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Armenia among pioneers of fighting trafficking: U.S. State Department



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PanARMENIAN.Net - The Armenian government fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of **trafficking**, the U.S. Department of State said in a report, published Thursday, June 30.

Trafficking in Persons, an annual report by the State Department rates countries in three tiers, based on U.S. perceptions of their efforts to acknowledge and combat human trafficking. It rates 190 nations -- up from last year's 188 with the addition of Libya and Yemen -- on how effectively governments are tackling the human trafficking industry on a scale from the worst on Tier 3 to best on Tier 1.

Armenia has been included in Tier 1 since 2013, which means that the country fully complies with the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA).

In June 2015, a law entered into force in Armenia, establishing standard procedures for the identification, support, protection, and reintegration of suspected and identified trafficking victims across national and local government bodies, NGOs, international organizations, and civil society. It also affords foreign trafficking victims the same rights and services as Armenian citizens, and ensures assistance is provided regardless of a victim's cooperation with law enforcement efforts.

As the report says, the Armenian government maintained strong collaboration with anti-trafficking NGOs, local media, donor organizations, and regional partners. It dedicated resources for victim services and provided funding to one NGO-run shelter for trafficking victims. The anti-trafficking interagency group met regularly to coordinate activities across the government. The government provided training and materials on victim identification to police investigators and border officials, as well as appropriate human rights training to employees at correctional institutions. The government increased the number of trafficking investigations, but initiated

fewer prosecutions and secured slightly fewer convictions. The government continued to lack formal victim-witness protection.

Still, the report says, Armenia is a source and, to a lesser extent, destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex and labor trafficking.

Also included in Tier 1 is Georgia, which is listed as a source, transit, and destination country for women and girls subjected to sex trafficking and men, women, and children subjected to forced labor.

Turkey and Azerbaijan are included in Tier 2, meaning their governments do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards, "but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards."

Countries like Iran and Russia, whose governments "do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so" make up Tier 3.

The bottom tier, by the way, is comprised of 27 countries.