

**Statement of Ambassador Cindy Dyer
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U.S. Department of State**

**Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee – Subcommittee on Global Health,
Global Human Rights, and International Organizations**

Examining the 2024 Annual Trafficking in Persons Report: Progress over Politics

July 9, 2024

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Wild, and distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report), released on June 24, and the Department of State's efforts to monitor and combat human trafficking worldwide.

The TIP Report, which my Office produces annually, contains narratives detailing global anti-trafficking efforts of 188 countries and territories, including the United States. It is the world's most comprehensive resource of governmental anti-trafficking efforts—including our own—and reflects the U.S. government's commitment to global leadership on this key human rights, law enforcement, and national security issue.

Overview of the 2024 TIP Report

This year's TIP Report includes 19 downgrades, with 17 downgrades from Tier 2 to the Tier 2 Watch List, including Hong Kong, Laos, Malta, Rwanda, and Uruguay, and two countries—Brunei and Sudan—downgraded to Tier 3. There were 22 countries whose rankings improved, including three—the Republic of Korea, Poland, and Suriname—upgraded to Tier 1 and five upgraded from Tier 3. Notable upgrades to Tier 2 include Bolivia, Botswana, Bulgaria, Egypt, Malaysia, South Africa, and Vietnam.

The 2024 TIP Report documented several continuing and emerging global trends:

First, we continued to track forced labor within Cuba’s medical missions across 53 countries, the PRC’s Belt and Road Initiative and other PRC-affiliated projects in 32 countries, and DPRK workers exploited abroad in 19 countries.

Second, the Department newly documented that Russian authorities, middlemen, private military companies, or Russian-affiliated forces used coercion, deception, and, in some cases, force to recruit foreign nationals, particularly Central and South Asian migrants, as well as citizens from Cuba and Syria, as fighters in support of Russia’s war of aggression in Ukraine.

And third, the Report highlights the continued growth of online scam operations, with centers emerging in new regions and victims recruited from an expanding list of source countries.

While the tier rankings are important, the TIP Report is, above all, the U.S. government’s principal diplomatic and diagnostic tool to guide relations with foreign governments on human trafficking, with the narrative and recommendations providing a roadmap to improvement, and the rankings a means to encourage governments to increase and improve their anti-trafficking efforts year after year.

In addition to narratives outlining steps governments are proactively undertaking to combat trafficking, the 2024 TIP Report also implicates additional governments in perpetrating the crime itself with a “policy or pattern” of trafficking, now including 13 countries, with Belarus added back to the list and Sudan newly

added, alongside 11 countries that have remained on the list, including Cuba, DPRK, PRC, and Russia.

The Role and Impacts of Digital Technology on Human Trafficking

This year's TIP Report introduction examines the role of digital technology in the fight against human trafficking. In particular, it highlights how traffickers use digital technology in perpetuating and facilitating human trafficking, but also how digital technology can be used effectively by the anti-trafficking community to monitor and combat this heinous crime.

One example of the nexus of human trafficking and digital technology is the phenomenon of online scam operations, often run by local PRC-national-operated crime syndicates. These scam centers have been predominantly located in Southeast Asia, primarily in Burma, Cambodia, and Laos. The 2024 TIP Report documents the expansion of online scam operations from Southeast Asia to countries in the Western Hemisphere, Europe, Africa, and the Gulf, ensnaring victims from more than 60 countries.

But digital technology can also contribute to the solution as well. For example, digital technology can be used to disseminate information to help prevent trafficking and assist victims. It can also empower law enforcement to uncover a digital trail, helping bring perpetrators to justice.

Addressing human trafficking in today's world requires an understanding and use of digital technology to uncover evidence of trafficking, protect victims, prosecute perpetrators, and ideally, prevent this crime. These efforts will require governments, law enforcement, technology companies, and civil society to work

together to develop and utilize innovative technologies and approaches to address today's—and tomorrow's—challenges.

Topics of Special Interest

The introduction to this year's TIP Report also addresses other areas of interest, including Cuba's coercive labor-export program, in which tens of thousands of workers, the majority of whom are medical professionals, are sent around the world, but often have their wages taken by the Cuban government and are not free to leave the program.

Other topics of special interest include forced marriage, trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal, the intersection between trafficking and persons with disabilities, and the importance of worker empowerment as a tool in combating labor trafficking.

Survivor Engagement

The TIP Office remains committed to listening—and centering—the voices of those with lived experience of human trafficking. Partnering with survivors in meaningful ways—from drafting sections of this year's TIP Report introduction to advising us on our programming—is critical to establishing effective victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally competent anti-trafficking policies and strategies that address prevention, protection, and prosecution. Survivor input is a central tenet of the federal government's approach to combating human trafficking.

As a movement, we must engage survivors early and often in the development of our policies and programs. Allow me to share a few recent examples of State Department survivor engagement:

- This year, we were honored to have members of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking join the U.S. delegation at meetings of the Organization of American States and at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, delivering remarks on the importance of survivor leadership in anti-trafficking work and other topics, such as prevention strategies.
- A Council member again joined Cabinet officials and other leaders from across the government at the February meeting of the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.
- The TIP Office has increased funding for locally based and survivor-led initiatives through its foreign assistance programming. Earlier this year, we invited organizations to submit applications to provide technical assistance to foreign governments, civil society organizations, and/or public international organizations to establish survivor leadership and partnership structures around the world.

TIP Office Anti-Trafficking Foreign Assistance

While modest in size, our foreign assistance programs—which include bilateral and regional initiatives, Child Protection Compact partnerships, and our research-driven, evidence-based Program to End Modern Slavery projects—punch far above their weight in terms of reach and impact. Our multi-year, phased approach means that, as of the start of this year, we have more than 100 bilateral and regional projects in 84 countries totaling over \$240 million.

On the same day we launched the TIP Report, we also put out a solicitation for proposals to address recommendations in the Report. This includes potential new programming touching priority issues in every region of the world – for example, potential projects focused on online scam operations and reducing the reliance on victim testimony in criminal justice proceedings in the Western Hemisphere as well as addressing human trafficking in the Belt and Road Initiative.

We are also working to establish Child Protection Compact partnerships with several governments. And earlier this year, we launched the Partnership to Prevent Trafficking in Persons, or P2P, with the government of Zambia. The P2P program builds on the partnership model of the CPC program, but expands the anti-trafficking efforts to focus on adults as well as children.

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As long as there is a profit motive to exploit other human beings for gain, trafficking will exist. But working together, whether across the aisle or across the ocean, we can work to end this abhorrent practice.

So again, thank you for all of your support—and especially Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Wild, and Representatives Salazar, Amata, and Manning, as well as House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman McCaul, for shepherding the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2023 through the House. I very much hope to see passage of a Trafficking Victims Protection Act reauthorization this Congress.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.