

trafficking and prescribes a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment or a fine of 50 million leones (\$6,000) for both sex and labor trafficking offenses. The ATPA's provision allowing convicted traffickers to be sentenced to just a fine provides for a penalty that is insufficiently stringent and not commensurate with the penalties for other serious crimes, such as rape. The government's national anti-trafficking taskforce reviewed the ATPA with an aim to revise the law, including by strengthening penalties for the trafficking of adults. The Sexual Offenses Act of 2012 prohibits child sex trafficking, prescribing penalties of a maximum of 15 years' imprisonment without the option of a fine, and requires the police to assist victims after receipt of a trafficking complaint and protect vulnerable witnesses.

During the reporting period, the government reported 54 investigations, six prosecutions, and no convictions of traffickers, compared with 21 investigations, one prosecution, and no convictions reported during the previous reporting period. Judicial inefficiency and procedural delays required victims to travel frequently to the capital for court appearances, which was difficult and costly; as a result, the vast majority of trafficking cases were not prosecuted. In addition, some victims were unwilling to testify. Rather than pursue cases in court, the government allowed some trafficking cases to be settled through mediation. Data collection remained weak, particularly within the judiciary; therefore, the Ministry of Justice was unable to provide comprehensive law enforcement statistics. The government did not report whether it provided training for police, prosecutors, or other law enforcement officials on trafficking in persons during the reporting period. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking offenses during the reporting period; however, corruption, particularly within the judiciary, remained a problem.

PROTECTION

The government sustained modest efforts to protect trafficking victims. Although the government did not gather comprehensive victim identification data, it reported the identification of 65 new trafficking victims during the reporting period; the majority of victims were women. NGOs assisted 85 trafficking victims (including nine whom they continued to assist from the previous reporting period), 65 new victims referred by the government, and 11 victims referred by other entities during the reporting period. In October 2015, the government requested from the Government of Lebanon the repatriation of two Sierra Leonean female domestic workers it believed were subjected to trafficking in Lebanon. The women remained in Lebanon at the conclusion of the reporting period. The government also worked to repatriate 40 Sierra Leonean women who had been subjected to trafficking in previous years in Kuwait and Lebanon and worked with an international organization and the Government of Kuwait to repatriate nine women subjected to forced labor in Kuwait during the last reporting period. There are no state-run shelters for trafficking victims and the government did not provide funding to any NGO shelters for their assistance to trafficking victims. However, government social workers and prosecutors continued to provide psychosocial services and legal representation to victims residing in NGO-run shelters. During the reporting period, the government and NGO partners began to use a national referral mechanism for trafficking victims adopted during the last reporting period. The law provides alternatives to removal to countries in which victims would face retribution or hardship, including temporary residency; however, no cases were identified during the reporting

period whereby victims could benefit from this provision. There were no reports the government detained, fined, or jailed victims for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being subjected to trafficking.

PREVENTION

The government sustained modest efforts to prevent trafficking. During the reporting period, government personnel who would otherwise focus on trafficking issues were seconded to assist in Ebola response and recovery efforts. Nonetheless, the government included awareness-raising about trafficking in persons in its nationwide programs to sensitize local communities about Ebola. The national anti-trafficking taskforce approved and implemented, as of August 2015, the national action plan on combating trafficking in persons. In an effort to expand protections for migrant laborers, including foreign workers employed in Sierra Leone and Sierra Leoneans going abroad, the Ministry of Labor and Employment continued to conduct investigations of all recruitment agencies and implemented strict licensing procedures; during the last reporting period, the government banned the use of recruitment fees and prohibited foreign nationals from operating recruitment agencies within the country.

As a result of a government investigation in June 2014, the government publicly declared a recruitment agency to be disreputable for engaging in fraudulent transactions with persons seeking to obtain jobs in other countries, and shut down the company. The government continued investigating the company during the current reporting period. The government did not provide anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel. The government took no discernible efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex or forced labor during the reporting period.

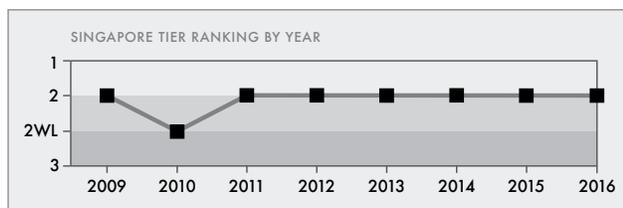
SINGAPORE: Tier 2

Singapore is a destination country for men, women, and girls from other Asian countries subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor, and a transit country for Cambodian and Filipino men subjected to forced labor on fishing vessels that transit through Singapore or its territorial waters. Some of the 1.37 million foreign workers that comprise approximately one-third of Singapore's total labor force are vulnerable to trafficking; most victims migrate willingly for work in construction, domestic service, performing arts, manufacturing, the service industry, or in the commercial sex industry. NGOs report an increase in domestic workers from Cambodia and Burma, many of whom experience language barriers and lack access to mobile phones, increasing their isolation and vulnerability to trafficking. NGO-released research found that some domestic workers in Singapore experience conditions indicative of forced labor including restriction on their movement and communications; verbal, physical, or sexual threats and abuse; and lack of a weekly day off of work (though the latter is legally required). In September 2014, the Burmese government imposed a ban on legal emigration to Singapore for domestic work, citing concerns of abuse and non-payment of wages. Although Singapore law limits agency fees, many foreign workers assume large debts to recruitment agencies in both Singapore and their home countries, making them vulnerable to forced labor, including debt bondage. Victims are also compelled into sex or labor exploitation through illegal withholding of their pay, threats of forced repatriation without pay, restrictions on movement,

and physical and sexual abuse. Passport confiscation, although illegal, remains a widespread and largely accepted practice; research conducted by the government in 2014 found six out of 10 foreign work permit holders did not possess their passports and work permits. Foreign workers have credible fears of losing their work visas and being deported, since employers have the ability to repatriate workers legally at any time during their contracts with minimal notice. Unscrupulous employers exploit the non-transferability of low-skilled work visas to control or manipulate workers. Some employers in Singapore rely on repatriation companies to seize, confine, and escort foreign workers to the airport for departure from Singapore, including through the use of assaults, threats, and coercion, to prevent them from complaining about abuses to authorities.

Foreign women sometimes enter Singapore with the intention of engaging in prostitution but are subjected to forced prostitution under the threat of serious harm, including financial harm, or other forms of coercion. Child sex trafficking involving both foreign and Singaporean boys and girls occurs in Singapore, and there have been cases of Singaporean men engaging in child sex tourism in other countries. Men are subjected to forced labor on long-haul fishing vessels that depart from Singapore or dock in Singaporean ports; some agencies in Singapore use deceptive tactics to recruit Filipino and Cambodian men for this work. Some foreign seamen reportedly suffer severe abuse by fishing boat captains, the inability to disembark from their vessels—sometimes for years—the inability to terminate their contracts, and non-payment of wages. Some of these men transit Singapore before embarking onto vessels from ports in other countries.

The Government of Singapore does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The government increased training for front-line law enforcement officers and obtained its first conviction under the 2015 anti-trafficking law. In that case, the convicted sex trafficker received a stringent sentence of six years and three months' imprisonment and a fine of 30,000 Singaporean dollars (\$22,400). Authorities initiated one additional child sex trafficking prosecution, and 11 other suspects remained under investigation—including one for labor trafficking offenses. Singapore has never convicted a labor trafficker. The government expanded some assistance to victims through government programs for vulnerable groups, but did not ensure all victims systematically received protection. The government launched a new national approach against trafficking in persons to follow on the work completed under its national action plan, which was completed in 2015. Singapore acceded to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol in September 2015.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SINGAPORE:

Using the 2015 anti-trafficking law, increase investigations and prosecutions of trafficking offenses, including debt bondage, and convictions and punishments of both sex and labor traffickers; increase specialized training for officials on use of the new law to identify victims and investigate cases, with a

focus on identifying non-physical forms of coercion; increase resources for investigative and prosecutorial training on human trafficking for Ministry of Manpower officials who handle labor violations; dedicate a budget for specialized trafficking victim protection, develop formal policies to ensure all victims receive robust protections, and provide increased funding to non-governmental shelters assisting potential victims; improve victim identification procedures, with a focus on psychological coercion, to ensure victims are not punished for acts committed as a result of being subjected to trafficking; provide all victims incentives to participate in investigations and prosecutions, including through legal assistance to seek compensation and temporary employment passes, transparent communication with service providers during the duration of court cases, and a victim-centered approach to law enforcement efforts; expand cooperation with and funding to NGOs, particularly in victim protection and support; and increase awareness campaigns to encourage public support of anti-trafficking efforts.

PROSECUTION

The government achieved the first conviction under its trafficking law, but overall trafficking prosecutions and convictions remained limited. The Prevention of Human Trafficking Act prohibits all forms of human trafficking and prescribes penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and fines up to 100,000 Singapore dollars (\$75,700), which are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes. In addition, article 140 of the Women's Charter prohibits forced prostitution involving detention or physical force and article 141 prohibits the movement of women and girls for "trafficking" but does not define the term. Penalties prescribed for sex trafficking offenses in the Women's Charter include a maximum of five years' imprisonment, which are sufficiently stringent but not commensurate with other serious crimes.

In 2015, authorities investigated 50 potential sex trafficking cases, four of which, involving 12 suspects, were substantiated as trafficking cases; 26 cases were dismissed without further action; and 20 cases involving 15 suspects were investigated for other offenses. Among the cases positively identified as sex trafficking, the courts prosecuted and convicted one suspect for child sex trafficking under the new trafficking law; the suspect was sentenced to six years and three months' imprisonment and a fine of 30,000 Singaporean dollars (\$22,400). One additional suspect was charged under the trafficking law for child sex trafficking and is pending court proceedings, and 10 other suspects remain under investigation for violation of the trafficking law. Authorities investigated 55 potential labor trafficking cases; one case remains under investigation for violation of the anti-trafficking law, and the others were addressed as employment-related complaints or dismissed. The government initiated prosecution of a Singaporean couple who allegedly starved a domestic worker, forced her to work excessive hours, and restricted her access to communication under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA) for a lesser offense which carries a maximum punishment of a one-year prison term or the option of a fine; the couple pled guilty and had not been sentenced by the close of the reporting period. Labor trafficking charges were dismissed in four cases initiated in the previous year; officials pursued lesser offenses under the EFMA. In comparison, the government prosecuted 11 suspects and did not convict any traffickers in 2014. The government incorporated anti-trafficking materials into its routine training for front-line police and Ministry of Manpower enforcement officers. However, authorities continued to face

challenges in identifying and building evidence in trafficking cases, particularly labor trafficking. Singapore has never obtained a labor trafficking conviction. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking.

PROTECTION

The government continued limited efforts to protect victims, but victim identification was sometimes ineffective and services were provided only on a case-by-case basis. Police and labor officials had standard operating procedures for identifying victims, and the government had a victim referral process among government officials, civil society organizations, and foreign embassies. The total number of victims identified or provided services in 2015 is unknown; there were 34 potential victims in sex trafficking cases investigated by authorities and 94 in potential labor trafficking cases investigated. Of these, the government officially recognized seven as sex trafficking victims (six girls and one boy) and seven as labor trafficking victims (seven adults). The government and NGOs often disagreed as to whether specific cases amounted to trafficking. Local NGOs reported officials failed to recognize key indicators of trafficking when interviewing potential victims, particularly in cases where individuals were compelled into sex or labor exploitation through psychological coercion or debt bondage—rather than physical confinement—or among individuals who initially consented to migrate for work in a specific sector and were subsequently subjected to trafficking in that sector (including the commercial sex industry). Officials reportedly faced difficulty in legally substantiating cases of domestic servitude—even when physical abuse, restriction of movement, withholding of wages, or document confiscation were present.

Authorities had the discretion to provide services on a case-by-case basis; there were no formal policies ensuring victims' access to services, and not all victims received the same level of protection. The 2014 trafficking law mandates some protections for child victims, including access to shelter and a requirement that their testimony be held via videoconference. Government-provided benefits could include shelter, medical services, counseling, interpretation, and temporary work permits. NGOs report that counseling, medical, and interpretation services provided by the government were not always sufficient. The government provides funding and oversight to 22 shelters serving vulnerable children, and six shelters for adults. Some victims—including those the government did not formally acknowledge as victims—received shelter and services from NGOs that did not receive support from the government or shelters maintained by foreign embassies. The government granted an increasing number of victims special passes or work permits that allowed them to temporarily live or work legally in Singapore. Although access to this benefit is not guaranteed, NGOs report the majority of victims recognized by the government could obtain work permits under Singapore's Temporary Job Scheme. The Seafarers' Welfare Centre, run by NGOs with cooperation from the government, provided basic humanitarian assistance to distressed fishermen, including potential trafficking victims, or referred them to their respective embassies. The government reported such victims would be eligible to receive special passes to temporarily remain in Singapore legally and receive government services, though no such victims were identified or assisted during the reporting period.

The government reported a policy not to punish victims for crimes committed as a direct result of being subjected to

trafficking, although it was not clear there was a legal basis in Singaporean law on which victims could rely. According to NGOs and foreign embassies, inadequate victim identification resulted in the possibility that trafficking victims were among the individuals arrested and penalized for prostitution violations. The government offered limited assistance for some victims participating in investigations and prosecutions of trafficking offenses, but many victims declined participation. Some victims reportedly did not wish to file official complaints with authorities for fear of losing work permits or being forced to remain in the country and participate in a prosecution. The lack of overall incentives for victims to remain in Singapore and participate in court cases interfered with the success of law enforcement efforts to address trafficking. NGOs and foreign embassies reported coordination between public and private stakeholders has improved, but the government's lack of detailed feedback regarding ongoing cases remained a problem and interfered with service providers' ability to assist victims. The government did not provide long-term alternatives to removal to countries where victims may face hardship or retribution.

PREVENTION

The government continued efforts to prevent trafficking. The government's interagency taskforce completed implementation of Singapore's national action plan and developed a new national approach against trafficking in persons—a strategy to guide its efforts following completion of the national action plan—which it launched in March 2016. The taskforce increased collaboration with U.S. government enforcement agencies and sought out and funded specialized training, including a high-level visit to the United States to study victim-centered approaches, which they subsequently incorporated into their local training. The taskforce conducted campaigns through social media, newspapers, television, posters, and other outreach materials to educate workers on their rights, raise public awareness of trafficking, and publicize efforts to punish employers for trafficking-related violations. The government took law enforcement action against employers for workplace violations and investigated and imposed fines on some unlicensed employment agencies or for committed other illegal practices that could facilitate trafficking. NGOs report that some agencies still committed such acts, such as contract switching and charging workers fees over the legal limit. The government provided anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel. The government made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts and forced labor. Singapore acceded to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol in September 2015.

SLOVAKIA: Tier 1

The Slovak Republic, or Slovakia, is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor. Slovak men and women are subjected to forced labor in agriculture and construction in Western Europe, primarily in the United Kingdom (UK). Most victims are Slovak women, who are subjected to sex trafficking in Germany, Austria, the UK, Ireland, Switzerland, Poland, and other European countries. Ukrainian, Moldovan, Bulgarian, Romanian, Thai, and Vietnamese men and women are subjected to forced labor in Slovakia. Eastern European women are also reportedly transported to and through Slovakia and forced into prostitution within the country and throughout Europe. Roma from marginalized communities are disproportionately vulnerable to trafficking. Slovak children of Romani descent are