

42,000 modern-day slaves rescued but millions in bondage, trafficking report says



Johan Ordonez / AFP - Getty Images, file

Prostitutes come out of a tunnel where they remained hidden during an operation against human trafficking at the "Super Frontera" bar, late on April 21, 2012 in Guatemala City.

By Ian Johnston, msnbc.com

More than 42,000 adults and children kept as slaves, forced into prostitution or otherwise trafficked were discovered by authorities around the world in 2011, [according to a new report by the U.S. State Department](#).

However this figure was a tiny fraction of the estimated number of people held in bondage with the International Labor Organization estimating earlier this month that there are about 20.9 million victims of modern slavery, the State Department Trafficking in Persons Report noted.

Under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003, foreign govern-

ments must supply information about trafficking investigations and prosecutions to the State Department in order to be considered by the U.S. as working to eliminate slavery.

The report details the problem of trafficking in countries around the world, including victims' accounts.

"I walk around and carry the physical scars of the torture you put me through. The cigarette burns, the knife carvings, the piercings ... how a human being can see humor in the torture, manipulation, and brainwashing of another human being is beyond comprehension. You have given me a life sentence," it quotes a victim of sex trafficking in the U.S. as telling her trafficker at his sentencing.

US expands human trafficking blacklist to 23 countries

Another trafficking survivor in the U.S. named "Tonya" said she "always felt like a criminal."

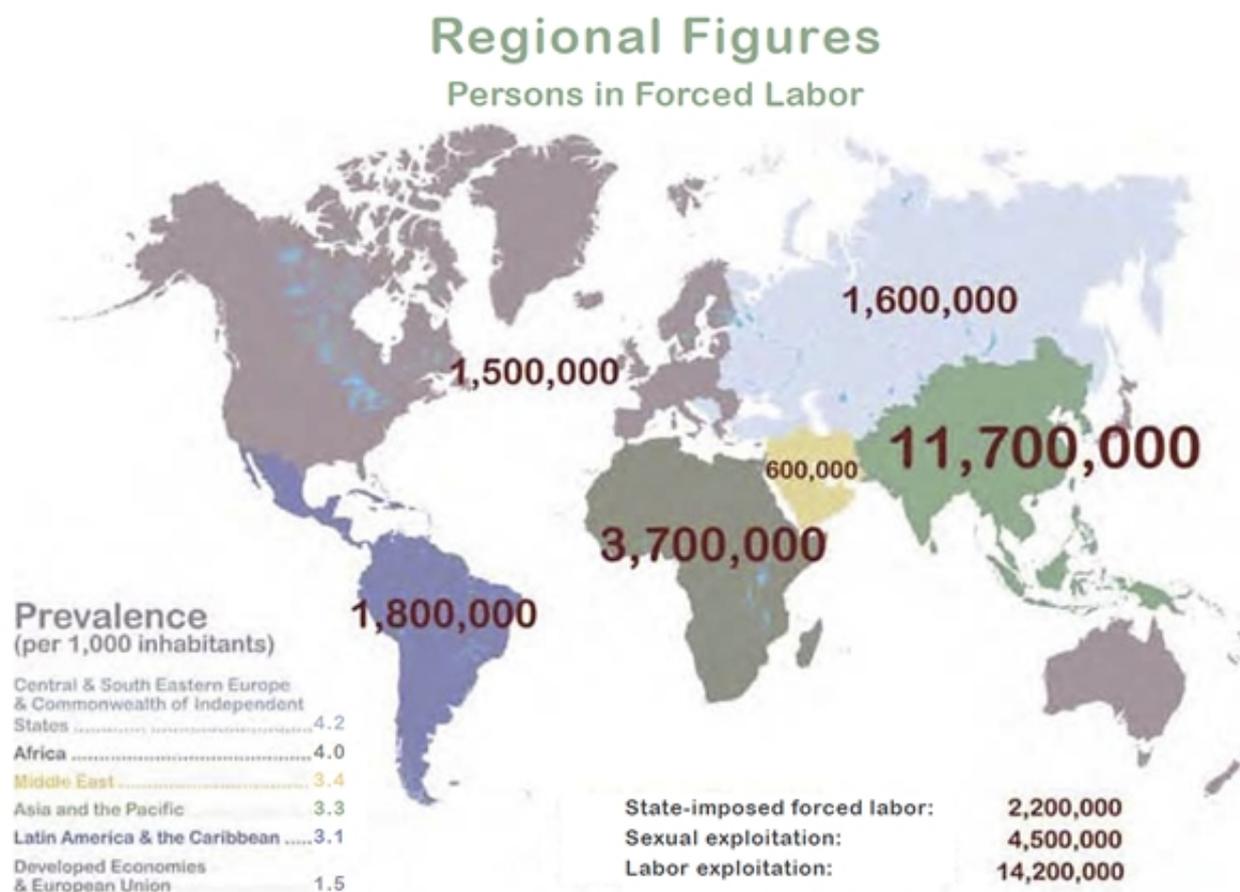
"I never felt like a victim at all. Victims don't do time in jail, they work on the healing process. I was a criminal because I spent time in jail," she said.

'Like she was our own daughter'

Ken Burkhart, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent, described the liberation of a Latin American sex trafficking victim.

"I told my agents we're going to treat this little girl like she was our own daughter. We're going to hunt this little girl down and get her out of this trailer," he said, according to the report.

After she was found, "I told her we'd been in touch with her sister and I shook her hand and I just gently led her right out the door," he added.



State Department

Graphic showing persons in forced labor in different parts of the world.

The offense of trafficking involves "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery."

It applies where people have been forced into prostitution; victims do not necessarily need to have been physically moved from one location to another.

Police rescue 24,000 women, children from Chinese human trafficking gangs

In a letter included in the report, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton noted the U.S. would celebrate the 150th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in the coming months and said that "governments across the globe are united in this struggle."

"Yet, despite the adoption of treaties and laws prohibiting slavery, the evidence nevertheless shows that many men, women, and children continue to live in modern-day slavery through the scourge of trafficking in persons," she added.

Clinton moved by girl's 'pride'

Clinton said earlier this year she had visited a trafficking shelter in Kolkata, India.

"The young women and girls there had suffered terrible abuse. But with their own drive and determination and with the help of some remarkable women and men they were getting their lives back on track," she said.

"I met one girl, about ten years old, who asked if I wanted to see the martial arts she had learned at the shelter. As she performed her routine, I was impressed with the skills she had learned; but more than that, I was moved by the pride in her eyes – her sense of accomplishment and strength," she added.

The Secretary of State said trafficking people deprived people of the "most basic freedom" – being able to determine their own future.

"A century and a half after the promise of freedom was fought and won in the United States, freedom remains elusive for millions," Clinton said. "We know that this struggle will not truly be won until all those who toil in modern slavery, like those girls in Kolkata, are free to realize their God-given potential."

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