

U.S. included in annual trafficking report rankings for first time

WASHINGTON - The United States is included in the State Department's annual report on human trafficking for the first time in the report's 10-year history.

"We have an involuntary servitude problem now just as we always have throughout history," said Ambassador-at-Large Luis CdeBaca of the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

He told journalists June 14 that putting the United States in the report was common sense, "as we work toward a lead-by-example diplomacy."

The State Department's trafficking office released its 2010 Trafficking in Persons report, a 177-country report assessing and ranking governments' efforts to fight human trafficking. The State Department estimates that 12.3 million children and adults worldwide suffer forced labor, bonded labor and forced prostitution; 56 percent of them were women and children. It said only 49,105 of the total victims have been identified.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the report shows Americans that human trafficking is "not someone else's problem."

"Involuntary servitude is not something we can ignore or hope doesn't exist in our own community," Clinton said.

The United States was ranked as a Tier 1 country, meaning it meets the minimum standards of the 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act. However, this ranking does not mean the country is free from modern-day slavery.

“The United States is a source, transit and destination country,” for trafficked men, women and children, the report stated.

“Trafficking occurs primarily for labor and most commonly in domestic servitude, agriculture, manufacturing, janitorial services, hotel services, construction, health and elder care, hair and nail salons, and strip-club dancing,” the report said.

It said the United States fully complies with minimum standards for eliminating trafficking by sustaining law-enforcement efforts and continuing to “encourage a victim-centered approach.” However, it said, “prioritizing trafficking cases and continued training are required to increase the number of cases prosecuted and victims identified.”

The 2010 report listed 13 countries as Tier 3 countries, meaning their governments “do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.”

Myanmar, Congo, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Iran, Kuwait, North Korea, Mauritania, Papua New Guinea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Zimbabwe all were given Tier 3 rankings.

At the June 14 news conference, Clinton said some countries have approached the United States asking “very forcefully” not to be given a low ranking.

She said the U.S. response was “to tell them the kinds of things that we would look to that would demonstrate the commitment that we think would make a difference.”

“Some countries have listened, and the results speak for themselves. Others have not,” Clinton said.

While 23 countries received upgraded rankings in the 2010 report, 19 countries

were downgraded.

The report also noted that 104 countries lack laws to prevent trafficking victims from being deported and that transnational migrants often fall prey to traffickers.

It said 62 countries have not convicted traffickers in their criminal justice systems in compliance with the Palermo Protocols, which criminalize all forms of human trafficking and urge governments to take the “3P” approach – prevention, criminal prosecution and victim protection.

Trafficking collectively earns traffickers about \$32 billion annually.