



# Thailand Makes Compelling Case To the U.S. For Upgrade in State Department's 2014 TIP Report

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WASHINGTON--(BUSINESS WIRE)--A team of Thailand's senior ranking anti-trafficking officials from the Ministries of Labor, Foreign Affairs, Social Development and Human Security, and Commerce, and the Royal Thai Police have just concluded anti-trafficking meetings in Washington with Members of Congress, the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP), and Department of Labor.

"Human trafficking is a global problem. It is bigger than any one single country and requires global solutions."

With release of the State Department's 2014 TIP report rapidly approaching, and growing attention being given to human trafficking issues, the delegation's visit last week sought to highlight facts about the enormous on-going work, international cooperation and progress in combating trafficking in Thailand, and set straight what might have been gravely misrepresented in recent media coverage.

"Thailand is fully committed to combating human trafficking. It's our national priority. In Southeast Asia, we are leading the efforts, working closely with the United States, international non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and our neighboring countries to assist victims of human trafficking, bring human traffickers to justice, and prevent people from falling victim to trafficking," commented Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Director General of American and South Pacific Affairs Mr. Songsak Saichuea after wrapping up a series of meetings on Capitol Hill adding, "Human trafficking is a global problem. It is bigger than any one single country and requires global solutions."

Progress to tackle human trafficking has continuously been made in Thailand, but concrete results were most notable in 2013 and in all fronts in accordance with its national strategy based on the 5P's approach that encompasses Prosecution and Law Enforcement, Protection and Recovery, Prevention, Policy and Mechanisms to drive the policy, and Partnerships. Also in 2013, Thailand ratified and became state party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

In the area of prosecution and law enforcement, Thailand has made remarkable progress, dramatically increasing the number of human trafficking investigations, prosecutions and convictions in the past year, with

sustained momentum during the first quarter of 2014. The Royal Thai Police and other law enforcement agencies like the Department of Special Investigation and the Office of the Attorney-General are working closely together, intensifying, integrating and coordinating their efforts.

2013 law enforcement statistics show significant progress in investigations, prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators, including investigations of 674 trafficking cases, prosecutions of 483 defendants, and convictions of 225 defendants. Over 60% of those convicted in 2013 served jail terms of 3 years or more. Actions against Thai officials alleged to be complicit in human trafficking also increased in 2013. At least 38 members of the police force, including 5 high-ranking police officials, were either punished or are now under civil and/or criminal processes.

The Royal Thai Government also took legal action against 155 illegal job broker companies. The Royal Thai Police conducted 28,280 inspections in high risk locations in 2013. 40,963 inspections were undertaken by Thai government officials at large and small scale workplaces in 2013. The Royal Thai Marine Police conducted routine and un-announced inspections of 837 fishing boats and the Royal Thai Navy conducted routine and un-announced boarding and inspection of fishing vessels 9,590 times in 2013.

Increased regulation of job brokers in Thailand saved nearly 15,000 Thai workers from paying unnecessary job broker fees in 2013. Thailand signed bilateral Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) on Cooperation in the Employment of Workers with Cambodia (2003), Laos (2002), and Myanmar (2003), as well as MOUs of Understanding on Combating Human Trafficking with Cambodia (2003), Laos (2005), Myanmar (2013), and Vietnam (2008). These bilateral agreements are protecting migrant workers and people from neighboring countries from exploitation, as well as facilitating victims' family tracing and assessment, and preparation before they are sent back home and reunited with their families.

"There is acute awareness throughout Thailand of the need to find and help victims of trafficking, and there is strong commitment from the nation's leadership and all of its Ministries working as a team. Increased budget funds have been allocated to anti-trafficking efforts. Evidence of that commitment and the undeniable progress on combating trafficking in Thailand has been submitted to the U. S. State Department," commented Director General Songsak.

To ensure effective mechanisms for trafficking victim identification and assistance among vulnerable populations, in 2013 Thailand put in place a multidisciplinary expert team led by the Royal Thai Police and the Ministry of Social Development and Social Security, which identified 1,020 victims, with 681 of them placed in government-operated shelters. Financial help was provided to nearly all of those victims from Thailand's Anti-Trafficking Fund.

Thai government agencies work regularly with NGOs and other partners on prevention and enforcement actions in all 77 Thai provinces to increase anti-trafficking training programs, enhance the capacity of law enforcement officers and inspectors, and raise awareness among business operators, workers, both Thai and foreign, and groups at risk. In 2013, more than 900 sessions were held across the country with over 91,000 participants.

"We condemn and recognize the gravity of human trafficking, and wholeheartedly are committed to eliminating this scourge because it is the right thing to do. Indisputable progress has been made, and we believe that we have turned a corner. But we also know that much more needs to be done, and are determined to continue our hard work inside Thailand and in partnership with other countries, including the United States, as well as with

local and international organizations," stated Ambassador Vijavat Isarabhakdi, following a recent anti-trafficking meeting with U.S. officials in Washington.

"Thailand deeply values our relationship with the United States. As far as the U.S. TIP Report is concerned, we strongly believe that our firm commitment, leadership and incontrovertible progress in combating human trafficking over the past year merits an upgrade on the U.S. TIP Report," he added.

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