



# TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

## JUNE 2019



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**ERITREA ONLY  
plus selected  
general information**



## TIER PLACEMENT

The Department places each country in this Report onto one of four tiers, as mandated by the TVPA. This placement is based not on the size of the country’s problem but on the extent of governments’ efforts to meet the TVPA’s minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking (see page 40-41), which are generally consistent with the Palermo Protocol.

While Tier 1 is the highest ranking, it does not mean that a country has no human trafficking problem or that it is doing enough to address the problem. Rather, a Tier 1 ranking indicates that a government has made efforts to address the problem that meet the TVPA’s minimum standards. To maintain a Tier 1 ranking, governments need to demonstrate appreciable progress each year in combating trafficking. Indeed, Tier 1 represents a responsibility rather than a reprieve.

Tier rankings and narratives in the 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report reflect an assessment of the following:

- enactment of laws prohibiting severe forms of trafficking in persons, as defined by the TVPA, and provision of criminal punishments for trafficking offenses;
- criminal penalties prescribed for human trafficking offenses with a maximum of at least four years’ deprivation of liberty, or a more severe penalty;
- implementation of human trafficking laws through vigorous prosecution of the prevalent forms of trafficking in the country and sentencing of offenders;
- proactive victim identification measures with systematic procedures to guide law enforcement and other government-supported front-line responders in the process of victim identification;
- government funding and partnerships with NGOs to provide victims with access to primary health care, counseling, and shelter, allowing them to recount their trafficking experiences to trained social counselors and law enforcement in an environment of minimal pressure;
- victim protection efforts that include access to services and shelter without detention and with legal alternatives to removal to countries in which victims would face retribution or hardship;
- the extent to which a government ensures victims are provided with legal and other assistance and that, consistent with domestic law, proceedings are not prejudicial to victims’ rights, dignity, or psychological well-being;
- the extent to which a government ensures the safe, humane, and to the extent possible, voluntary repatriation and reintegration of victims;
- governmental measures to prevent human trafficking, including efforts to curb practices identified as contributing factors to human trafficking, such as employers’ confiscation of foreign workers’ passports and allowing labor recruiters to charge fees to prospective migrants; and
- governmental efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts and international sex tourism.

Keeya’s neighbors in Botswana knew her family was struggling to pay for her education and offered her a scholarship to a good college and free accommodations in the United States in exchange for working at their daycare center. When she arrived in the United States, she called the family she was supposed to work for and they gave her another number to call, telling her never to call them again. When Keeya eventually arrived at her new family’s home, the woman there confiscated her identity documents, forced her to work as her nanny, and physically and verbally abused her for more than a year. The trafficker eventually kicked Keeya out of her home after she sought medical attention at a hospital. Eventually, Keeya was able to find help, connect with law enforcement, and secure a job and safe place to live. She is now a survivor advocate who speaks out publicly about human trafficking to raise awareness in an effort to help others.

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**“We strongly believe that the work we do as survivors matters. Our work on the Council is grounded in hope and integrity and a shared mission that meaningfully calls upon each of its members and the agencies with which we collaborate.”**

*– Tanya Street  
 Survivor Advocate and Member  
 of the U.S. Advisory Council on  
 Human Trafficking*

.....  
“These are poor regions with high illiteracy rates. If a relative or friend turns up offering someone a job, it is often the girls’ parents themselves who encourage them to go, without realizing what is really happening. It is the perfect breeding ground for traffickers.”

– Anuradha Koirala  
founder of Maiti Nepal



A Uighur woman cries for her husband who was detained in a Chinese internment camp. Many Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and ethnic Kyrgyz detained in these camps have experienced forced labor.

Tier rankings and narratives are NOT affected by the following:

- efforts, however laudable, undertaken exclusively by nongovernmental actors in the country;
- general public awareness events—government-sponsored or otherwise—lacking concrete ties to the prosecution of traffickers, protection of victims, or prevention of trafficking; and
- broad-based law enforcement or developmental initiatives.

## A GUIDE TO THE TIERS

### *Tier 1*

Countries whose governments fully meet the TVPA’s minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.

### *Tier 2*

Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA’s minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

### *Tier 2 Watch List*

Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA’s minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards, and for which:

- a) the absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing;
- b) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, including increased investigations, prosecution, and convictions of trafficking crimes, increased assistance to victims, and decreasing evidence of complicity in severe forms of trafficking by government officials; or





Two girls break rocks at a mine. Some owners of remote mines force children to carry out this dangerous work, including carrying heavy loads and breaking rocks.

When Fateh, Hassan, and Emir's father died, they inherited the debt he owed to the owner of the brick kiln where he worked. Through manipulation and deceit, the debt had ballooned in the ten years since its origination and continued to do so after the three brothers assumed it. The brick kiln owner forced Fateh, Hassan, and Emir to work for 13 years as bonded laborers, during which they endured 14-hour days molding and hauling heavy bricks, constant harassment, and physical abuse. The brothers were able to escape and sought assistance from a local NGO. With the help of a local government official, they received release certificates freeing them from the false debts and local law enforcement filed charges against their trafficker.

- c) the determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional steps over the next year.

### Tier 3

Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

No tier ranking is permanent. Every country, including the United States, can do more. All countries must maintain and continually increase efforts to combat trafficking.

## FUNDING RESTRICTIONS FOR TIER 3 COUNTRIES

Pursuant to the TVPA, governments of countries on Tier 3 may be subject to certain restrictions on assistance, whereby the President may determine not to provide U.S. government nonhumanitarian, nontrade-related foreign assistance. In addition, the President may determine to withhold funding for government official or employee participation in educational and cultural exchange programs for certain Tier 3 countries. Consistent with the TVPA, the President may also determine to instruct the U.S. Executive Director of each multilateral development bank and the International Monetary Fund to vote against and use his or her best efforts to deny any loans or other uses of the institutions' funds to a designated Tier 3 country for most purposes (except for humanitarian, trade-related, and certain development-related assistance). Alternatively, the President may waive application of the foregoing restrictions upon a determination that the provision to a Tier 3 country of such assistance would promote the purposes of the TVPA or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States. The TVPA also authorizes the President to waive funding restrictions if necessary to avoid significant adverse effects on vulnerable populations, including women and children.

Applicable funding restrictions apply for the next Fiscal Year, which begins October 1, 2019.

# TIER PLACEMENTS

## TIER 1

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ARGENTINA	CHILE	GEORGIA	NETHERLANDS	SWEDEN
AUSTRALIA	COLOMBIA	GUYANA	NEW ZEALAND	SWITZERLAND
AUSTRIA	CYPRUS	ISRAEL	NORWAY	TAIWAN
THE BAHAMAS	CZECH REPUBLIC	JAPAN	PHILIPPINES	UNITED KINGDOM
BAHRAIN	ESTONIA	KOREA, SOUTH	PORTUGAL	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BELGIUM	FINLAND	LITHUANIA	SLOVENIA	
CANADA	FRANCE	LUXEMBOURG	SPAIN	

## TIER 2

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ALBANIA	EGYPT	KENYA	NIGER	SLOVAKIA
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA	EL SALVADOR	KOSOVO	NIGERIA	SOLOMON ISLANDS
ARMENIA	ESWATINI	KUWAIT	OMAN	SURINAME
ARUBA	ETHIOPIA	LATVIA	PAKISTAN	TAJIKISTAN
BENIN	GERMANY	LEBANON	PALAU	THAILAND
BOTSWANA	GHANA	MACAU	PANAMA	TIMOR-LESTE
BRAZIL	GREECE	MACEDONIA	PARAGUAY	TOGO
BULGARIA	GUATEMALA	MADAGASCAR	PERU	TONGA
BURKINA FASO	GUINEA	MALI	POLAND	TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
CABO VERDE	HAITI	MALTA	QATAR	TUNISIA
CAMEROON	HONDURAS	MAURITIUS	RWANDA	TURKEY
CHAD	HONG KONG	MEXICO	ST. LUCIA	UGANDA
COSTA RICA	ICELAND	MICRONESIA	ST. MAARTEN	UKRAINE
COTE D'IVOIRE	INDIA	MOLDOVA	ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
CROATIA	INDONESIA	MONGOLIA	SENEGAL	URUGUAY
DENMARK	IRELAND	MOROCCO	SERBIA	ZAMBIA
DJIBOUTI	ITALY	MOZAMBIQUE	SEYCHELLES	ZIMBABWE
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	JAMAICA	NAMIBIA	SINGAPORE	
ECUADOR	JORDAN	NEPAL		

## TIER 2 WATCH LIST

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AFGHANISTAN	BOLIVIA	GUINEA-BISSAU	MALAWI	SOUTH AFRICA
ALGERIA	BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	HUNGARY	MALAYSIA	SRI LANKA
ANGOLA	CAMBODIA	IRAQ	MALDIVES	SUDAN
AZERBAIJAN	CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	KAZAKHSTAN	MARSHALL ISLANDS	TANZANIA
BANGLADESH	CONGO, REPUBLIC OF THE	KYRGYZ REPUBLIC	MONTENEGRO	UZBEKISTAN
BARBADOS	CURAÇAO	LAOS	NICARAGUA	VIETNAM
BELIZE	FIJI	LESOTHO	ROMANIA	
BRUNEI	GABON	LIBERIA	SIERRA LEONE	

## TIER 3

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BELARUS	COMOROS	ERITREA	PAPUA NEW GUINEA	TURKMENISTAN
BHUTAN	CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REP. OF THE	THE GAMBIA	RUSSIA	VENEZUELA
BURMA	CUBA	IRAN	SAUDI ARABIA	
BURUNDI	EQUATORIAL GUINEA	KOREA, NORTH	SOUTH SUDAN	
CHINA (PRC)		MAURITANIA	SYRIA	

## SPECIAL CASE

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LIBYA	SOMALIA	YEMEN
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# AFRICA

Boundary representation is not authoritative.

## TIER PLACEMENTS



YEAR	PROSECUTIONS	CONVICTIONS	VICTIMS IDENTIFIED	NEW OR AMENDED LEGISLATION
2012	493 (273)	252 (177)	10,043 (6,544)	4
2013	572 (245)	341 (192)	10,096 (2,250)	7
2014	811 (49)	317 (33)	9,523 (1,308)	4
2015	1,517 (53)	719 (8)	12,125 (3,531)	6
2016	1,293 (54)	1,120 (21)	18,296 (13,205)	4
2017	1,325 (98)	515 (34)	26,517 (5,902)	2
2018	1,253 (37)	1,190 (29)	24,407(3,749)	2

The above statistics are estimates derived from data provided by foreign governments and other sources and reviewed by the Department of State. Aggregate data fluctuates from one year to the next due to the hidden nature of trafficking crimes, dynamic global events, shifts in government efforts, and a lack of uniformity in national reporting structures. The numbers in parentheses are those of labor trafficking prosecutions, convictions, and victims identified.

home. The government provided \$50,000 to an NGO providing services to female victims of violence, including likely trafficking victims. The government did not have formal procedures to identify or refer trafficking victims to care. The government had no formal policies to provide foreign trafficking victims legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they might face retribution or hardship. High-level government officials' expressions of interest in combatting trafficking in persons during the reporting period translated to limited tangible improvement in working level officials' capacity to identify proactively victims of trafficking.

Police and border officials solicited bribes from detainees—the majority of whom were young foreign men, although children and women were also detained—and deported those who did not pay. In 2018, there were no verified reports authorities penalized trafficking victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit; however, due to a lack of formal victim identification procedures and reports of officials requiring bribes from detainees, some unidentified trafficking victims may have been penalized.

### PREVENTION

The government increased efforts to prevent trafficking. During the reporting period, the government convened its anti-trafficking inter-ministerial committee multiple times and coordinated with international organizations, foreign governments, and civil society to draft and approve a 2019-2021 national action plan to improve its ability to prosecute traffickers, proactively identify victims, and raise awareness in the capital and on the mainland; however, the government did not report allocating a budget to implement the action plan during the reporting period. The government convened its inter-ministerial committee once in the previous reporting period.

In 2018, officials launched an awareness raising campaign using multiple media platforms including radio, television, and social media to increase the population's understanding of trafficking in persons; the government funded and provided official space for at least two week-long seminars on the mainland and in the capital to raise the public's awareness about trafficking in persons. Prostitution was legal in the country and, in an attempt to decrease exploitation of vulnerable individuals and demand for commercial sex acts by increasing the cost of purchasing sex, the government continued implementing regulations requiring all commercial sex establishments to register and provide contracts to their workers.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Security continued to implement regulations for all companies to sign formal labor contracts with their employees, and created and advertised an anonymous reporting portal for labor violations, including forced and child labor. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security continued to partner with the non-governmental General Director of the National Financial Research Organization to inspect businesses and ensure firms complied with labor laws, fining multiple Chinese companies in 2018; some of these fines may have been in response to trafficking violations. In February 2019, the government issued a public decree prohibiting children from working as street vendors, resulting in increased public awareness of forced child labor. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) instructed diplomats posted abroad to review visa applications for signs of trafficking, resulting in MFA officials denying multiple applications from Cameroonians and Nigerians based on potential trafficking indicators. The government did not report taking any further

action on these visa denials. During the reporting period, the government funded \$1.3 million for UN programming to advance human rights within Equatorial Guinea; some of these programs addressed human trafficking.

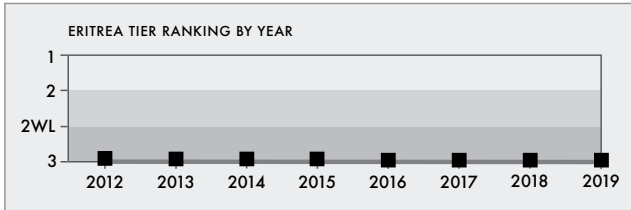
### TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Equatorial Guinea. The majority of trafficking victims are exploited in the cities of Malabo, Bata, and Mongomo, where relative wealth and security make the country an attractive destination for Central and West African migrant workers. Equatoguinean traffickers exploit local and foreign women in the commercial sex trade in these cities. Lower oil prices and oil production in recent years caused a contraction of the country's economy, leading to a decreased government budget for social welfare programming, and shrinking formal economic activity. Experts noted the sustained economic downturn resulted in Equatoguineans in urban centers replacing some foreign domestic servants with children from rural areas in Equatorial Guinea, who they then subject to forced labor. LGBTI youth are often left homeless and stigmatized by their families and society, increasing their vulnerability to trafficking. Equatoguinean business owners reportedly subject children from nearby countries—primarily Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Togo, and Gabon—to forced labor as domestic workers, market laborers, vendors, and launderers. Traffickers recruit individuals from Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and other African countries, as well as from Latin America and the Caribbean for work in Equatorial Guinea, and sometimes subject them to forced labor or forced prostitution. Foreign firms recruit Chinese nationals to migrate to Equatorial Guinea for work or to engage in prostitution, and subject some of them to passport confiscation, increasing their vulnerability to forced labor or sex trafficking. Companies in the construction sector, among others, also held the passports of foreign workers, increasing their vulnerability to forced labor. Experts reported corrupt and complicit officials—including senior members of the government—participated in trafficking-related crimes during the reporting period.

## ERITREA: TIER 3

The Government of Eritrea does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so; therefore Eritrea remained on Tier 3. Despite the lack of significant efforts, during the reporting year the government cooperated with an international organization to host and facilitate a conference on compliance with international conventions on organized crime, particularly on trafficking, and trained some Eritrean prosecutors and law enforcement officials. However, the government continued to subject its nationals to forced labor in its compulsory national service and citizen militia by forcing them to serve for indefinite or otherwise arbitrary periods. The government did not report any trafficking investigations, prosecutions, or the identification and protection of any victims. The government did not report holding any complicit officials accountable for trafficking crimes. Authorities did not report the development of formal procedures for the identification and referral of victims to care, nor did the government report providing any services directly to victims. The government regularly conflated trafficking with transnational migration or smuggling.





### PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Enforce existing limits on the length of active national service to 18 months and cease the use of threats and physical punishment for non-compliance. • Develop, enact, and enforce an anti-trafficking statute that criminalizes all forms of trafficking, including sex trafficking and forced labor, clearly differentiating between emigration, smuggling, and human trafficking. • Provide protective services to trafficking victims. • Extend existing labor protections to persons performing national service and other mandatory citizen duties. • Continue and strengthen partnerships with international organizations to provide training to all levels of the government, specifically law enforcement and border guard officials, on identifying and responding to trafficking crimes.

### PROSECUTION

The government maintained negligible anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. The Eritrean Penal Code of 2015 criminalized some forms of trafficking in persons. Article 315 criminalized trafficking in women and young persons for sexual exploitation, which was punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment; these penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with punishments prescribed for other serious crimes, such as kidnapping. Article 297 criminalized enslavement and prescribed penalties of seven to 16 years' imprisonment, which were sufficiently stringent. Article 299 criminalized forced labor and prescribed penalties from six to 12 months' imprisonment or a fine of 20,000 to 50,000 nakfa (\$1,330-\$3,330). These penalties were not sufficiently stringent.

The government did not report investigating, prosecuting, or convicting suspected traffickers during the reporting period. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking, but sources indicated Eritrean military officers may have been complicit in smuggling, and possibly trafficking offenses; during the previous reporting period, unconfirmed reports claimed the government arrested 44 military officials for conspiracy to subject Eritreans to migration-related crimes and possibly trafficking. The government did not report providing any trafficking-specific training for judicial, prosecutorial, or law enforcement personnel; however, for the first time, in January 2019, it cooperated with an international organization to host and facilitate a conference on compliance with international conventions on organized crime, to include trafficking, which reached an unknown number of prosecutors and law enforcement officials who participated. The government continued to conflate transnational migration and human trafficking crimes.

### PROTECTION

The government did not report any efforts to identify or protect trafficking victims. The government did not have formal procedures to proactively identify trafficking victims

among vulnerable groups, particularly those fleeing the country, primarily to Sudan and Ethiopia; some of these nationals were vulnerable to being indiscriminately arrested, detained, harassed, or forcibly recalled into national service. The government did not report having or developing a systematic mechanism for the referral of identified trafficking victims to care. In addition, it did not provide information on its funding for victim protection, any incentives for victims to assist in trafficking investigations or prosecutions, and it did not report providing foreign victims with legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they faced retribution or hardship.

### PREVENTION

The government maintained negligible efforts to prevent trafficking. It provided minimal information regarding any Eritrean national action plan but sought assistance from international entities to develop interstate cooperative agreements on organized crime, to include trafficking. In recent years, the government reportedly educated its citizens on the dangers of irregular migration and trafficking through awareness-raising events, poster campaigns, and mass convocations and exhortations, through the National Union of Eritrean Women, National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, and National Confederation of Eritrean Workers; however, such efforts conflated transnational migration and human trafficking. It continued to subject its nationals to forced labor in its compulsory national service and citizen militia. While the Proclamation of National Service 11/199 prohibited the recruitment of children younger than 18 years of age into the armed forces and applied sufficiently stringent penalties for this crime, previous reports alleged some children younger than 18 were sent to *Sawa* military and training academy for completion of their final year of secondary education. The government did not report on its efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts or forced labor, or its provision of anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel.

### TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic victims in Eritrea, and traffickers exploit victims from Eritrea abroad. Perennially, thousands of Eritreans who fled the country are smuggled migrants seeking to be reunited with family members already overseas; those who sought to escape human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest and detention, lack of due process, and religious persecution; were in search of better economic opportunities; or hoped to avoid the often indefinite periods of service in the government's mandatory National Service. Proclamation 82 of 1995 requires all persons aged 18 to 40 years to perform compulsory active national service ostensibly for a period of 18 months—six months of military training followed by 12 months of duty in a variety of military, security, or public service positions. However, since the 1998-2000 Eritrean-Ethiopian border conflict, the 18-month limit has been suspended; most individuals are not demobilized from government work units after their mandatory period of service but rather forced to serve indefinitely under threats of detention, torture, or familial reprisal. An international organization assesses that many Eritrean asylum seekers, particularly those who deserted National Service when they fled, expressed well-founded fears of persecution in Eritrea, and there are an unknown number of cases of returnees disappearing, presumably in prison, with their whereabouts unknown. It was this same expert's assessment that traffickers exploited Eritreans in forced labor and sex trafficking primarily in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Libya.

National Service takes a wide variety of forms, including active military duty, although active military duty constitutes a small and diminishing percentage; office work in government agencies and enterprises (functions ranging from lawyers, diplomats, and mid-level managers to skilled technicians and mechanics, to clerical, maintenance, and janitorial work); medical professionals and support workers; elementary and secondary school teachers; and construction or other unskilled physical labor. Conditions are often harsh for those in military service or physical labor, though some National Service members experience normal, civilian workplace conditions, albeit with low pay and negligible to complete lack of freedom of choice or movement. In 2012, the government instituted a compulsory citizen militia, requiring medically fit adults up to age 70 not currently in the military to carry firearms and attend military training or participate in unpaid national development programs, such as soil and water conservation projects. Eritreans may be released from National Service after an indefinite number of years by petitioning the government based on criteria that shift periodically and are not fully transparent; policies and practices for obtaining release from National Service are inconsistent across organizations and job fields. Certain professions (e.g., medicine and teaching) exist almost exclusively within the ranks of the National Service. Wages are extremely low—although pay raises have been granted for a number of job functions in recent years—and the government often supplants obligated payments with food or non-food rations. Eritrean officials continue to discuss—particularly on the heels of the 2018 peace agreement with Ethiopia—hard-capping National Service to 18 months, but this change in policy has never been publicly announced and those serving in the obligatory government program beyond 18 months have yet to be demobilized.

All 12th-grade students, including some younger than age 18, are required to complete their final year of secondary education at the *Sawa* military and training academy; those who refuse to attend cannot receive high school graduation certificates, attain higher education, or be offered some types of jobs. Government policy bans persons younger than 18 from military conscription; however, according to previous reports from some organizations outside of Eritrea, the government in some instances includes children younger than age 18 in groups sent to *Sawa*. For unreported reasons, during the current reporting period the government discontinued *Maetot*, a national service program in which secondary-school children were assigned to work in public works projects, usually within the agricultural sector, during their summer holidays. Unaccompanied children continue to be vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Some officials detain or force into military training children who attempt to leave Eritrea despite some of them being younger than the minimum service age of 18. Traffickers subject Eritreans to forced labor and sex trafficking in Israel, reportedly after they survive torture while transiting through the Sinai Peninsula. Traffickers also subject smaller numbers of Eritrean women and children to sex trafficking in Sudan; anecdotal reports suggest traffickers sometimes force Eritrean migrants into prostitution in nightclubs in Khartoum, Sudan. International criminal groups kidnap vulnerable Eritreans living inside or in proximity to refugee camps, particularly in Sudan, and transport them primarily to Libya, where traffickers subject them to human trafficking and other abuses, including extortion for ransom. Some migrants and refugees report traffickers force them to work as cleaners or on construction sites during their captivity.

From September-December 2018, the government opened various land border crossing points with Ethiopia that had

been closed for 20 years, and ceased requiring exit visas or other travel documents for Eritreans crossing to Ethiopia. While reports allege this open border has drastically reduced the business of migrant smuggling into Ethiopia, other sources say these networks still exist. During the reporting period, on the Eritrean side, one of the two official border crossings with Sudan remained closed. Most Eritreans consensually commence their outbound journeys with the aid of payment to smugglers, but in many cases this movement devolves into trafficking situations and conditions highly vulnerable for exploitation. Eritrea's strict exit control procedures and limited issuance of passports, which compel those who cannot obtain exit visas or documents to travel clandestinely, increase its nationals' vulnerability to trafficking abroad, primarily in Sudan, Ethiopia, and to a lesser extent Djibouti, with the ultimate goal of seeking asylum in Europe or at a minimum, obtaining refugee status in Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, Israel, or Uganda; some also strive to reach the United States. An international body posits the number of Eritreans crossing into Ethiopia during the initial two months following the September 2018 border opening was 27,000, while other sources allege as many as 200,000 fled to Ethiopia by the end of the year. Another international organization estimates 3,500 Eritreans entered Sudan seeking refugee or asylum status in 2018. The small number of Eritreans crossing into Djibouti were almost exclusively members of the Afar ethnic group, which spans the Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia border region. Afar members are able to cross the border freely with a permit from a tribal leader; it is an otherwise restricted military area through which non-Afars are prohibited to enter. During the current reporting period, concerns materialized that Eritrea's development of the port in Massawa for domestic use and to service Ethiopia could exacerbate trafficking vulnerabilities due to increased commerce and an uptick in foreign laborers. Moreover, the lack of visa requirements for Eritreans traveling to Ethiopia, as well as the ability to travel overland without passports heightens these workers' vulnerability to exploitation. Reports persist that Eritrean military officers are complicit in migration-related and possibly trafficking crimes along the border with Sudan.

## ESTONIA: TIER 1

The Government of Estonia fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period; therefore Estonia remained on Tier 1. These efforts included implementing labor act amendments prohibiting recruitment agencies from charging worker-paid recruitment fees, developing new identification and referral guidelines, and ordering restitution payments from traffickers to victims. The anti-trafficking working group, comprising 35 government agencies and NGOs, published an annual report of its activities, and the government established a national victim support hotline for all victims of violent crime, including trafficking, while providing funding to a separate NGO-run hotline. Although the government meets the minimum standards, authorities investigated and prosecuted fewer trafficking cases and courts convicted fewer traffickers. Additionally, authorities neither identified nor assisted any potential labor trafficking victims.