the first-ever regional workshop in Eritrea on strengthening international and regional police cooperation, at which trafficking was a predominant component.

PROTECTION

The government did not report any efforts to identify or protect trafficking victims. It remained unknown if the government had formal procedures to proactively identify trafficking victims among vulnerable groups. Individuals fleeing the country were particularly vulnerable to the government indiscriminately arresting, detaining, harassing, or forcibly recalling them into national service. The government did not report having or developing a systematic mechanism for the referral of identified trafficking victims to care. In addition, it did not provide information on its funding for victim protection, any incentives for victims to assist in trafficking investigations or prosecutions, and it did not report providing foreign victims with legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they faced retribution or hardship. Eritrean law requires offenders in all crimes to pay restitution, though victims have the option of suing for such in civil court rather than have the criminal court impose it. If an offender's assets are too scant to pay both restitution and the associated fines, the government mandates restitution be paid out first. It was unclear whether any courts imposed this penalty for trafficking crimes during the reporting period.

PREVENTION

The government demonstrated modest efforts to prevent trafficking. The government continued to subject its nationals to forced labor in its compulsory national service and citizen militia. The government had an interagency steering committee on trafficking and migration issues, originally launched in early 2017. The government did not have a national action plan to combat human trafficking. However, the government participated in a UN-sponsored, regional anti-trafficking workshop, during which it committed to produce a Regional Plan of Action for Eastern Africa on Countering Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants. Officials participated in a high-level side event on general prevention and prosecution initiatives. In 2019, the government increased its international cooperation and outreach on trafficking and related topics with a range of multilateral and bilateral partners. Officials were reportedly active in an international organization's regional anti-trafficking project, which commenced creation of a region-wide action plan with complementary national-level plans. The government also signed a separate partnership framework agreement with the same international organization on a migration and criminal justice reform program and capacity building measures to include trafficking. During the year, the government chaired the "Khartoum Process" mechanism, which is a cooperation and dialogue forum organized between the EU and East African countries aimed at addressing migration, migrant smuggling, and human trafficking; it also partnered with a Western donor country on anti-trafficking and capacity building initiatives, but further details remained unknown. In recent years, the government reportedly educated its citizens on the dangers of irregular migration and trafficking through awareness-raising events, poster campaigns, and mass convocations and exhortations, through the National Union of Eritrean Women, National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, and National Confederation of Eritrean Workers. The government did not report on its efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts, or its provision of anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic victims in Eritrea, and traffickers exploit victims from Eritrea abroad. Perennially, thousands of Eritreans who flee the country are smuggled migrants seeking to be reunited with family members already overseas; are those who sought to escape human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest and detention, lack of due process, and religious persecution; were in search of better economic opportunities; or hoped to avoid the often indefinite periods of service in the government's mandatory National Service. Proclamation 82 of 1995 requires all persons aged 18 to 40 years to perform compulsory active national service ostensibly for a period of 18 months—six months of military training followed by 12 months of duty in a variety of military, security, or public service positions. However, since the 1998-2000 Eritrean-Ethiopian border conflict, the 18-month limit has been suspended; most individuals are not demobilized from government work units after their mandatory period of service, but rather forced to serve indefinitely under threats of detention, torture, or familial reprisal. An international organization assesses that many Eritrean asylum-seekers, particularly those who deserted National Service when they fled, expressed well-founded fears of persecution in Eritrea. There are unconfirmed reports of returnees disappearing, presumably in prison, with their whereabouts unknown. It was this same expert's assessment that traffickers exploited Eritreans in forced labor and sex trafficking primarily in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Libya.

National Service takes a wide variety of forms, including active military duty, although active military duty constitutes a small and diminishing percentage; office work in government agencies and enterprises (functions ranging from lawyers, diplomats, and mid-level managers to skilled technicians and mechanics, to clerical, maintenance, and janitorial work); medical professionals and support workers; elementary and secondary school teachers; and construction or other unskilled physical labor. Conditions are often harsh for those in military service or physical labor, though some National Service members experience normal, civilian workplace conditions, albeit with low pay and, in many cases, negligible to complete lack of freedom of choice or movement. In 2012, the government instituted a compulsory citizen militia, requiring medically fit adults up to age 70 not currently in the military to carry firearms and attend military training or participate in unpaid national development programs, such as soil and water conservation projects on a part time basis. Eritreans may be released from National Service after an indefinite number of years by petitioning the government based on criteria that shift periodically and are not fully transparent; policies and practices for obtaining release from National Service are inconsistent across organizations and job fields, but officials generally release expectant mothers and individuals who can show they have become the sole or primary source of familial support. Certain professions (e.g., medicine and teaching) exist almost exclusively within the ranks of the National Service. Wages are low, although pay raises have been granted for a number of job functions in recent years, particularly for those with higher education or skilled training credentials. However, National Service workers without educational or vocational qualifications continue to be paid poorly and the government often supplants obligated payments with food or non-food rations. In previous years, Eritrean officials reportedly discussed hard-capping National Service to 18 months, but this change in policy has never been publicly announced and those serving in the obligatory government program beyond 18 months have yet to be demobilized.

All 12th grade students are required to complete their final year of high school education at the Warsay-Yikealo Secondary School, which is embedded within the Sawa military and training academy; those who refuse to attend cannot receive high school

graduation certificates, attain higher education, or be offered some types of jobs. The program is comprised of seven months of academic instruction, followed by five months of basic military training. Upon graduation from Sawa, the government requires all students to participate in National Service, either civilian or military. Although it remains likely some of the students are age 17 at the time of attendance at the Warsay-Yikealo/Sawa academy, there are no reports anyone under age 18 began military service and government policy bans persons younger than 18 from military conscription. However, as National Service is mandatory starting at age 18, the government does not report recruiting any members of the armed forces, and it remains unclear if there is an age verification procedure that is consistently applied prior to it sending new Sawa graduates to active military service. Unaccompanied children continue to be vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Some officials detain or force into military training children who attempt to leave Eritrea despite some of them being younger than the minimum service age of 18. Previous reports alleged international criminal groups kidnap vulnerable Eritreans living inside or in proximity to refugee camps, particularly in Sudan, and transport them primarily to Libya, where traffickers subject them to human trafficking and other abuses, including extortion for ransom. Some migrants and refugees report traffickers force them to work as cleaners or on construction sites during their captivity.

In 2018, the government opened various land border crossing points with Ethiopia and ceased requiring exit visas or other travel documents for Eritreans crossing to Ethiopia. By January 2019, the government again closed those borders. During the reporting period, on the Eritrean side, both official border crossings with Sudan remained closed. Most Eritreans consensually commence their outbound journeys with the aid of payment to smugglers, but in many cases, once outside Eritrea, this movement devolves into trafficking situations and conditions highly vulnerable for exploitation. Eritrea's strict exit control procedures and limited issuance of passports, which compel those who cannot obtain exit visas or documents to travel clandestinely, increase its nationals' vulnerability to trafficking abroad, primarily in Sudan, Ethiopia, and to a lesser extent Djibouti, with the ultimate goal of seeking asylum in Europe or at a minimum, obtaining refugee status in Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, Israel, or Uganda; some also strive to reach the United States.

ESTONIA: TIER 1

The Government of Estonia fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period; therefore Estonia remained on Tier 1. These efforts included investigating and prosecuting more trafficking cases and convicting more traffickers under Section 133 of the penal code. Additionally, authorities identified significantly more victims and referred more victims to government-sponsored care. Although the government meets the minimum standards, 11 out of 15 convicted traffickers received probation without serving any prison time, and authorities struggled to identify potential labor trafficking and child trafficking victims.

