



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 28, 2013

State Department Condemns China, Russia Over Human Trafficking

The U.S. State Department released its annual global [human trafficking report](#) June 20, and two countries — China and Russia — are angry with the United States for being downgraded from Tier 2 two to Tier 3 status, joining Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and nearly a score of other nations noted for their severe human trafficking issues. The annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report ranks nearly 200 countries on their record of combatting various forms of human trafficking, and promises over the last nine years from China and Russia to improve their records have kept them precariously in the Tier 2 slot.



“Now, the State Department has dropped the two countries, along with Uzbekistan, to Tier 3,” reported [World News](#), accusing “China of state-sponsored forced labor under the name ‘re-education through labor,’ as well as widespread sex trafficking,” and Russia of “using forced labor for projects related to the upcoming Winter Olympic Games in Sochi and forcing North Koreans to work in logging camps, under an agreement with the North Korean government.”

China’s notorious one-child policy — along with the resulting sex ratio of 118 males to 100 females — has dramatically increased the demand for “trafficking of foreign women as brides for Chinese men and for forced prostitution,” the report states. As for Russia, the report cited research from the Migration Research Center, which has estimated that one million people suffer under “exploitative” labor conditions in the former Soviet nation.

[BBC News](#) reported on the angry response from the two governments, with Russia expressing its “indignation” over the report, and one Chinese official calling the findings an example of “arbitrary judgment.” Hua Chunying, a spokeswoman for China’s foreign ministry, insisted that her country places “great importance to fighting all crimes of trafficking,” and said that the United States “should take an objective and impartial view of China’s efforts and stop making unilateral or arbitrary judgements of China.”

Similarly, Russia’s foreign ministry human rights envoy, Konstantin Dolgov, accused the United States of using “unacceptable methodology” in its latest TIP report, slotting countries in certain groups according to their supposed friendliness to the U.S. government. “In fighting organized crime, including countering trafficking,” Dolgov said in a statement, “Russian authorities will never follow instructions worked out in another country, let alone fulfill conditions presented nearly in the form of an ultimatum.”

The report charges that while Russian officials made “ad hoc” attempts to stem human trafficking, they had not “established any concrete system for the identification or care of trafficking victims.” As for China, the report acknowledges that although Beijing made steps toward raising the awareness of



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trafficking and to partner with some international efforts, it had failed to tackle extensive cases of both child and adult forced labor, and the ongoing problem of sex trafficking involving girls and women. “Despite ... modest signs of interest in anti-trafficking reforms,” the report stated, “the Chinese government did not demonstrate significant efforts to comprehensively prohibit and punish all forms of trafficking and to prosecute traffickers.”

[Bloomberg News](#) reported that, according to the U.S. report, an estimated “27 million men, women, and children worldwide are trapped in some form of slavery — South Asian maids confined in Qatari homes against their will, children taken from school to work in Uzbek cotton fields, and Paraguayans forced into labor in Argentine sweatshops. Millions of women and children are trafficked for sex. Very few are even identified, a focus of this year’s report.”

Luis CdeBaca, who heads up the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, insisted that everything his department does “is driven by finding and identifying these people.” He claimed to reporters that in 2012 those efforts resulted in the identification of at least 46,500 victims of human trafficking.

As for specifically targeting two nations with which the United States has had increasingly strained relations over the past year, CdeBaca said: “We trust that the relationship with these countries is a mature relationship. This is one of many issues with which we deal with these governments. While sometimes these truths can be hard to tell and hard to hear, at the same time we need to have an accurate and respectful dialogue with them on what can be done and what needs to be done.”

World News reported that “President Barack Obama has 90 days to determine whether to apply sanctions against the 21 countries currently on the Tier 3 list. Sanctions could range from restricting aid to removing U.S. backing for loans from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.”

Among those offering guarded optimism about the latest annual report was David Abramowitz, director of the U.S.-based Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking. “Frankly, we expected a number of these countries to be upgraded for geopolitical reasons,” he commented. “The Trafficking in Persons report is only effective when it’s honest.”

Photo: From the cover of the “Trafficking in Persons” report



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