

Trafficking in Persons Report 2013

GREECE (Tier 2)

Greece is a transit, destination, and a very limited source country for women and children subjected to sex trafficking and for men, women, and children in forced labor. Women from Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, Nigeria, and some countries in Asia are subjected to sex trafficking in Greece. Victims of forced labor identified in Greece, primarily children and men, are from Albania, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, India, Moldova, Pakistan, Romania, and increasingly boys from Afghanistan. Victims are subjected to debt bondage in agriculture and construction. Hundreds of children, mainly Roma from Albania and Romania, are subjected to forced labor in Greece and made to sell goods on the street, beg, or commit petty theft. There was a reported increase in Roma children from Romania brought to Greece and forced to work. Roma from Bulgaria are increasingly brought to Greece on the promise of employment and subjected to forced begging; children are subjected to forced petty theft. Nigerian women are reportedly transported through the Aegean islands and through the Greek-Turkish border in Evros and instructed to file for asylum as Somalis; they are then subjected to sex trafficking in Athens and other major cities. Traffickers use voodoo curses, spiritual traditions, and threats against family to coerce Nigerian women into exploitation. Traffickers transport victims through Greece for forced labor and sex trafficking in Italy and other EU countries. Small numbers of Greek citizens are identified as victims of trafficking within the country. Asylum seekers from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan were vulnerable to debt bondage imposed by smugglers and trafficking offenders. Restaurants, nightclubs, yacht rental companies, and other small businesses serve as money laundering fronts for small cells of criminal trafficking networks.

The Government of Greece does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The government convicted more trafficking offenders compared to the previous reporting period and made efforts to train police and the judiciary on human trafficking issues during the year. While a lack of proactive investigations continued, there was strong collaboration between NGOs and anti-trafficking police on identified cases of trafficking and formal agreements enabled police to place victims in NGO shelters in spite of a lack of government funding for victim services. There was a continued need for long-term care for victims of trafficking and shelter for male victims. The government did not investigate or prosecute any public officials for alleged complicity in human trafficking offenses, even though there were allegations of low-level police involvement in trafficking.

Recommendations for Greece: Vigorously prosecute trafficking offenders, including officials alleged to be complicit in trafficking; continue to provide training and opportunities for knowledge sharing within the judiciary to ensure trafficking offenders are not prosecuted for lesser crimes with lenient penalties; enhance witness protection for victims and encourage their participation in investigations and prosecutions; improve screening for trafficking among asylum seekers, women in prostitution, and other vulnerable populations; ensure victims of trafficking are transferred out of detention to appropriate shelter and protection; increase the number of official certifications issued to identified victims of trafficking; encourage sustainable funding for anti-trafficking NGOs; reduce barriers to victims' pursuit of restitution or compensation; ensure access to assistance and shelter for male victims of trafficking and labor trafficking victims; ensure all victims are effectively afforded a reflection period in which to recover before deciding whether to cooperate with law enforcement; and strengthen the central authority to coordinate and monitor anti-trafficking efforts through a mandate of accountability within the inter-ministerial process.

Prosecution

The government improved its law enforcement efforts in 2012, convicting an increased number of trafficking offenders and providing specialized training for the judiciary; trials, however, continued to be lengthy—with an average of five years in duration—discouraging victims' participation in criminal proceedings. Greek Law 3064/2002 and Presidential Decree 233/2003 prohibit both sex trafficking and forced labor and prescribe punishments of up to 10 years' imprisonment with fines the equivalent of approximately \$14,000 to \$70,000. These penalties are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Labor actions and work stoppages by judges, prosecutors, and judicial officials during the reporting period exacerbated the problem of already lengthy trials, delaying efforts to hold trafficking offenders accountable. Prohibitively high court fees for victims to retain competent counsel also hampered efforts to bring cases to trial. There were reports of courts failing to provide interpretation services for trafficking cases and of weak witness protection efforts. The anti-trafficking police investigated 46 human trafficking cases in 2012, compared to 41 cases in 2011. Six investigations were for forced begging or labor. In 2012, the government prosecuted 177 defendants for human trafficking, a decrease from 220 in 2011 and 246 in 2010. Of these, 23 were prosecuted for labor trafficking. The government convicted 27 traffickers and acquitted 16, compared to 19 convictions and 14 acquittals in 2011. The resulting sentences ranged from one to 15 years' imprisonment. Courts frequently reduced charges against trafficking offenders to pimping, imposing more lenient penalties of up to five years' imprisonment and enabling traffickers to avoid jail time through payment of fines.

Police academies continued to provide anti-trafficking training, incorporating survivors' voices to promote increased sensitivity. The police maintained strong international collaboration on transnational anti-trafficking investigations and coordinated with Italy, Romania, Russia, Albania, and Bulgaria on trafficking cases. In one such case, 16 Romanians were held in forced labor picking oranges under debt bondage for their smuggling journey, having to pay rent to live in a decrepit barn and forced to buy food from the traffickers at exorbitant prices. High turnover in the anti-trafficking police unit reduced its effectiveness of investigations and NGOs reported that police did not conduct proactive investigations, although police improved efforts in responding to solid leads provided by the public. NGOs reported wide variation between judges' individual knowledge of trafficking and sensitivity in court to victims' symptoms of trauma. There were some reports of corruption among local police and vice officers, who accepted small bribes from traffickers or patronized establishments involved in human trafficking. Despite these reports, the Government of Greece did not report any investigations or prosecutions of public officials for alleged complicity in trafficking-related offenses during the reporting period.

Protection

The government maintained very modest efforts to protect victims of trafficking during the year, despite continued austerity measures. NGOs did not receive any government funding to serve victims of trafficking. The government continued to provide services to victims of trafficking through public health services, a short-term shelter and processing center for victims of trafficking and other forms of abuse, and two long-term shelters. Thirty-four victims stayed in government shelters during the reporting period. Other shelters serving victims of trafficking were run by faith-based NGOs with support from international donors. Victims had the freedom to come and go from shelters. Some small domestic NGOs closed during the reporting period due to lack of funding. Long-term care for victims of trafficking was lacking and there was no shelter available for men. Child victims were served in the government short-term shelter, facilities for unaccompanied minors, orphanages, or in separate units of adult detention centers. Many asylum seekers, including unaccompanied child migrants, were held in substandard

facilities and were not assessed for protection needs, leaving them vulnerable to human trafficking. NGOs reported police and immigration officials screened arriving migrants for potential trafficking, but the screenings were poorly implemented and lacked appropriate translation. The government identified 94 victims in 2012, of whom 25 were subjected to forced labor or begging, compared to 97 total victims identified in 2011. Only eight victims, however, received official certification allowing them access to government-provided care. Seventeen women and seven girls were served in government or NGO shelters and 22 victims received repatriation services. Victims who do not stay in shelters have access to legal services, psychological care, and basic social services. Formal agreements between NGOs and law enforcement enabled the government to transfer victims from law enforcement custody to various shelters. The government provided training on identifying victims of trafficking to border police, coast guard, and vice police. NGOs reported positive cooperation with police and the anti-trafficking unit but stressed that victim identification continues to be an area that should be improved. The government did not effectively screen women in prostitution to identify indicators of human trafficking.

The government issued new temporary residency permits to 56 foreign victims of trafficking in 2012, which afforded them the right to obtain employment in Greece—though employment opportunities were scarce. Advocates from NGOs accompanied victims to court to provide them emotional support; however, many victims were unwilling to testify due to fear of traffickers' retribution or their desire to return home before the conclusion of lengthy criminal proceedings. While victims are permitted to file civil suits against traffickers, the high costs and protracted delays involved in processing these suits deterred victims from pursuing restitution or damages. There were no reports of victims being prosecuted for acts committed as a result of their being trafficked during the year. NGOs reported that authorities temporarily placed victims of labor trafficking in jail due to lack of shelter. The government did not effectively grant victims of trafficking a reflection period, time in which to recover before deciding whether to cooperate with law enforcement, and often ordered foreign victims deported.

Prevention

The government maintained its prevention efforts through an anti-trafficking public awareness campaign on national television and radio stations, targeting potential victims of human trafficking. The campaign encouraged victims to seek help and informed them of their rights and available assistance regardless of victims' cooperation with authorities. The campaign also raised awareness and sensitized the public to the issue of human trafficking, and highlighted victim protection and punishment for traffickers. The government did not demonstrate efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts or forced labor. Despite growing anti-immigrant sentiment, authorities distributed cards printed in multiple languages with information on how to seek help to potential victims at border checkpoints and in immigration detention centers. In cooperation with UNHCR, the government distributed a booklet in Greek and English to front-line responders with guidelines on the protection of women and girls in the asylum process who are at risk of trafficking. In cooperation with UNICEF, the government ran public awareness campaigns on child sex trafficking. The government continued to implement the national action plan against human trafficking; however, the government lacked a central coordinating mechanism to measure accountability for actions to be taken under that plan. The government did not demonstrate efforts to reduce the demand for forced labor during the reporting period.