

# US Report Cites 13 Countries for Human Trafficking

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Photo: VOA

*US State Department's anti-trafficking coordinator, Luis CdeBaca, 14 Jun 2010*

*A U.S. State Department report released on Monday lists 13 countries - including Iran, North Korea, Burma and Cuba - as failing to meet minimum international standards in the fight against human trafficking. The 10th annual global human trafficking report rates the United States for the first time.*

*The massive State Department report assessed the anti-trafficking efforts of 177 countries, including the United States where it says that despite strong enforcement efforts there are cases of forced labor and prostitution, and debt bondage.*

*Countries covered in the report are placed in three categories, according to anti-trafficking performance.*

*Those lowest rated, in Tier 3, are subject to U.S. sanctions, where applicable, including cuts in non-humanitarian aid.*

*There are 13 Tier 3 countries this year, four fewer than in 2009, reflecting what U.S. officials say is growing awareness and anti-trafficking enforcement.*

*Eleven holdovers from last year remain in Tier 3 - Burma, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Kuwait, Mauritania, North Korea, Papua-New Guinea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Zimbabwe.*

*The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Dominican Republic joined Tier 3, while five countries - Chad, Fiji, Malaysia, Niger, Swaziland and Syria - were credited with progress and upgraded from the bottom category.*

*At a State Department event to release the report, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the survey is not about finger-pointing or casting blame, but about encouraging and prodding countries to act against what she called the "scourge of modern slavery."*

*She noted that the report cites cases of sexual slavery and labor bondage in the United States, despite its overall Tier-One rating.*

*"In some cases, foreign workers, drawn by the hope of a better life in America, are trapped by abusive employers," said Hillary Clinton. "And there are Americans, unfortunately, who are held in sexual slavery. And this report sends a clear message to all of our countrymen and women - human trafficking is not someone else's problem. Involuntary servitude is not something we can ignore or hope doesn't exist in our own communities."*

*Briefing reporters, the State Department's anti-trafficking coordinator, Luis CdeBaca, highlighted strides by several countries, including Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, Malaysia and most notably Bosnia-Herzegovina - a longtime Tier 3 country - which climbed to Tier 1 this year.*

*He said U.S. officials see the beginning of anti-trafficking action in Persian Gulf allies Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, although they remain in Tier 3.*

*CdeBaca dismissed a suggestion that the U.S. dislike of Cuba's communist government played a role in that country's Tier 3 ranking.*

*He said Cuba still has no anti-trafficking law and that the communist North Korean government might be complicit in forced labor practices against its own workers sent abroad.*

*"Is the government sending police or security services or others with them in order to keep them in line? We've expressed concern as have some of the governments of Western Europe," said Luis CdeBaca. "The Czech Republic actually terminated their contracts with the North Korean labor export company because of their concerns of the type of abuse that was happening with the exported North Korean laborers."*

*The State Department envoy said 116 countries have anti-trafficking laws and that labor-abuse convictions tripled last year.*

*But he said it is hard to gauge whether the overall number of persons trafficked has begun to decline, given that so many cases are undocumented*