

(GOOD) NEWS RELEASE  
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## Philippines keeps Tier 1 rank in 2019 US trafficking report

The Philippines has retained its top ranking in the 2019 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report of the United States, indicating our government's continued efforts to tackle trafficking in persons.

The US State Department in its report said "the Government of the Philippines fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period; therefore the Philippines remained on Tier 1."

"These efforts included implementing prosecution procedures that reduce the potential for further harm to child sex trafficking victims; convicting and punishing traffickers; and robust efforts to prevent trafficking of Filipino migrant workers and to assist those who become victims of trafficking overseas. "

The report noted the government's increased law enforcement efforts. The 2003 (RA 6955) and 2012 (RA 10364) anti-trafficking acts criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to 20 years' imprisonment and fines of between 1 and 2 million pesos (\$19,050 to \$38,100). These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape.

It also cited that "the government continued to implement formal procedures to identify trafficking victims in the Philippines and overseas and to refer them to official agencies or NGO facilities for care."

On the prevention side, the report particularly mentioned accomplishments of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration in its anti-illegal recruitment and trafficking in persons campaign.

"The POEA held 48 seminars on illegal recruitment and trafficking for 3,239 participants and provided information about worker protection, legal recruitment, and government services available to OFWs to 30,517 individuals through community-based pre-employment orientation seminars and to 798,589 individuals through online seminars, compared to 722,132 total the prior year. DOLE distributed informational materials to 34,634 individuals within communities that were vulnerable to illegal recruitment and trafficking."

"In response to the increased number of underage females identified prior to departing from Mindanao for domestic work in Middle East, DOLE created a task force against illegal recruitment, recruitment of minor workers, and trafficking in persons. IACAT member agencies and local government units also partnered with an NGO and private recruitment agencies to conduct six awareness raising events that reached 1,245 stakeholders in Mindanao. NBI and POEA officials investigated 278 cases of alleged illegal recruitment and recommended 123 cases for filing in the courts; the government reported 11 convictions. This compared with 309 investigations and eight convictions in 2017."

"The POEA filed 1,432 administrative charges against licensed recruitment agencies for fraudulent employment or exorbitant fees, resulting in the cancellation of 40 agencies' licenses. POEA reviewed 30 bilateral and multilateral labor agreements with other countries and signed two multilateral and nine bilateral agreements aimed at preventing trafficking and reducing the vulnerability of OFWs."

According to the report, "Tier 1 Countries whose governments fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. 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. /END