

2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan

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TRAFFICKING PROFILE

PAKISTAN: Tier 2 Watch List

The Government of Pakistan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included convicting traffickers for the first time under the government's comprehensive human trafficking law, convicting more traffickers for bonded labor than the previous year, and increasing registration of brick kilns nationwide to improve oversight of workers whom labor traffickers target. The government also identified more trafficking victims than the previous reporting period, and initiated eight investigations against suspected traffickers for Pakistani trafficking victims identified overseas. In addition, federal and provincial authorities continued to collaborate with international partners and foreign governments on anti-trafficking efforts. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period. The government significantly decreased investigations and prosecutions of sex traffickers, and Punjab province, where over half of the population resides, continued to disproportionately report nearly all anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts, including 98 percent of convictions. As in previous years, only two of Pakistan's six provinces convicted any traffickers. Law enforcement efforts against labor trafficking remained inadequate compared to the scale of the problem. Punjab continued to be the only province to report efforts against bonded labor traffickers. It reported more

overall convictions than the previous reporting period, although overall bonded labor convictions decreased from other prior years. In Sindh, local officials continued to perpetrate bonded labor in brick kilns and on farms with impunity. Unlike the previous reporting period, the government did not take action against credible reports of official complicity in trafficking, and organizations reported official complicity and corruption led to several high-profile trafficking cases being dropped during the year. The government continued to lack overall adequate resources for victim care, and only referred four percent of all victims identified to care. Therefore Pakistan was downgraded to Tier 2 Watch List.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

At both the federal and provincial levels, increase prosecutions and convictions of both sex trafficking and forced labor, including cases allegedly involving complicit officials, and stringently punish perpetrators. • Instruct labor departments to refer all suspected bonded labor cases to police for criminal investigation. • Train officials—including provincial police, labor inspectors, and social services—on standard operating procedures (SOPs) for victim identification and referral to rehabilitation services. • Ensure victims are not penalized for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit. • Make efforts to finalize, disseminate, and train officials on the implementing rules for the 2018 Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTPA). • Significantly increase referrals of trafficking victims to services, and increase the quality and availability of trafficking-specific services, including for males. • Designate specialized prosecutors and judges to hear trafficking cases. • Expand services for bonded laborers, including shelter, identity documents, and legal assistance. • Register and inspect brick kilns in accordance with relevant laws regulating factories, and refer suspected bonded labor to law enforcement. • Take steps to eliminate all recruitment fees charged to workers. • Continue to train government officials to clearly distinguish between human trafficking and migrant smuggling. • Amend the 2018 PTPA to remove penalty provisions that allow fines in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking offenses. • Lift restrictions on female migration while negotiating female worker protections

with destination country governments. • Improve efforts to collect and accurately report anti-trafficking data. • Accede to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

PROSECUTION

The government significantly decreased sex trafficking investigations and prosecutions, although labor trafficking prosecutions and convictions increased. Pakistani laws criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking. The 2018 PTPA criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment, a fine of up to one million Pakistani rupees (PKR) (\$6,460), or both, for trafficking offenses involving an adult male victim, and penalties of between two and 10 years' imprisonment, a fine of up to one million PKR (\$6,460), or both, for those involving adult female or child victims. These penalties were sufficiently stringent. However, with regard to sex trafficking, by allowing for a fine in lieu of imprisonment, these penalties were not commensurate with those for other serious crimes, such as rape. The government continued to use other sections of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) that criminalized some forms of human trafficking. For example, Section 371A and 371B criminalized the buying and selling of a person for prostitution and prescribed penalties of up to 25 years' imprisonment and fines. Section 374 criminalized unlawful compulsory labor and prescribed penalties of up to five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both. Section 366A criminalized procurement of a "minor girl under 18" and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine. Section 370 criminalized buying or disposing of any person as a slave and prescribed penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment and a fine, and Section 371 criminalized habitual dealing in slaves and prescribed penalties of up to life imprisonment and a fine if the imprisonment was less than 10 years. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape. The federal Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act (BLSA) criminalized bonded labor, with prescribed penalties ranging from two to five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both; these penalties were sufficiently stringent. Most of the provincial governments have adopted their

own labor laws, including anti-bonded labor laws, under a devolution process that began in 2010, and federal laws apply until provinces enact corresponding laws.

The 2018 PTPA was in force as the government worked with an international organization to draft implementing rules. Punjab investigated five cases under the 2018 PTPA involving 85 suspects, prosecuted an unknown number of cases and suspects, and convicted 14 traffickers. While it reported imposing fines upon some of the convicted traffickers, it did not report if it sentenced any to imprisonment. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KP) authorities initiated one investigation into four suspects under the 2018 PTPA, which was ongoing at the close of the reporting period. The government reported data on trafficking investigations, prosecutions, and convictions under the PPC by province and special administrative area. Overall, law enforcements and judiciaries investigated 916 sex trafficking cases and initiated prosecutions in 567 cases, and convicted 131 sex traffickers—significant decreases from 2,367 sex trafficking investigations, 2,212 prosecutions, and an unreported number of convictions in the previous reporting period. The vast majority of sex trafficking investigations and all but one conviction took place in Punjab under Section 371A of the PPC for “Selling person for purposes of prostitution etc.” The government did not report sentences for the convictions. Sindh achieved two sex trafficking convictions. Azad Jammu and Kashmir was the only province that did not conduct at least one sex trafficking investigation. Punjab continued to make the vast majority of law enforcement efforts against sex trafficking; of the national statistics on sex trafficking, Punjab reported 85 percent of the investigations, 81 percent of prosecutions, and 98 percent of convictions.

The government’s law enforcement action on labor trafficking, especially bonded labor, remained inadequate. Despite the adoption of the BLSA, bonded labor persisted, largely due to ineffective enforcement of the law and powerful local officials as perpetrators. Punjab was the only province to investigate, prosecute, or convict traffickers under the BLSA. Punjab authorities investigated 77 cases of bonded labor, prosecuted 20 cases, and convicted 16 traffickers, an increase from 23 investigations, 22 prosecutions, and three convictions in the previous reporting period but still a significant decrease from 197

investigations, 182 prosecutions, and 37 convictions in 2017. The Punjab Child Protection and Welfare Board (CPWB) additionally filed 616 First Information Reports (FIRs) under the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour from Brick Kilns Act. An international organization stated authorities did not adequately enforce the BLSA primarily due to police inaction on complaints and lower court judges' lack of understanding of the law. Moreover, in many provinces, including Sindh, the Department of Labor (DOL) handled bonded labor cases and could at most administer financial penalties. Punjab initiated one investigation and prosecution for forced labor under PPC Section 374, unlawful compulsory labor. Although the 2018 PHTA encompassed PPC Section 369A for trafficking in human beings, Sindh authorities also reported one investigation under 369A. Additionally, Sindh authorities initiated four investigations and three prosecutions under PPC Section 371 for habitual dealing in slaves, similar to previous reporting periods. While Sindh police removed at least 677 bonded laborers from the location of their exploitation during the reporting period, it did not initiate criminal investigations. Despite police and prosecutors' responsibility to pursue cases, authorities reported they did not do so because victims could not afford to pay for investigations and prosecutions. The government also reported data on several penal code sections that criminalized labor trafficking and other non-trafficking crimes but did not disaggregate the data to specify which cases under these sections were for labor trafficking versus non-trafficking offenses.

Sindh courts only intervened sporadically on trafficking cases to remove victims from perpetrators but did not criminally prosecute alleged traffickers for bonded labor offenses. While Sindh passed legislation criminalizing bonded labor in 2015, it did not draft civil or criminal procedures to facilitate its implementation. While the BLSA mandated the creation of District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) in each province to ensure implementation of the BLSA, including reporting and filing cases, the government relied on bonded labor victims to have knowledge of the BLSA, proactively leave their landowners, and file their own cases in the court. Even when bonded laborers did so, the courts either did not act on such claims or handled them administratively. As a result, trafficking victims who came forward often faced retaliation from their exploitative employers.

The Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) remained the government's lead reporting and coordinating entity on human trafficking. The agency focused on transnational offenses, while provincial police generally investigated internal human trafficking cases. While FIA and provincial police coordinated on an ad hoc basis, overall collaboration remained weak and complicated law enforcement efforts and data collection. FIA investigated human trafficking and migrant smuggling cases through its 24 anti-trafficking law enforcement joint task forces at the federal, provincial, and local levels. FIA officials, including all newly inducted officers, received regular training on countering trafficking in persons, including differentiating between human trafficking and migrant smuggling; however, some officials continued to conflate the crimes. Foreign governments and international organizations funded trafficking-specific trainings for police, investigators, prosecutors, and FIA officials, and government agencies contributed in-kind support to some of the trainings. FIA had satellite offices at three embassies abroad; its Oman office referred eight human trafficking cases for investigation. NGOs noted provincial police were reluctant to file FIRs—required to launch criminal investigations—into many crimes, including trafficking. Furthermore, overburdened prosecutors and judges, who frequently lacked adequate training, contributed to lengthy trafficking trials and low conviction rates. The government maintained bilateral law enforcement cooperation mechanisms with multiple countries, participated in eight international human trafficking or migrant smuggling investigations, and extradited one sex trafficker to the United Kingdom.

Official complicity in trafficking remained a significant concern, impeding anti-trafficking efforts during the reporting period. Despite sustained reports, the government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions into officials allegedly complicit in human trafficking offenses, a decrease from the previous year. During the reporting period, officials and media reported a Pakistani-Chinese organized crime ring sent more than 620 Pakistani women to China from 2018-2019 for ostensibly legitimate marriages, but the “husbands” physically and sexually abused many of the women, including forcing some into commercial sex. While officials initially began an investigation into multiple Chinese suspects, it later acquitted all 31 suspects. NGOs and media reported powerful government officials ordered the acquittals and transferred some officials who had attempted to

continue pursuing human trafficking charges. Moreover, while victims and media consistently reported Chinese and Pakistani traffickers operated the scheme together, the government did not report investigating any Pakistani suspects. In July 2019, a 14-year-old domestic worker reported substantial indicators of trafficking by her employer, a parliamentarian in Punjab, including sexual abuse and torture. While police registered the charges, they did not arrest the parliamentarian, allegedly because the provincial government did not allow them to do so. The parliamentarian continued to pressure the victim to drop the charges. In January 2020, the Supreme Court set aside the extended three-year sentence imposed on a judge and his wife for cruelty to a child for subjecting a 10-year-old girl to torture and domestic servitude—the government’s first reported conviction of an official complicit in trafficking-related offenses in 10 years—and reinstated the initial sentence of one year’s imprisonment. In October 2018, police removed a 10-year-old domestic worker from the house of a Pakistani army major after allegations of torture and domestic servitude and arrested the army major’s husband. The government did not report whether the case against the employers continued or whether it began investigating an assistant sub-inspector of police, whom it had initially suspended for failing to file a police report in the case.

The government did not report any efforts to address local government officials’ reportedly endemic perpetuation of bonded labor, which created a culture of impunity for offenders. Feudal landlords and brick kiln owners used their political connections to facilitate their use of forced labor. In some cases, when bonded laborers attempted to escape or seek legal redress, police refused to file a case and returned bonded laborers to their traffickers. NGOs continued to report perpetrators of bonded labor successfully filed fraudulent charges against victims leading to their arrest and imprisonment, at times in collusion with police. Some police reportedly assisted employers in kidnapping bonded laborers that authorities or NGOs had previously removed from exploitation. Police were reluctant to investigate cases of potential bonded labor when wealthy and influential individuals, such as local politicians, were the alleged perpetrators. Some police reportedly acted against trafficking only when pressured by media and activists. Observers alleged police accepted bribes to ignore prostitution crimes, some of which may have included sex trafficking, and

border officials might have facilitated human trafficking. Contacts also reported police refused to register cases of child sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, unless victims paid a bribe. Some garment factories paid monthly bribes to labor department officials to avoid inspections, some factories in Sindh prevented government officials from conducting inspections, and Punjab province—which had 70 percent of the country’s textile factories and many cases of forced and bonded labor—banned labor inspectors from visiting any factory in September 2019.

PROTECTION

The government identified more victims but decreased victim protection efforts and such efforts remained inadequate, especially for bonded labor victims. Provincial police reported identifying 19,954 trafficking victims in 2019, compared with 19,723 in 2018. This included 15,802 female victims and at least 760 bonded labor victims identified in Sindh and Punjab. Due to the lack of legal, financial, and social assistance of bonded labor victims, officials estimated other traffickers trapped most of the 760 in forced labor again shortly afterwards. FIA identified 66 victims, an increase from not identifying any victims in the previous reporting period; most of the victims were females identified in sex trafficking in Oman. The government reported some law enforcement, immigration, and social service personnel had SOPs to identify trafficking victims, but it was unclear how widely officials disseminated and employed these SOPs. Several provincial government officials and law enforcement noted they had never received and did not employ, SOPs, and other law enforcement reportedly used SOPs on an ad hoc basis.

Provincial police referred 799 trafficking victims to the government or NGOs for care, including only one adult male—a significant decrease from 2,697 trafficking victims referred to care in the previous reporting period and still inadequate compared to the total number of victims identified. Police reported some victims declined to avail themselves of government services. Victim services were not available for many trafficking victims, with a lack of available shelter and services in many regions, particularly for male victims. Government-

run shelters for women experiencing a range of difficult circumstances, including trafficking, were the most predominately available service. Punjab operated women's shelters in each of its 36 districts; Sindh operated five women's shelters in its 29 districts and four centers that offered women in distress medical and legal aid and shelter for up to 72 hours; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa operated women's shelters in six of its 26 districts and 10 welfare homes for exploited children; Balochistan operated one women's shelter and one shelter for destitute male citizens among its 32 districts; and the Islamabad Capital Territory had one family and rehabilitation center that served women and children. NGOs and local politicians continued to note the low quality of victim care at many of these shelters, including their lack of basic resources such as showers. Moreover, some of the government shelters severely restricted women's movement and pressured them to return to their abusers, including traffickers. Some victims reported shelters subjected them to sex trafficking. Punjab continued to operate its wholly integrated center that provided shelter, medical, and psychological support, and legal assistance for female victims of violence. While all female victims of violence, including trafficking victims, could access the center, the government did not report whether it assisted any trafficking victims. Child trafficking cases in which parents might have been complicit were of particular concern, since authorities often returned potential child trafficking victims to their families immediately following identification without effective methods to ensure families would not subject their children to trafficking again. Boys could access government shelters in many provinces, but the government only identified one shelter in the country that could house adult males. Several government officials denied that male trafficking victims, if identified, would require care. Both government and NGO contacts noted that, due to cultural norms, male victims were less likely to seek or accept assistance. Civil society continued to provide some victim services, largely without government support. In part due to lack of dissemination and training on SOPs, authorities may have charged sex trafficking victims with moral crimes.

Provincial child protection units (CPUs) were active in Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and KP, and identified and referred children in exploitative or vulnerable labor situations to NGO and government care. KP established two new CPUs during the reporting period, for a total of 14. With an international organization, Balochistan established its first CPU during the

reporting period. The Punjab CPWB operated open reception centers to identify and register children living on the street and identified and assisted 8,114 children, a decrease from 10,203 in the previous reporting period. Authorities did not report how many of these children were trafficking victims.

The BLSA required districts to establish DVCs to ensure implementation of the BLSA and provide assistance to bonded labor victims. Punjab had DVCs in all 36 districts, and they conducted 259 meetings during the reporting period—an increase from 188 meetings the previous year. While Sindh reported it had 29 DVCs, only nine had ever convened and none met regularly. Neither Balochistan nor KP had any DVCs. Some officials believed DVCs frequently lacked the motivation, information, and resources necessary to combat bonded labor. Some officials also contended district deputy commissioners, charged with leading the DVCs, failed to prioritize bonded labor among their portfolios and did not convene meetings as mandated. Instead, provincial governments relied on bonded labor victims to seek social services. In addition, one Sindh official claimed bonded labor no longer existed in the province, and another downplayed the prevalence of the practice, indicating there was no need for the provincial government to dedicate additional personnel or resources to combat the problem. Punjab and KP could provide free legal aid to bonded laborers who requested assistance. NGOs reported that because provincial DOLs, including in Sindh, have not registered hundreds of brick kilns, the corresponding thousands of brick kiln workers could not receive the social welfare benefits guaranteed under provincial laws.

NGOs noted most cases of bonded labor ended with financial settlement in lieu of criminal prosecution, in part because police and the judiciary often ceased support for victims after authorities had removed the victim from exploitation and did not guide them through how to pursue a formal civil or criminal case. Bonded laborers whom authorities had released from exploitation frequently had no alternative employment or housing and sometimes returned to brick kilns or farms and assumed more debt. Those who lacked identity documents were even more vulnerable, since they could not access government services such as health care and food stipends. Some NGO-run shelters could accommodate bonded laborers,

including entire families, but often had insufficient resources to provide long-term housing. Government policy included protections for those cooperating in trafficking-related investigations; however, the government did not report how often it granted these protections. Victims expressed reluctance to testify against their traffickers due to threats of violence against them and their families. The 2018 PTPA and sections of the PPC allow courts to provide trafficking victims with restitution, but courts did not do so in any cases. During the reporting period, the government began constructing a migrant reception center at its border with Iran to assist returned migrants, including trafficking victims. The Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) within the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development (OPHRD) employed 19 community welfare attachés in 14 destination countries to provide support and information to Pakistani migrant workers; BEOE did not report if the attachés identified or assisted any trafficking victims. The Ministry of Interior had the authority to grant extensions for foreign victims to stay in the country until the Federal Review Board of the Supreme Court reached a decision on repatriation; authorities did not identify any foreign trafficking victims within Pakistan during the reporting period.

PREVENTION

The government maintained efforts to prevent trafficking. The government continued to implement its 2015-2020 national strategic framework against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. FIA's research and analysis center collaborated with an international organization to create quarterly newsletters on human trafficking and migrant smuggling, although it did not make these reports publicly available. While experts agreed bonded labor remained a significant problem in Pakistan, outside of Punjab, provincial governments lacked accurate data of the problem, which hampered targeted efforts to address key exploitative districts and industries. Labor inspectors remained the front-line officials to inspect and identify forced and bonded labor in several sectors, including brick kilns, farms, and factories. However, inspectors had inadequate training to identify indicators of trafficking, insufficient funding to conduct inspections, and a lack of standard procedures to

refer potential forced and bonded labor cases to police. Moreover, inspectors did not have the authority to remove children or bonded laborers from exploitative situations. Despite high incidences of child and forced labor in agriculture and domestic work, the majority of provincial labor laws did not allow labor inspectors to inspect these worksites for infractions. Despite estimates of more than 264,000 child domestic workers in Pakistan and commonplace reports of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and forced labor by employers, provincial labor laws and protections did not extend to adult or child domestic workers. Brick kilns fall under the Factories Act of 1934 and are subject to the same regulations as other factories, including workers' rights provisions. The Lahore High Court ordered the Punjab labor department to register all brick kilns in the province under the act by August 2020. Specifically, the court instructed the labor department to ensure no kilns had child workers younger than 14, every worker had a written contract, and employers kept detailed registers of advances and regularly paid into workers' social security funds as federally mandated. Punjab labor inspectors monitored brick kilns for labor violations, including filing FIRs against 23 employers for child labor and minimum wage violations—indicators of bonded labor. In addition, the Islamabad Capital Territory's labor department suspended 36 brick kilns from operating in 2019, including for child and bonded labor, although it did not report filing criminal charges against any of the owners. The majority of the estimated 18,000 kilns continued to operate without registration and the required benefits for workers.

Provinces continued to use labor laws to investigate, prosecute, and convict offenders for child and exploitative labor offenses at brick kilns. However, because such laws only prescribed fines and authorities did not refer these cases to police for criminal investigation, suspected traffickers did not receive sufficiently stringent sentences. Punjab prosecuted 7,179 brick kilns for lack of compliance with labor laws, including non-payment of wages, and imposed fines totaling 5.17 million PKR (\$33,390). This is a significant increase from prosecution of 3,953 in the previous year, although a significant decrease in the amount of the penalties assessed, from 288 million PKR (\$1.86 million). KP's labor department had a specialized inspection team within the office on child and bonded labor that conducted 8,512 inspections and filed 318 prosecutions, and courts imposed fines in 224 cases. Punjab continued to provide identity cards to brick kiln workers and birth registration for

their children. KP, Punjab, and Sindh continued to fund and implement some multi-year programs focused on combating the worst forms of child labor and other labor abuses. The federal and provincial governments continued their nationwide child labor survey—the first since 1996—that will reach approximately 250,000 households. The governments allocated funds for the survey and international organizations assisted with implementation.

BEOE issued licenses to private employment promoters and monitored workers who migrated through licensed agencies. The Emigration Ordinance of 1979 prohibited the role of unregulated and unregistered sub-agents; however, sub-agents continued to operate widely with impunity. The government allowed licensed employment promoters to charge migrant workers a service fee of 6,000 PKR (\$39) for a welfare fund to compensate workers' families in case of the workers' death abroad, and workers to pay all the costs associated with overseas employment. While the government stipulated employers should provide workers with a receipt for these costs, the government did not specify any cost limit and did not consistently review migrant workers' receipts. BEOE cancelled licenses of 28 registered employment promoters and suspended 44, compared with 54 licenses cancelled during the previous reporting period; BEOE did not provide details of the agencies' violations. In addition, BEOE reported registering 34 cases against illegal recruiters; courts rendered verdicts in nine cases during the reporting period and imposed an unknown number of sentences of fines and imprisonment. It was unclear on what charges BEOE registered these cases. The government continued to ban female migrant workers younger than 30 from migrating for domestic work and required females age 30-35 to obtain special approval from OPHRD. The UN and members of civil society argued any ban on female migration increased the likelihood such women would migrate illegally and therefore heighten their vulnerability to human trafficking. BEOE required migrant workers to attend a pre-departure briefing at one of its seven offices that included information on what to do if the migrant worker encountered problems; however, observers asserted these centers did not provide sufficient information on the risks of, and assistance to combat, trafficking.

In April 2019, the military announced it would bring more than 30,000 religious schools, including *madrassas*, under the government's control, some of which non-state armed

groups used to forcibly recruit child soldiers. The government continued to host 878,000 Afghans with Afghan Citizen Cards (ACCs), which provided temporary legal protection from deportation under Pakistan's Foreigners' Act, and continued to grant 1.4 million previously registered Afghan refugees an extension of proof of registration (POR) cards. The government continued to extend the validity of both ACCs and PORs in short increments, most recently extending ACCs through May 31, 2020, and PORs through June 30, 2020. The short extensions created an environment of uncertainty for both groups of Afghans. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. The government provided anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic and peacekeeping personnel. Pakistan is not a party to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Pakistan, and traffickers exploit victims from Pakistan abroad. The country's largest human trafficking problem is bonded labor, in which traffickers exploit an initial debt assumed by a worker as part of the terms of employment and ultimately entraps other family members, sometimes for generations. The practice remains widespread. Traffickers, including local government officials, primarily force men, women, and children to work in bonded labor in Sindh in agriculture and in both Sindh and Punjab in brick kilns. Traffickers also force men, women, and children to work to pay off exaggerated debts in other sectors in Sindh and Punjab and in Balochistan and KP in agriculture and brick kilns and, to a lesser extent, in fisheries, mining, and textile-, bangle-, and carpet-making. In agriculture, traffickers force workers to labor in wheat, cotton, and sugarcane, among other goods. Traffickers often did not provide workers with access to their expenditure and earnings receipts, so traffickers control how much money they earn, the accrual of interest on their debt and when they have repaid the debt. Landlords exploit widespread illiteracy among workers and manipulate accounting records to continue to the cycle of bonded labor. Many feudal landlords and brick kiln owners, who are traffickers that employ bonded laborers, are local government officials or use their affiliation with political parties to protect their

involvement in bonded labor. Some landlords use armed guards to restrict bonded laborer's movements and others buy and sell workers among one another. In some kilns that employ entire families, kiln owners have sold bonded laborers to repay a family member's outstanding debt. Observers reported employers in Sindh are moving carpet- and bangle-making productions into private homes to further increase the difficulty in monitoring labor conditions. Reports estimate more than 70 percent of bonded laborers in Pakistan are children. Traffickers also target lower-caste Hindus, Christians, and Muslims specifically for forced and bonded labor.

Traffickers buy, sell, rent, and kidnap children for forced labor in begging, domestic work, small shops, and sex trafficking. One report estimated more than 264,000 child domestic workers currently work in Pakistan. Media increasingly reports cases of employers forcing children as young as 7 years old into domestic work, where they are often subjected to severe physical abuse, including torture, and sexual abuse; several government officials were among the suspected perpetrators. According to a prominent child rights NGO, the majority of children working in the streets in Pakistan are subjected to forced begging and are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking. Begging ringmasters sometimes maim children to earn more money and sometimes force children to steal. Organized criminal groups force children into drug trafficking in Sindh and Balochistan. Due to the consistent lack of law enforcement efforts against those who exploited street children, including in forced labor and sex trafficking, traffickers operated openly and with impunity. Traffickers subject boys to sex trafficking around hotels, truck stops, bus stations, and shrines. Traffickers have forced Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani children into drug trafficking in border areas and Karachi. There are reports of widespread sexual exploitation of boys in one coal mining community in Balochistan. Boys as young as 6 years old from Balochistan, KP, and Afghanistan, are purportedly lured to work in the mines but subjected to sex trafficking; in some cases, parents are complicit in sending their children to the mines for sex trafficking. Within Pakistan, NGOs and police report some employers, including in restaurants and factories, require boy child laborers to provide sexual favors in order to obtain a job with the employer, to keep the job, and/or for accommodation. An NGO reported multiple cases of forced labor by students in government-run schools.

Some factories pay monthly bribes to labor department officials to avoid inspections. Illegal labor agents charge high recruitment fees to parents in return for employing their children, some of whom are subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Some police accept bribes to ignore prostitution, some of which may include sex trafficking, and police refused to register cases of child sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, without a bribe. Some Pakistani traffickers lure women and girls away from their families with promises of marriage, create fraudulent marriage certificates, and exploit the women and girls in sex trafficking, including in Iran and Afghanistan. During the reporting period, traffickers increasingly targeted impoverished Christian communities to send females to China for arranged marriages. Upon arrival in China, hundreds of Pakistani women reported their “husbands” forced them into commercial sex. In other cases, traffickers, including some extra-judicial courts, use girls as chattel to settle debts or disputes. Some traffickers force victims to take drugs and exploit the drug addiction to keep them in sex trafficking.

Some organizations reported that non-state armed groups that had a presence in Pakistan recruited and used child soldiers in Afghanistan, although there is no credible evidence that the Government of Pakistan was complicit in the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Non-state militant groups kidnap children as young as 12, buy them from destitute parents, coerce parents with threats or fraudulent promises into giving their children away, or recruit children from *madrassas*; these armed groups force children to spy, fight, and conduct suicide attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Traffickers have promised Pakistani boys admittance to Afghan religious schools but sold them to members of the Afghan security forces for *bacha bazi*.

Pakistani men and women migrate overseas voluntarily, particularly to the Gulf states and Europe, for low-skilled employment such as agriculture, domestic service, driving, and construction work; traffickers exploit some of them in labor trafficking. False job offers, including fake modeling advertisements, sham recruitment agencies, and high recruitment fees charged by illegal labor agents or sub-agents of licensed Pakistani overseas employment promoters entrap Pakistanis in sex trafficking and bonded labor, including in Gulf countries. In 2019, foreign countries had nearly 11,000 Pakistanis detained abroad,

including more than 3,000 in Saudi Arabia. In many cases, observers alleged foreign law enforcement had arrested workers for fraudulent documents procured by recruitment agents or for lack of documents because their employers had withheld their documents—indicators of forced labor. Traffickers have exploited Pakistani girls in sex trafficking in Kenya and Pakistani adults, including with disabilities, to forced begging in the United Arab Emirates. Pakistani boys are vulnerable to sex traffickers in Greece. Some traffickers, including organized criminal groups, subject Pakistani adults and children to forced labor in domestic work, construction, and begging in Iran; some traffickers have targeted Pakistanis with disabilities for forced begging. Pakistan is a destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor—particularly from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Chinese men working in construction may be vulnerable to forced labor in Pakistan. Traffickers exploit women and girls—and, to a lesser extent, boys—from Afghanistan, Iran, and other Asian countries in sex trafficking in Pakistan. Refugees and stateless persons from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Burma, as well as religious and ethnic minorities such as Christians and Hazaras, are particularly vulnerable to traffickers in Pakistan. Traffickers exploit Rohingya refugees in forced labor in Pakistan.