

*Report on Human Trafficking Issues
to the Winter Meeting
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by
Rep. Christopher H. Smith, U.S.A.

**Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues
for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

Colleagues, I am pleased to inform you of my recent activities as Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues.

Since our last winter meeting, I have met with government leaders, parliamentarians and official delegations from around the world, encouraging them to make the fight against human trafficking a priority and to utilize best practices that have been developed over the last 12 years. I have met several times over the last year with high-level officials from Ukraine, including the Foreign Minister, the Deputy Foreign Minister, and the Deputy Minister of Social Policy, whose task it is to coordinate anti-trafficking efforts in Ukraine. I also met with Members of European Parliament from Spain and the Netherlands; with legislators from Ireland, Macedonia, the Ivory Coast, and Kenya; and with the Ambassadors of Russia, Turkey, Ethiopia, and the Holy See. I also met with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the foreign minister of Rwanda as those who are trafficked internationally to OSCE participating and partner States all too often come from the developing nations of Africa. In these meetings I highlighted pressing human trafficking issues specific to each country, as well as advised on innovative methods to fight human trafficking. Through annual supplemental resolutions in the Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE PA has promoted a wealth of best practices which can be easily adapted for each country.

In fact, I have been working closely with the Chairman in Office to launch best practices in Ukraine concerning trafficking in the travel industry, as per the OSCE PA Declaration in Oslo in 2010. Ukraine may soon implement an exemplary trafficking response in their travel industry. To its credit, Ukraine also adopted a comprehensive anti-trafficking law last year and is taking steps to implement this law by creating a national referral mechanism. The Chairman in Office has made the fight against human trafficking a priority for its Chairmanship, and I look forward to assisting it with best practices developed through the OSCE PA.

As Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe from 2011–2012, I have chaired numerous hearings and briefings highlighting human trafficking concerns in the OSCE region (<http://www.csce.gov/>). In October, on the heels of the multi-victim Penn State University child sex abuse case in the United States, I hosted a briefing on

“Listening to Victims of Child Sex Trafficking.”¹ The sex trafficking and abuse of children is one of the most destructive crimes on earth. It shatters the lives of the victims and their families and is a crime from which the victims rarely recover in full. The traffickers and abusers rely on their ability to frighten a child into silence or the reluctance of adults to listen when children speak. They also use their own reputations, standing, or power in the community to prevent allegations from being properly considered and investigated. It is imperative that the justice system be ready to listen to allegations and to thoroughly investigate allegations no matter when they are raised—and no matter who is accused.

Many OSCE participating and partner States struggle to hold government officials accountable for trafficking crimes, including those against children. My briefing focused on a case study in the Netherlands, where serious allegations of child sex trafficking have been raised against a government official who, until very recently, was a senior official in the Dutch Ministry of Justice. This official has been accused by two Turkish boys, now men, of raping them when they were adolescents in Turkey. The alleged victims have attempted several times to open a formal investigation through the Dutch legal system. Multiple Turkish government officials—including the Turkish security officer who allegedly brought one of the boys to the Dutch official for abuse—have come forward to offer evidence and testimony in support of the alleged victims’ stories. Yet the Government of the Netherlands has repeatedly refused to conduct a formal investigation. The Government of the Netherlands has not spoken to any of the five Turkish government witnesses nor to one of the alleged victims. The alleged victim offered to come to the Netherlands if given security and allowed the presence of his lawyer during questioning. The Government of the Netherlands refused.

Instead, the Government of the Netherlands conducted a few informal inquiries in which the investigators did not have full investigatory powers. They spoke with one alleged victim, and dismissed his account as “inconsistent” without explanation or opportunity for the witness to clarify any question regarding what he suffered 14 years before. The accused Dutch official says he was not in Turkey during the years when the rapes allegedly occurred. The Netherlands

¹ Listening to the Victims of Child Sex Trafficking (October 4, 2012) http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=531&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=B&CFID=18778639&CFTOKEN=37165406.

Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations says the Dutch official's travel records were destroyed. And the Government of the Netherlands has not, to date, resolved the conflicting statements on these very serious child sex trafficking allegations.

Meanwhile, the alleged Turkish victims are in grave danger. They have gone into hiding and report threats of rape and murder against them and their families if they do not withdraw their request for a formal investigation in the Netherlands. According to reports, one alleged victim had a spike driven into his leg and his tongue sliced when he refused to drop the formal investigation request. In December 2012, one of his supporters was knocked out on the street and taken to the hospital after the supporter refused to disclose the whereabouts of the alleged victims' safe house. The suspected attacker was caught, but it is not clear if he will face charges. The other alleged victim reportedly had his face broken by thugs as he left an attorney's office in November 2012. A key witness for the case reports an attempt on his life on February 6, 2013, as he left his house. He was able to cover his heart with his hands to avoid being fatally stabbed. But his attackers warned him as they fled, saying, "Next time, you will not escape alive."

These reports raise serious questions as to whether the governments of Netherlands and Turkey are fulfilling their duty to protect trafficking victims with the rule of law and ensure victims' access to their respective justice systems. I have called on the governments of the Netherlands and Turkey to conduct speedy and formal investigations of the child sex trafficking and abuse allegations against the high-ranking Dutch official. I will continue to encourage these important participating States to thoroughly investigate all allegations of child sex trafficking—no matter who is accused—and I look forward to an open dialogue on the topic. I have also introduced legislation in the U.S. Congress to encourage greater attention to the claims of child sex trafficking victims.²

In 2012 I held a hearing on the vulnerability of the Romani community to human trafficking.³ Alarming, a recent study done by the European Roma Rights Center in five OSCE countries shows that the Roma minority comprises between 40% and 80% of human

² H.Res. 62 (February 12, 2013) <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hres62ih/pdf/BILLS-113hres62ih.pdf>.

³ The Escalation of Violence Against Roma in Europe, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (February 15, 2012)

http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=521&ContentType=H.B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=76144649&CFTOKEN=58632706.

trafficking victims in the countries studied.⁴ The reasons for vulnerability were varied: structural forms of ethnic and gender discrimination, poverty and social exclusion, low educational achievements, high levels of unemployment, usury, growing up in state care, domestic violence or substance abuse. However, the result was the same—extreme vulnerability leading to human trafficking on a shocking scale.

The report also underscored that poor relations between law enforcement and the Romani community prevented the investigation and prosecution of human traffickers exploiting the community. Lack of prosecution leaves traffickers free to claim more victims.

Moreover, the report showed that poor relations with law enforcement also prevented victim identification—which is necessary in most countries for victims to receive desperately needed rehabilitative services. Tragically, trafficking victims who do not receive services have an even higher vulnerability to being trafficked a second time. And so the cycle continues even when they escape from one trafficker.

In order to fight these disturbing trends, I introduced and the OSCE PA adopted in Monaco a supplementary item calling on participating States to establish in major cities special, Roma-oriented task forces composed of Romani NGOs, Romani mediators and Romani community representatives, along with members of state law enforcement, anti-trafficking authorities, and social services representatives. Such task forces can increase trust, communication, and teamwork in order to prevent the trafficking of Roma, bring traffickers to justice, and rehabilitate victims.

The task force approach has transformed the trafficking response in many communities in the United States. With assistance of the U.S. Department of Justice, task forces bring together national and local police, social services, faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, and every other entity that works to find victims, deliver services, and prosecute traffickers. The task force approach has maximized our limited resources, minimized duplication, and, most importantly, created a local team to ensure that victims are being

⁴ “Breaking the Silence: Trafficking in Romani Communities,” European Roma Rights Center (May 2011) <http://www.errc.org/article/breaking-the-silence-trafficking-in-romani-communities/3846>.

identified and receiving the care that they need to assist with prosecution and/or to move on with their lives.

I believe the task force approach would effectively address the epidemic of trafficking in the Romani community, but it is also an effective approach in any community to ensure that victim identification is receiving the priority it deserves. This is particularly important because, as the supplementary item notes, overall victim identification in the OSCE region has declined in recent years, although we have no reason to believe that victimization has declined. On the contrary, the recent economic downturn has increased vulnerability all over the world. Desperate people are more willing to be put in danger, and traffickers are more than willing to exploit desperation. The year 2009 marked the high point for victim identification, when, according to the Trafficking in Persons report put out by the U.S. Department of State, more than 49,000 victims were identified in the OSCE region. That number fell dramatically in 2010 to about 33,000, but rose again in 2011 to over 42,000. The region is moving now in the right direction toward again prioritizing victim identification—but identification rates are far below the need.

In response, my supplementary item also called on participating States to specially train law enforcement, including border patrol, to focus on individuals from vulnerable groups and to screen them with extra care for signs that they are, or are likely to become, victims of human trafficking. Participating States should also ensure law enforcement is equipped with anti-trafficking information to distribute to vulnerable individuals, including immigrants with visas.

My supplementary item also called on participating States to ensure that all immigrants coming to work in the OSCE Region are equipped to know who to call should their employers turn out to be traffickers. According to best practices, participating States should have a trafficking hotline and pamphlets with information on their rights and who to call if they are trafficked. This information should be distributed with work visas, made available in consular offices, medical clinics, social services, and anywhere else that vulnerable populations would be able to access information. This information can prevent the vulnerable from being trafficked in the first place and provide a rescue number should they, or someone they know, become a victim.

The vulnerable are the least able to help themselves, which is why it is important for us, as legislators, to do everything we can to ensure limited government resources are strategically targeted at preventing the vulnerable from becoming or remaining victims. Community task force coordination with vulnerable groups, law enforcement focus on vulnerable groups, and educational outreach to vulnerable groups are key ways that each Participating and Partner States can decrease victimization and increase victim identification and rehabilitation.

I have kept the spotlight on human trafficking through other congressional hearings. In late February of 2012, I chaired a hearing “Healing the Wounds of Conflict and Disaster: Clarifying the Fate of Missing Persons in the OSCE Area,”⁵ which discussed how the international DNA database concept, first developed by the International Center for Missing Persons (ICMP) to bring closure to relatives who lost loved ones in the western Balkans, can be used to find victims of sex and labor trafficking, as well as victims of other sorts of violence. Queen Noor of Jordan testified before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe that, “The need for knowledge, for closure in these situations is universal. And providing it is critical to overcoming anger and despair and restoring stability to families, communities and nations. The fundamental human rights work of ICMP is not only palliative, it is preventative. The healing and recovery it provides to victims, as well as the process of accountability it helps foster with governments, are absolutely integral to the process of healing, reconciliation, justice and ultimately conflict prevention.” In short, the database links governments and families of the missing at the international level, facilitating the return of missing persons, including trafficking victims.

In September 2012, I also addressed human trafficking and sexual exploitation surrounding UN Peacekeeping missions in a hearing with Assistant Secretaries, Dr. Esther Brimmer and the Honorable Johnnie Carson.⁶ I personally have chaired several hearings to

⁵Healing the Wounds of Conflict and Disaster: Clarifying the Fate of Missing Persons in the OSCE Area, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (February 28, 2012) http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=522&ContentType=H.B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=4069252&CFTOKEN=41281128.

⁶ Assessing U.S. Policy on Peacekeeping Operations in Africa, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (September 13, 2012) <http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/75861.pdf>.

highlight this issue in the 112th Congress.⁷ The Trafficking Victims Protection Act that I sponsored in 2000 and its reauthorizations include as part of the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking in persons the prevention of human trafficking by peacekeeping personnel. The current zero-tolerance policy arose out of a hearing that I chaired more than 10 years ago, during which I requested the U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General, Joseph Schmitz, to undertake a global assessment of the United States military's complicity in human trafficking. I had obtained reports—particularly from South Korea—of U.S. service members abusing Russian, Moldovan, Philippine, South Korean, and other women—many of whom had been trafficked—in brothels. A similar situation occurred in the Balkans with the UN Peacekeepers (UNMIK), and on this situation I chaired hearings which exposed the complicity in trafficking of DynCorp police. Inspector General Schmitz wrote a devastating report regarding troop involvement in human trafficking. In response, then-President Bush issued a zero-tolerance policy for the U.S. military. The next year I met with NATO leaders, top command leadership, and pushed a zero-tolerance policy. NATO later adopted a similar policy, as did the United Nations.

Implementation of the zero tolerance policies in NATO and in U.N. Peacekeeping has proven to be challenging. The issue of human trafficking surrounding NATO missions in the Balkans and the zero-tolerance policy was at the center of another hearing, which I chaired in January of last year, on the western Balkans and the 2012 NATO Summit.⁸ Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse continue to emerge from many UN peacekeeping missions. The United Nations has increased pre-deployment trainings and accountability at many missions, launching investigations and sending offending troops home. However, the home country often fails to take or report action against the offending soldier.

In 2012, the United Nations developed a new accountability tool of withholding funds from troop-contributing countries when their troops engage in sexual exploitation or trafficking.

⁷ See in particular, The Western Balkans and the 2012 NATO Summit, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (January 19, 2012) http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=517&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=76145530&CFTOKEN=83590937.

⁸ The Western Balkans and the 2012 NATO Summit, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (January 19, 2012) http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=517&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=76145530&CFTOKEN=83590937.

I look forward to seeing this new measure encourage OSCE sending countries to hold their own soldiers and peacekeeping troops accountable for sexually exploiting the populations they are sent to protect—and to ensure that they are trained to fight, not facilitate, human trafficking.

I and other members of Congress also worked this year to strengthen accountability for the U.S. military and government contractor zero tolerance policy and will continue oversight of the zero tolerance policy for UN Peacekeepers. I also addressed peacekeeper trafficking in the African context in other recent hearings.⁹

I continue to be very concerned by the security situation in Egypt, particularly as it affects the abduction and forced marriage of minority women and girls. The needs of minority women and girls must be vigorously protected in all assistance to Egypt. In the 112th Congress, I chaired several hearings on Egypt, both in the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe,¹⁰ and in the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights.¹¹ Michele Clark, the former Head of the Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), testified and presented her landmark report on Egypt, focusing on the abduction, forced conversion, and forced marriage of Coptic women and girls, who are thereby cut off from their families and communities. Coptic families who go to the police for assistance are turned away. In at least one case, the family found and retrieved their daughter only to have the police come to their house and forcibly return the girl to her captors. I know of no case where the Egyptian government brought charges for abduction and forced

⁹ The Devastating Crisis in Eastern Congo, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (December 11, 2012)

<http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/77362.pdf>; Explaining the Role of Rwanda in the DRC Insurgency, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (September 19, 2012) <http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/76030.pdf>.

¹⁰ Escalating Violence Against Coptic Women and Girls: Will the New Egypt Be More Dangerous than the Old?, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (July 18, 2012)

http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=529&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=18778639&CFTOKEN=37165406; Minority at Risk: Coptic Christians in Egypt, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (July 22, 2011)

http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=504&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=76145572&CFTOKEN=22825915;

From Arab Spring to Coptic Winter, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (November 15, 2011)

http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=513&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=76600560&CFTOKEN=61885740.

¹¹ Prioritizing Religious Freedom in U.S. Foreign Policy, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (June 3, 2011)

<http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/66782.pdf>.

marriage. One witness at the most recent hearing shared her own horror story, having survived an attempted abduction. It is an issue of great concern and one that must be addressed as Egypt moves forward.

Also in the 112th Congress, I chaired a hearing on Human Trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime, which featured Piero Bonadeo, Deputy Representative to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), New York.¹² I have also addressed human trafficking in my hearings on Kazakhstan,¹³ Central Asia and the Arab Spring,¹⁴ Moldova,¹⁵ labor trafficking in the United States,¹⁶ and review of the annual Trafficking in Persons Report released by the U.S. Department of State.¹⁷ All of these hearings and more can be found at www.csce.gov under the “Hearings” tab. In addition, I held several hearings in my Subcommittee on Human Rights, in which I raised human trafficking in Africa,¹⁸ China,¹⁹ and other Asian countries.²⁰

¹² Human Trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (November 2, 2011)

http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=511&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=76145572&CFTOKEN=22825915; see also Best Practices and Next Steps: A New Decade in the Fight Against Human Trafficking, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (June 13, 2011)

<http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/66898.pdf>.

¹³ Kazakhstan: As Stable as its Government Claims? Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (January 23, 2012)

http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=518&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=76145530&CFTOKEN=83590937.

¹⁴ Central Asia and the Arab Spring: Growing Pressure for Human Rights? Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (May 11, 2011)

http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=494&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=76145572&CFTOKEN=22825915.

¹⁵ Moldova: The Growing Pains of Democracy, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (January 31, 2012)

http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=519&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=B&CFID=76145530&CFTOKEN=83590937.

¹⁶ Labor Trafficking in Troubled Economic Times: Protecting American Jobs and Migrant Human Rights, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (May 23, 2011)

http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=497&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=76145572&CFTOKEN=22825915.

¹⁷ The Trafficking in Persons Report 2011: Truth, Trends, and Tier Rankings, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (October 27, 2011)

<http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/70951.pdf>.

¹⁸ Governance, Democracy, Human Rights, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation in Africa: The FY2012 Proposed Budget, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (May 10, 2011) <http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/66291.pdf>; The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Securing Peace in the Midst of Tragedy, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (March 8, 2011)

<http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/65058.pdf>; USAID’s Long-Term Strategy for Addressing East African Emergencies, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs

In June 2012, the U.S. Department of State just released the latest Trafficking in Persons report (<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2012/>). Along with a concise summary of a country's progress on prevention, prosecution, and protection over the course of the last year, the report ranks countries according to the minimum standards. The minimum standards, as delineated by the Trafficking Victim's Protection Act of 2000 and my reauthorizations of the act in 2003 and 2005, are very similar to the standards in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which has been signed by most of the OSCE countries. The minimum standards are just that—minimum—and include the following:

- 1) The government of the country should prohibit severe forms of trafficking in persons and punish acts of such trafficking.
- 2) For the knowing commission of any act of sex trafficking involving force, fraud, coercion, or in which the victim of sex trafficking is a child incapable of giving meaningful consent, or of trafficking which includes rape or kidnapping or which causes a death, the government of the country should prescribe punishment commensurate with that for grave crimes, such as forcible sexual assault.
- 3) For the knowing commission of an act of a severe form of trafficking in persons, the government of the country should prescribe punishment that is sufficiently stringent to deter and that adequately reflects the heinous nature of the offense. The government of the country should make serious and sustained efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons.²¹

Committee (September 8, 2011) <http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/68243.pdf>; Assessing China's Role and Influence in Africa, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (March 29, 2012) <http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/73538.pdf>.

¹⁹ China's Latest Crackdown on Dissent (May 13)

<http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/66295.pdf>.

²⁰ Examining Ongoing Human Rights Abuses in Vietnam, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (January 24, 2012)

<http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/72463.pdf>; Human Rights in North Korea: Challenges and Opportunities, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, House Foreign Affairs Committee (September 20, 2011) <http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/68443.pdf>.

²¹ The criteria for applying these standards can be found in the Trafficking Victim's Protection Act of 2000, Div. A of Pub. L. No. 106–386, §108, as amended by the Trafficking Victim's Protection Act of 2003, Pub. L. No. 108–193, and Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005, Pub. L. 109–164.

The rankings in the report reflect whether the government of the country has in fact taken serious and sustained efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons during the reporting year. Governments receive a Tier 2 Watch List ranking when the government does not fully comply with the minimum standards, but the government is making serious efforts to bring itself into compliance, and one of the following factors are present:

- a) the absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing; or
- b) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat trafficking in persons from the previous year or there is decreasing evidence of complicity by government officials; or
- c) the determination that a country is making significant efforts is based on commitments by the country to take additional steps over the next year.

Of particular note in the 2012 report is that some Tier 1 countries (Bosnia Herzegovina and Portugal) were dropped to Tier 2—a good reminder to each nation that the fight against human trafficking requires constant diligence. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Iceland, and Malta were upgraded to Tiers 1 or 2. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan were placed or remained on the Tier 2 Watch List. Overall, the OSCE region saw a positive increase in trafficking prosecutions and convictions last year, with prosecutions up 31% and convictions up 10%.

In the United States, the 40 Department of Justice-led task forces reported over 900 investigations that involved more than 1,350 suspects in 2011. Combined with other federal investigations into human trafficking, the federal government convicted a record 151 human traffickers in 2011, which does not include additional convictions for the commercial sexual exploitation of children or trafficking convictions under other federal laws. The average sentence for a convicted trafficker under U.S. federal trafficking law in 2011 was 11.8 years—and several traffickers received life sentences.

One of the reasons the United States has been successful in convicting traffickers is that the U.S. has taken a victim-centered approach. The victim's needs should always come first even as law enforcement seeks the victim's help with prosecution. Law enforcement officials and prosecutors tell me that it is sometimes difficult to conduct a prosecution with a victim who has been traumatized by human trafficking, but they also tell me it is worth it. Prosecutions with victim witnesses consistently result in convictions and significant sentences. Typically, even victims who do not participate in the trial itself are helpful in ensuring that the prosecution is successful. The victim-centered approach—ensuring the victim's needs are met first—has been critical in supporting victims so that they are then able to work with law enforcement if they so choose, putting traffickers behind bars and stopping the cycle of human trafficking.

Even more, the victim-centered approach has been critical for the health and well-being of the victim. In the United States, foreign-born victims of severe forms of human trafficking are offered the same care and services as are offered to the UNHCR refugees our country accepts, including medical care, food, housing, mental health treatment, translation and interpretation, immigration and legal assistance, and transportation. Victims with work authorization are helped in finding employment. A network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) across the United States receives government funding to provide these critical rehabilitative services to victims.

Under the comprehensive trafficking law I introduced in 2000, the United States does not put foreign victims on the first transport back to the country from which they were trafficked. Rather victims are offered the opportunity to stay in the United States for a year and encouraged to assist law enforcement. Many victims are eligible to apply for long term visas to stay in the United States under the T visa created by my legislation, as well as the U visa, which allow victims to remain in the United States for 4 years with the possibility of becoming citizens. Victims may apply for a T visa if they meet certain criteria, such as complying with reasonable requests for assistance in the investigation or prosecution of acts of trafficking. Victims may also apply if they are less than 18 years old, or are unable to cooperate due to physical or psychological trauma, or if they would suffer extreme hardship involving unusual and severe harm upon removal. The T visa also allows victims to bring their family members to the United

States in order to prevent reprisals on family members by traffickers in their home country. Both the T and the U visa puts former victims on the pathway to a new life outside the cycle of human trafficking. Such visas should be considered a best practice as we seek to meet the needs of trafficking victims.

In the U.S. Congress, I continue to advance legislation aimed at strengthening and expanding our anti-trafficking efforts consistent with the OSCE PA resolutions. My Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act will further refine U.S. trafficking law. For instance, the current draft will require corporations with \$100 million or more in worldwide receipts to report on their websites what actions they have taken to combat human trafficking in their supply chains. Consumers, then, will be able to make an informed choice about what products they buy. They will not be unwilling collaborators in demand for goods made by trafficked human beings. The Act will also expand the information to be included in the Attorney General's annual report to Congress to include any contracts terminated by a federal agency as a result of human trafficking by a contractor, and whether any employees have been disciplined, terminated or prosecuted for violating the zero-tolerance policy. This would be in addition to a new investigation and enforcement mechanism attached to the National Defense Authorization Act, which was passed in 2012.

I was encouraged in 2012 to see that the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has recently developed a Program for Action that contains many positive provisions and initiatives, including provisions on how better co-operation between CIS and OSCE can be promoted. The CIS also coordinated with the OSCE and the Council of Europe to host a trafficking roundtable in St. Petersburg, Russia, in April. I welcome this coordination and the positive trends in the OSCE and CIS regions. For instance, Armenia continues to make progress against human trafficking, including by working in partnership with civil society groups to protect identified trafficking victims and raise awareness on these issues. Moldova has taken a lead on victim protection services and expanded its exemplary national referral system. Ukraine is also working to improve delivery of services to victims through a national referral system.

Every step forward counts. Every positive change tips the scale a little more in the direction of freedom for the enslaved, and prison for the slave masters. The fight against human trafficking always requires persistence. I look forward to persisting with each Participating and Partner State in adopting the best practices that will move us closer toward the eradication of human trafficking.