

Trafficking in Persons Report 2007

TUNISIA (Special Case)

Tunisia is not listed in the Report this year because available information is insufficient to substantiate a significant number of trafficking victims in the country. Tunisia is listed as a special case due to lack of credible information of a significant number of trafficking incidents this year.

Scope and Magnitude. Tunisia is a transit country for North and sub-Saharan African men and women migrating to Europe, some of whom may be trafficked for the purpose of involuntary servitude or sexual exploitation. The Government of Tunisia does not systematically differentiate trafficking victims from illegal migrants traveling through the country. Tunisia may also be a source country for internal trafficking of children for commercial sexual exploitation.

Government Efforts. Tunisia does not prohibit all severe forms of trafficking in persons, but does prohibit forced prostitution through Article 233 of its penal code; prescribed punishment under this statute is three to five years, imprisonment. The government pursued no trafficking prosecutions under that law this year. Though government officials have a general understanding of trafficking issues, Tunisia should ensure that law enforcement officers and prosecutors are formally trained in identifying potential trafficking victims and are prosecuting trafficking cases when they arise. Tunisia should also enact a comprehensive anti-trafficking law that criminalizes all forms of trafficking in persons, assigning penalties both sufficiently stringent to deter the crime and adequately reflective of the heinous nature of the crime.

The government monitors its borders closely to interdict smuggling and trafficking rings. However, Tunisia does not employ a formal mechanism to systematically identify trafficking victims among illegal migrants and those arrested for prostitution. Victims of trafficking, if identified, have access to social services available for the abused and vulnerable. The government assigns a child protection delegate to each district to ensure that child sexual abuse victims receive adequate medical care and counseling. Tunisia also employs government workers, including social workers, to assist in three shelters for abused women and children operated by the Tunisian National Women's Union. Nonetheless, some child victims of commercial sexual exploitation may be incarcerated for prostitution. The government should institute a formal victim identification mechanism to ensure that victims of trafficking are not deported or jailed. The government should also offer victims legal alternatives to removal to countries where they may face hardship or retribution.

To prevent the abuse of Tunisian workers abroad, the government continued to deploy social attachés in countries with large Tunisian populations to inform those workers of

their rights. The government should continue monitoring its borders to screen for potential victims of trafficking as they enter the country, and should develop anti-trafficking public awareness campaigns.