

July 22, 2005 Vol. 11, Issue 11

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS WIDESPREAD, STATE DEPARTMENT FINDS

Law enforcement efforts to stop trafficking made gains in 2004, but police and immigration officials around the world were undermined by corrupt officials who colluded with brothel-keepers, sweatshop owners, and traffickers themselves. This corruption is slowing efforts to help the 600,000 to 800,000 people trafficked across international borders each year, and the many others who are trafficked within their own countries.

Those are among the findings of the 5th annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* from the U.S. State Department. Released in June, it concludes that four in five victims of trafficking are women and half are children. Most live in fear and misery.

“Trafficking is not simply a crime against human rights,” said Ambassador John R. Miller, the Department’s Senior Advisor on Trafficking in Persons. “It amounts to a public health menace and a rich source of financing for organized crime.”

This year, 14 countries were listed as “Tier 3” – the report’s worst rating. Just ten nations were placed in Tier 3 last year. The 14 nations on the 2005 Tier 3 list are: Bolivia, Burma, Cambodia, Cuba, Ecuador, Jamaica, Kuwait, North Korea, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Togo, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela. Tier 3 countries are subject to sanctions from the United States if they do not take significant anti-slavery actions.

Last year’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* placed 46 countries on its Tier 2 Watch list; 31 of those countries improved their ratings this year.

The report singles out South Korea, Sweden and Morocco for praise for taking strong steps to end human trafficking in the last year.

“All states must work together to close down trafficking routes, prosecute and convict traffickers, and protect and reintegrate victims into society,” Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in releasing the report. “The responsibility does not rest only with developing countries, whose citizens are vulnerable to trafficking because of poverty or corruption or lack of education. Destination or demand countries, like the United States and other prosperous nations, whose citizens create the marketplace for trafficking, also bear a heavy responsibility.”

Congress required the State Department to produce these annual reports in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. The report is designed to raise global awareness and spur governments to take actions to counter all forms of trafficking in persons. *It is available at www.state.gov/g/tip/.*