

## **New Report Says 12 Million Trapped in Some Form of Human Trafficking**

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WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Efforts to combat global human trafficking suffered setbacks last year, in part because a bad global economy left more people vulnerable to traffickers, a new report says.

The U.S. Department of State released its 2009 Trafficking in Persons report June 16. The annual report documents the efforts of foreign governments to eliminate the most severe forms of human trafficking.

The U.S. government defines severe human trafficking as the use of force, coercion or fraud to obtain labor or induce a commercial sex act.

Kristyn Williams, interim associate director of the anti-trafficking services program for the U.S. bishop's Migration and Refugee Services, suggested the trafficking report could be "an effective tool" in the prevention of human trafficking worldwide.

According to the report, an estimated 12.3 million people are currently trapped in some form of modern-day slavery.

The report cited the international economic crisis as a driving factor in the rise of human trafficking. Rising unemployment rates and falling incomes have left desperate workers vulnerable to manipulation by human traffickers, particularly in underdeveloped countries.

Increased international demand for cheap goods also has contributed to the rise in human trafficking, the report said.

It highlighted some positive developments in the effort to combat human trafficking. In 2008, 26 acts of anti-trafficking legislation were introduced or amended worldwide.

The 2009 report contains assessments of more than 175 countries. Foreign governments are evaluated on their effectiveness in prosecuting traffickers, protection of victims of trafficking and prevention of further trafficking violations.

Each nation is placed on one of three tiers based on the results of these evaluations.

Those in compliance with the U.S. government's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking are considered first-tier nations.

Second-tier nations are those that have made significant strides toward meeting the minimum standards, and third-tier nations are those that are making no effort to combat trafficking. Nations ranked in the third-tier may be subject to economic sanctions.

The report ranked 28 nations in the top tier, down from 29 in 2008. The number of nations in the third tier rose from 14 to 17.

Speaking during the release of the report, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton emphasized the importance of recognizing and combating both labor trafficking and sex trafficking.

Clinton's comments drew praise from Williams.

"I was glad to hear Secretary of State Clinton recognize the importance of labor trafficking as well as sex trafficking," Williams said in a June 18 interview with Catholic News Service.

Williams stated that of the 1,037 human trafficking victims aided by the bishops' program from April 2006 to May 2009 roughly two-thirds were victims of labor trafficking.

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