

Thailand fights human trafficking, Foreign Minister tells U.S.

Thailand's Minister of Foreign Affairs has asked the United States to recognize the Kingdom's commitment and efforts to fight human trafficking by removing Thailand from a watch list of countries where trafficking is prevalent, and is optimistic the U.S. will respond positively once it reviews the evidence.



“I would like the U.S. to know our intention is to solve this problem and would like the U.S. to upgrade Thailand's status to a better ranking,” Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Surapong Tovichakchaikul told reporters after meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Kristie Kenney and handing her a report on Thailand's progress in the campaign to end trafficking in persons. Ambassador Kenney said she would forward the report to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry for consideration. The U.S. Department of State releases its trafficking in persons report in June.

Thailand has been ranked on Tier 2 Watch List of Washington's Trafficking In Persons (TIP) report for the past three years. Countries on the Tier 2 Watch List have governments that do not fully comply with the U.S. government's minimum standards on the issue, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards. Nearly 40 countries are on the Tier 2 Watch List. In the region, Malaysia and Myanmar are also on the watch list.

The minister stressed to the ambassador that Thailand is making serious efforts against trafficking in persons, and a government working group chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Chalerm Yubamrung was being set up to coordinate the work of various agencies in tackling the problem.

As part of a broad-based inclusive approach to finding solutions to the problem of trafficking in persons, and recognition of the contribution the civil society can make in the efforts, the minister recently chaired a meeting at the Royal Thai Police Command and Control Operation Center of nongovernmental organizations and government agencies that work on the issue. The meeting was attended by Minister of Labor Phadermchai Sasomsub, Minister of Social Development and Human Security Santi Promphat, and Police Commissioner General Adul Saengsingkaew. In his opening remarks, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister explained that the objective of the meeting was to enhance cooperation between the relevant governmental agencies and NGOs. In particular, he noted, information from NGOs would help the authorities improve their work in the prevention and suppression of human trafficking and prostitution which hopefully would also lead to more prosecution of offenders, including government officials involved in human trafficking.

The NGOs detailed seven issues they would like the government to address, including the belief by some officials that forced prostitution no longer exists in Thailand, language barriers of victims, child beggars from neighboring countries, lack of a database and research on the problem and its causes, and the problem of the Rohingya from Myanmar and how they are classified by the government.

Minister Surapong pledged that all the suggestions would be taken into consideration and said he would instruct the Thailand Research Fund, a think tank, to investigate root causes of the problem of trafficking and possible solutions.

With the Thai prime minister declaring in combating human trafficking a matter of national priority, including in her speech to the United Nations General Assembly last September, Thai agencies have stepped up cooperation with various stakeholders. Besides NGOs, they have rallied the private sector to work together to end human trafficking. Read previous issues of Thailand Focus for more information visit

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