

HUMAN TRAFFICKING¹

What is Human Trafficking or Trafficking in Persons?²

Trafficking in persons – also known as “human trafficking” – is a form of modern-day slavery. Traffickers often prey on individuals who are poor, frequently unemployed or underemployed, and who may lack access to social safety nets, predominantly women and children in certain countries. Victims are often lured with false promises of good jobs and better lives, and then forced to work under brutal and inhuman conditions.

Human trafficking frequently involves the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, a brutal crime the Department [of Justice] is committed to aggressively investigating and prosecuting. Trafficking also often involves the exploitation of agricultural and sweat shop workers, as well as individuals working as domestic servants.

The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution outlaws slavery and involuntary servitude. The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (VTVPA) supplements existing laws and establishes new tools and resources to combat trafficking in persons and to provide services and protections for victims.

Human Trafficking is not Human Smuggling

Human smuggling is the facilitation, transportation, attempted transportation or illegal entry of a person(s) across an international border, in violation of one or more countries' laws, either clandestinely or through deception, such as the use of fraudulent documents. Often, human smuggling is conducted in order to obtain a financial or other material benefit for the smuggler, although financial gain or material benefit are not necessarily elements of the crime. For instance, sometimes people engage in smuggling to reunite their families. Human smuggling is generally with the consent of the person(s) being smuggled, who often pay large sums of money. Once in the country of their final destination they will generally be left to their own devices.

Unlike smuggling, which is often a criminal commercial transaction between two willing parties who go their separate ways once their business is complete, trafficking specifically targets the trafficked person as an object of criminal exploitation. The purpose from the beginning of the trafficking enterprise is to profit from the exploitation of the victim. It follows that fraud, force or coercion all play a major role in trafficking.

Human trafficking does not require the crossing of an international border – it does not even require the transportation of victims from one locale to another. Victims of severe

¹Excerpted from the U.S. Department of Justice website.

² The information provided here is general in nature and not intended as legal advice. The laws discussed are subject to change without notice. Seek legal advice for more information.

forms of trafficking are not all illegal aliens; they may, in fact, be U.S. citizens, legal residents, or visitors. Victims do not have to be women or children – they may also be adult males.

Where can I get help?

Report trafficking crimes or get help by calling Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force Complaint Line at the toll-free hotline 1-888-428-7581 (voice and TTY). New laws provide options for trafficking victims regardless of immigration status. Operators have access to interpreters and can talk with callers in their own language. The service is offered on weekdays from 9 AM to 5 PM EST. After these hours, information is available on tape in English, Spanish, Russian, and Mandarin.

You can also report suspected instances of trafficking or work exploitation, by contacting the FBI field office nearest you.

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