Human Rights Foundation

AUTHORITARIANISM AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
ANNUAL POLICY BRIEF

REPORT

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Executive Summary

Human trafficking, considered a modern form of slavery, exists in every region of the world. In 2021, there were an estimated 27.6 million individuals trapped in modern slavery and 22 million trapped in forced marriage globally. While human trafficking exists in every country, the evidence suggests a strong connection between the political regime types of countries and how effectively they address trafficking. Unfortunately, international bodies and nongovernmental organizations have largely failed to examine and highlight this connection.

In the following brief, the Human Rights Foundation (HRF) (1) explores the current state of global human trafficking and recent developments; (2) analyzes the connection between authoritarianism and trafficking using the tier rankings of the annual U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) reports; (3) presents four case studies further showing the influence of authoritarian regimes on trafficking; and (4) provides a conclusion on the findings in the prior three parts.

HRF found that in the 2022 TIP Report, 90 percent of Tier 1 states were democratic. These countries were making active efforts to combat trafficking. In contrast, 100 percent of Tier 3 countries were authoritarian. These countries were making little to no effort to combat trafficking. This trend continued throughout a longitudinal review of the TIP reports, with 90 to 95 percent of Tier 1 comprising democratic states and 90 to 100 percent of Tier 3 comprising authoritarian states in the last five reports from 2018–2022.

90%
of **Tier 1** states are **democratic**

Tier 1: Governments that fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking

100%
of **Tier 3** states are **authoritarian**

Tier 3: Governments that do not fully comply with the minimum anti-trafficking standards and are not making significant efforts to comply

Democratic states are characterized by strong political institutions, sufficient resources, a strong civil society, a free press, and independence of the judiciary that holds governments to account. Therefore, democratic regimes are more likely to identify trafficking as a problem that needs to be addressed, and, thus, comply with international standards to prevent and prosecute trafficking, and to protect and compensate their victims. In contrast, authoritarian regimes are characterized by government complicity, weak or subservient political institutions, or high levels of conflict and political instability. Therefore, authoritarian regimes generally fail to put into place the legal mechanisms and institutions that can prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators. In some cases, the regime itself is the perpetrator. This finding is further bolstered by four case studies of authoritarian regimes — China, Cuba, Eritrea, and Saudi Arabia — included in this brief.

The correlation between political regime type and human trafficking suggests authoritarianism is a root cause of human trafficking. It also suggests that improving civil and political rights in authoritarian regimes will likely lead to better protection, advocacy, and justice for victims of human trafficking. For efforts to combat trafficking to be successful, states must include democratic reforms as part of their national anti-trafficking plans.

Introduction

Human trafficking, considered a modern form of slavery, exists in every region in the world. In 2018, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) found 50,000 human trafficking victims were detected and reported by 148 countries.[1] However, the actual number of victims is much higher. According to a report published by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Walk Free, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), it was estimated that 27.6[2] million individuals were trapped in forced labor and 22 million trapped in forced marriage worldwide in 2021.[3] The rest of Section I will break down the definition and aspects of human trafficking globally. Section I will also review current factors influencing trafficking, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though trafficking is present in every country, including democracies, the analysis in this report suggests there is a strong connection between trafficking and authoritarianism at a structural level. Unfortunately, international bodies and nongovernmental organizations have largely failed to examine and highlight this connection. Section II will explore the relationship between authoritarian regimes and human trafficking through an analysis of the U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Reports and other relevant literature.

In addition to the analysis in Section II, this report will explore four case studies in Section III — China, Cuba, Eritrea, and Saudi Arabia — as examples of authoritarian states perpetuating trafficking.

Section IV of this report will present a conclusion on the findings presented in previous sections.

Lastly, Section V will offer recommendations and calls to action relating to efforts to combat human trafficking.

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1 "Human Trafficking FAQs," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Accessed April 18, 2022, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/faqs.html#h2.

2 Of the 49.6 million victims in 2021, 27.6 million people were subjected to forced labor and 22 million subjected to forced marriage. While the study by the ILO and Walk Free Foundation considers forced marriage as an aspect of modern slavery, many organizations focus on the forced labor statistics. This brief does the same and looks at the 27.6 million people subjected to forced labor.

3 "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage," The International Labour Organization, Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration, Geneva, 2022, 1. https://cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2022/09/12142341/GEMS-2022_Report_EN_V8.pdf

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

In 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children to supplement the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.[4] Article 3(a) of the Protocol defines trafficking in persons as, "...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation..."[5]

The crime of human trafficking requires three core elements. The trafficker must act using certain means for a purpose. Acts can include recruiting, transporting, harboring, or receiving trafficked persons. The means of trafficking can include threats, force, coercion, fraud, and deception to traffic individuals. Lastly, the act of trafficking must be taken for a purpose, which is exploitation of the individuals for financial gain.[6]

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4 "U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children," United Nations General Assembly 55/25, 15 November, 2000, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolTraffickingInPersons.aspx

5 Ibid.

6 "The Crime: Defining Human Trafficking," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Accessed 23 March, 2022. https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/crime.html.

TYPES OF TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking can take many forms. Article 3(a) of the Protocol defines exploitation as "prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs." [7]

The different types of trafficking are often divided into two broad categories: sexual exploitation and forced labor. Sexual exploitation, or sex trafficking, is defined as individuals performing commercial sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Sex trafficking can exist in public spaces, such as on the street or at truck stops, as well as in venues such as massage parlors, brothels, strip clubs, hostess clubs, and hotels.[8] In some analyses, sexual exploitation is included under the "forced labor" category.

Forced labor, or labor trafficking is defined as individuals performing labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.[9] Labor trafficking victims are exploited across industries; the more commonly reported economic sectors include agriculture, construction, fishing, mining, manufacturing, and domestic servitude.[10] One-fifth of labor trafficking victims are held in debt bondage, in which the trafficker uses the personal debt of the victim as a means to forcibly obtain labor.[11]

Other forms of trafficking include, but are not limited to, forced begging, forced criminal activity, use of child soldiers, forced marriage, and the removal of organs. UNODC reported one percent of reported trafficking includes mixed or multiple forms of trafficking.[12]

Of the 27.6 million victims reported by the ILO, Walk Free, and IOM in 2021 as being subjected to forced labor, 86 percent were exploited for labor in the private industry, 23 percent were exploited for sex, and 14 percent were exploited in state-imposed forced labor.[13] The assessment found that of those trapped in private industry labor, 32 percent worked in the services sector, 18.7 percent in the manufacturing sector, 16.3 percent in the construction sector, 12.3 percent in agriculture, 8.2 percent in domestic work, and 11.1 percent in other industries.[14]

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7 "U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children."

8 "Sex Trafficking," National Human Trafficking Hotline, Accessed 5 April, 2022. https://humantraffickinghotline.org/type-trafficking/sex-trafficking.

9 "Labor Trafficking," National Human Trafficking Hotline, Accessed 5 April, 2022, https://humantraffickinghotline.org/type-trafficking/labor-trafficking.

10 "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna, 2021, 10 https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP_2020_15jan_web.pdf.

11 "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage," 43.

12 "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020," 11.

13 "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage," 25.

14 Ibid., at 31.

Despite higher numbers of labor trafficking victims, sex trafficking is more known and therefore more reported. Of the 50,000 victims identified by the UNODC in 2018, 50 percent were trafficked for sexual exploitation and 38 percent for forced labor. Six percent were subjected to forced criminal activity and more than one percent to begging. Smaller numbers encompassed forced marriage, organ removal, and other forms of trafficking. [15]

Smuggling, sometimes conflated with trafficking, is a separate activity. Victims do not need to cross a border to be trafficked and can be exploited domestically. In 2018, 65 percent of identified victims were trafficked within the borders of their country.[16] However, smuggling can present a vulnerability to trafficking. Those who are smuggled into a country illegally may be deceived, coerced, or forced into an exploitative situation later in the process. For example, the smuggled individual may be put into debt bondage and forced to work for little pay in exchange for their transportation.[17]

WHO IS TRAFFICKED?

Persons of all genders, ages, races, and nationalities can be trafficked. However, victim demographics vary based on the industry and the region. Females are overall disproportionately affected — comprising 8 out of every 10 trafficking victims identified in 2018. While adult women were the main identified victims in the UNODC 2018 study, demographics varied by region. In Sub-Saharan Africa, more children victims were identified over adult victims, and in the Middle East and North Africa, more adult men were identified over adult women.[18]

Gender is a critical factor of exploitation. The ILO, Walk Free, and IOM in 2021 found that women and girls make up four out of five sexual exploitation victims.[19] Male victims were more likely to be in forced labor. For example, the construction industry accounts for 22 percent of all male exploitation, but only four percent for women.[20] Children comprised 39 percent of forced labor exploitation victims, 51 percent of sexual exploitation victims, and 10 percent of state-imposed labor victims.[21]

Certain circumstances, often called "push-pull factors"[22] or "pre-existing factors" move individuals into vulnerable situations where traffickers can recruit and exploit them. Unfavorable circumstances, such as war and poverty, push individuals, while favorable circumstances, such as freedom from persecution and

15 "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020," 10

16 Ibid., at 55.

17 "Human Trafficking FAQs."

18 "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020," 31.

19 "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage," 45.

20 Ibod., at 34.

21 Ibid., at 46.

22 See: Cho, Seo-Young. "Modeling for Determinants of Human Trafficking: An Empirical Analysis." Social Inclusion 3, no. 1 (January 2015), 2–21.

employment opportunities, pull individuals.[23] Poverty is a major driving factor. Of the trafficking in persons court cases analyzed by the UNODC, 51 percent reported the victim in a condition of economic need.

PUSH FACTORS	PULL FACTORS
Poverty/Limited Employment Opportunities	Better Employment Opportunities
Weak Institutions	Improved Quality of Life
Conflict/Human Rights Abuses	Safety/Security
Persecution	Freedom From Persecution

Migration, driven by push-pull factors, provides traffickers the opportunity to easily exploit victims. Of the aforementioned court cases, immigration status was a factor in 10 percent of cases.[24] When migrating, individuals can be particularly vulnerable to trafficking if they are moving through irregular channels. During migration, they are often dislocated from community and family support structures without access to legitimate forms of employment, legal status, and social protection. They may also work in informal sectors where there are no labor protections.[25] In fact, migrants may actively search for and accept known exploitative work when they believe that there are no other alternatives for them to fulfill their economic needs.[26]

While personal push and pull factors, like economic need, are often explored, the systemic root causes of trafficking are influenced by the state. For example, countries in conflict or with weak and corrupt institutions are less likely to address human trafficking than stable states. The regime of a state plays a significant role either combatting or perpetuating human trafficking, as will be discussed in Section II.

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23 "Human Trafficking," National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, 1 September, 2014, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://vawnet.org/sc/human-trafficking.

24"Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020," 71.

25 David, Fiona, Katharine Bryant, and Jacqueline Joudo Larsen, "Migrants and Their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour," International Organization for Migration, 2019, Accessed 26 July 2022. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/migrants_and_their_vulnerability.pdf.

26 "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020," 71.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in early 2020, significantly impacted human trafficking trends. The pandemic disrupted economic activities and reduced livelihood options for individuals globally. The economic distress exacerbated risks for those vulnerable to trafficking. For example, migrant workers and those in the informal economy faced riskier employment conditions with minimal oversight from governments. An IST Research survey of migrant workers in the Gulf states found that more than 50 percent of migrant workers reported bearing new debts because of the pandemic. Others who experienced drastic changes in their financial situation, such as reduction of wages and unemployment, also became vulnerable to trafficking, even if they were not previously at-risk.[27]

Traffickers used the pandemic to their advantage, targeting families with financial struggles and informal sector workers. Some examples cited in the U.S. Department of State's 2021 TIP Report included traffickers offering fraudulent jobs to recruit children from financially unstable families, business owners and landlords pressuring individuals to take out loans in exchange for cheap labor or commercial sexual exploitation, and traffickers re-exploiting survivors who became financially unstable. With disruptions to anti-trafficking efforts and public justice systems during the pandemic, many traffickers were able to act with impunity.[28]

Conflicts

Conflicts can put large numbers of people at risk when they are internally displaced or forced to leave their home country as refugees. When refugees are forced to leave their homes, they also leave behind their families, communities, and other forms of social support.[29] In Ethiopia, the conflict in Tigray, which began in November 2020, has exacerbated the existing refugee crisis in the region. In addition to the famine and egregious human rights abuses, 2.5 million have been displaced in Ethiopia and surrounding states.

Without access to support and at risk of harm, trafficking has increased. Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees smuggled out of the region are also at higher risk of trafficking. The smuggling of refugees through Sudan to Northern Africa and Europe has increased threefold since the start of the conflict.[30] Eritrea will be explored further as a case study in Section III.

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27 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2021." Washington, D.C.: Department of State, United States of America, 2021, 4, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/.

28 Ibid., at 7.

29 "Trafficking in Persons," United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, Accessed April 27, 2022, https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/human-trafficking.html.

30 "Nowhere to Run: Eritrean Refugees in Tigray," Refugees International, March 3, 2022, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2022/3/1/nowhere-to-run-eritrean-refugees-in-tigray.

Additionally, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has created the largest European refugee crisis since World War II.[31] Of the over 5 million Ukrainians refugees created by the invasion, 90 percent are women and children, who are particularly vulnerable to trafficking.[32] Recent reports have described traffickers pretending to be volunteers or targeting Ukrainian refugees with promises of employment.[33]

Sports Events

When large sporting events take place, demand for quick labor to construct arenas, accommodation, and other infrastructure increases. For example, FIFA's infrastructure requirements, particularly for stadiums and training grounds for the Men's World Cup, can only be met by a handful of countries without engaging in massive construction or renovation efforts. Traffickers take advantage of the demand for construction and low wage labor to exploit workers, particularly migrant workers.[34] In addition, FIFA has been under investigation in recent years for corruption in the host selection process, especially as it recently awarded hosting rights to the authoritarian regimes of Russia and Qatar in 2018 and 2022, respectively.[35]

The 2022 FIFA World Cup is the latest event with reports of exploitation. Qatar's economy is reliant on approximately 2 million migrant workers, which make up 95 per cent of its total labor force.[36] Qatar had little existing elite soccer infrastructure in place and had to build many of the stadiums from scratch.[37]

31 Vierlinger, Julian, "UN: Ukraine refugee crisis is Europe's biggest since WWII," Atlantic Council, April 20, 2022, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/un-ukraine-refugee-crisis-is-europes-biggest-since-wwii/.

32 Siegfried, Kristy. "Ukraine Crisis Creates New Trafficking Risks." United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, April 13, 2022, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/stories/2022/4/62569be24/ukraine-crisis-creates-new-trafficking-risks.html.

33 Adler, Katya, "How the Sex Trade Preys on Ukraine's Refugees," BBC News, 27 March, 2022, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60891801.

34 Hepburn, Stephanie, "It's Not Just About Sex—Human Trafficking and Mega Sporting Events," HuffPost, 13 February, 2017, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/its-not-just-about-sexhuman-trafficking-and-sporting_b_58a25412e4b0e172783a9fd7.

35 Panja, Tariq and Kevin Draper. "U.S. Says FIFA Officials Were Bribed to Award World Cups to Russia and Qatar." The New York Times, 20 October, 2021, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/sports/soccer/qatar-and-russia-bribery-world-cup-fifa.html.

36 "'How Can We Work Without Wages?'Salary Abuses Facing Migrant Workers Ahead of Qatar's FIFA World Cup 2022," Human Rights Watch, 24 August, 2020, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/08/24/how-can-we-work-without-wages/salary-abuses-facing-migrant-workers-ahead-qatars.

37 See: Oslo Freedom Forum, "Slavery's Shadow on Qatar's World Cup | Pete Pattisson | 2019 Oslo Freedom Forum in New York," YouTube Video, 11:02, 23 December, 2019, Accessed 26 July 2022 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ua7ALYI-wc.
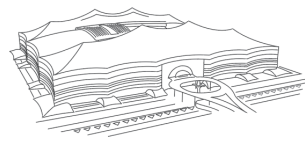
Several reports from Human Rights Watch (HRW) have recorded contracting firms withholding wages from World Cup laborers for months at a time while the laborers work in perilous conditions.[38] In 2022, the Qatar World Cup organizers acknowledged that workers were exploited for the event after the release of an Amnesty International investigation which found security guards were working in "forced labor" conditions by exceeding the 60-hour maximum work week and not receiving time off.[39] In 2021, 37 deaths were recorded among workers directly linked to construction of Qatar's World Cup stadiums.[40]
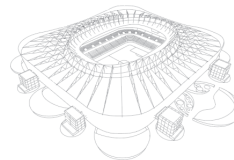
Regimes that commit human rights abuses also use these events to help clean their image, a phenomenon known as "sportswashing." This will be further discussed in the China case study in Section III.
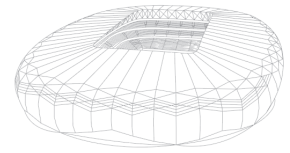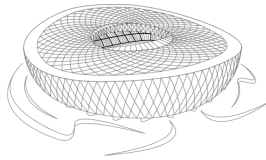

Ras Abu Aboud Stadium   Al Bayt Stadium   Ahmed Bin Ali Stadium   Education City Stadium
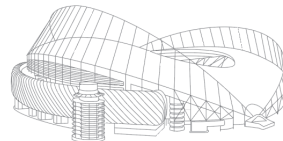
Lusail Stadium   Khalifa International Stadium   Al Thumama Stadium   Al Janoub Stadium
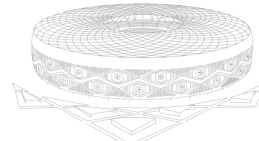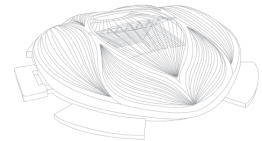
Qatar's World Cup stadiums

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38 "Qatar: Wage Abuses by Firm in World Cup Leadup," Human Rights Watch, 3 March, 2022, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/03/qatar-wage-abuses-firm-world-cup-leadup.

39 "Qatar World Cup Organizers Admit Workers were Exploited," ABC News, 6 April, 2022, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://abcnews.go.com/Sports/wireStory/qatar-world-cup-organizers-admit-workers-exploited-83922217.

40 Pattison, Pete and Niamh McIntyre, "Revealed: 6,500 Migrant Workers have Died in Qatar since World Cup Awarded," The Guardian, 23 February, 2021, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/feb/23/revealed-migrant-worker-deaths-qatar-fifa-world-cup-2022.

Human Trafficking and Authoritarianism

As discussed in Section I, the relationship between human trafficking and authoritarianism is under-explored. For this report, HRF analyzed the tier rankings in the U.S. Department of State's annual TIP reports. HRF assessed the rankings of states in seven of the TIP reports and compared them to the state's political regime classifications to determine if there was a correlation between regime type and anti-trafficking efforts.

METHODOLOGY

Under international law, states are obligated to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in their territories, and are responsible for the protection of its victims. These obligations are defined in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children. [41]

The United States' Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) establishes minimum standards for states in combating trafficking.[42] The U.S. Department of State assesses states' compliance with TVPA on an annual basis in its TIP Report, one of the best-known, authoritative, and most widely cited texts on the subject. The TIP Report places states into one of four tiers based on a "3P" paradigm of "prosecuting traffickers," "protecting victims," and "preventing the crime." The 3P paradigm is an approach reflected under both international law and the TVPA.[43] The U.S. Department of State also recognizes an additional "fourth P" — partnership — as "a complementary means to achieve progress across the 3Ps and ensure all segments of society are enlisted in the fight against modern slavery." The TIP Report provides a description of the trafficking situation in each country or territory and analyzes the government's efforts to address trafficking, including the enactment of anti-trafficking laws and victim protection efforts.[44]

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41 "U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children."

42 "Trafficking Victim Protection Act: Minimum Standards for the Elimination of Trafficking in Persons," U.S. Department of State, Div. A of Pub. L. No. 106-386, § 108, as amended 2000, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-106publ386/pdf/PLAW-106publ386.pdf.

43 Amahazion, FikreJesus, "Global Anti-Sex Trafficking: State Variance in Implementation of Protectionist Policies," Human Rights Quarterly 36, no. 1 (February 2014): 176-209.

44 Vidwans, Prachi and Malaak Jamal, "Authoritarianism and Trafficking in Persons," Human Rights Foundation, 27 July, 2018, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://hrf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HRF-policy-memo-2.pdf.

The TIP Report ranks states annually into four categories:

Tier 1

The governments of countries that fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.

Tier 2

The governments of countries that do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

Tier 2 Watch List

The governments of countries that do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards. Distinct from Tier 2 countries, Tier 2 Watch List countries are also characterized as those in which:

- The absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing.
- There is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year.
- The determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with the minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional future steps over the next year.

Tier 3

The governments of countries that do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.[45]

HRF categorizes states into three regime types — democratic, competitive authoritarian, and fully authoritarian — using the widely accepted definitions provided by Harvard professor Steven Levitsky and University of Toronto professor Lucan A. Way in their seminal book "Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War".[46]

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45 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2022." Washington, D.C.: Department of State, United States of America, 2022, 55, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/.

46 Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way, Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War,New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

HRF reviewed the classifications included in the 2022 TIP Report, which assessed government efforts to combat human trafficking from April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022.[47] This review was taken in addition to the data previously collected by HRF from the 2001, 2002, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 TIP Reports. These reports were analyzed alongside HRF's political regime classifications to determine probable correlation between regime type and efforts to combat human trafficking.

DATA ANALYSIS

HRF's analysis of the 2022 TIP Report revealed that democratic regimes ranked better than authoritarian regimes in meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking. The map below shows that poorer ranking states are more likely to be fully authoritarian regimes and competitive authoritarian regimes. Many of these regimes are clustered in Africa, the Middle East, and South and Central Asia.

It is important to note that there is an additional Special Case categorization in the 2022 TIP Report which HRF included in calculating the total number of regime types and the percentages cited below. In the 2022 TIP Report, three fully authoritarian regimes were classified as special cases: Libya, South Sudan, and Yemen.

As further explained in the below table, there is a strong correlation between political regime type and tier placement in the 2022 TIP Report. In 2022, 90 percent of Tier 1 states were democratic. In contrast, 75 percent of Tier 3 countries were fully authoritarian states. Notably, zero democracies were classified as Tier 3 in 2022. Instead, competitive authoritarian and fully authoritarian states combined made up the 100 percent of countries in Tier 3.

47 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2022," 52.

Table 1. An Analysis of the 2022 TIP Report

	Democratic	Competitive Authoritarian	Fully Authoritarian
Tier 1	27, 90.00%	1, 3.33%	2, 6.67%
Tier 2	50, 50.51%	28, 28.28%	21, 21.21%
Tier 2 Watch List	15, 45.45%	7, 21.21%	11, 33.33%
Tier 3	0, 0.00%	5, 25.00%	15, 75.00%

Table 1. The first numbers indicate the number of countries in each tier and the second numbers represent the percentage of countries in the tier for the 2022 TIP Report.

This follows a trend of democracies comprising the vast majority of Tier 1 states, with the majority of authoritarian states comprising Tier 3. In HRF's review of TIP reports from the last five years, numbers stayed relatively constant, with 90 to 95 percent of Tier 1 comprising democratic states, and 90 to 100 percent of Tier 3 comprising authoritarian states in the last five reports from 2018–2022. Competitive authoritarian states were often less than 7 percent of Tier 1 and fluctuated between 15 and 30 percent for Tier 3.

The following chart illustrates the consistency of the rankings for the three regimes. It shows the percentage of each tier that the regime types fall into from the analysis of TIP Reports for the last five years.

Tier Percentages by Regime, 2018 – 2022
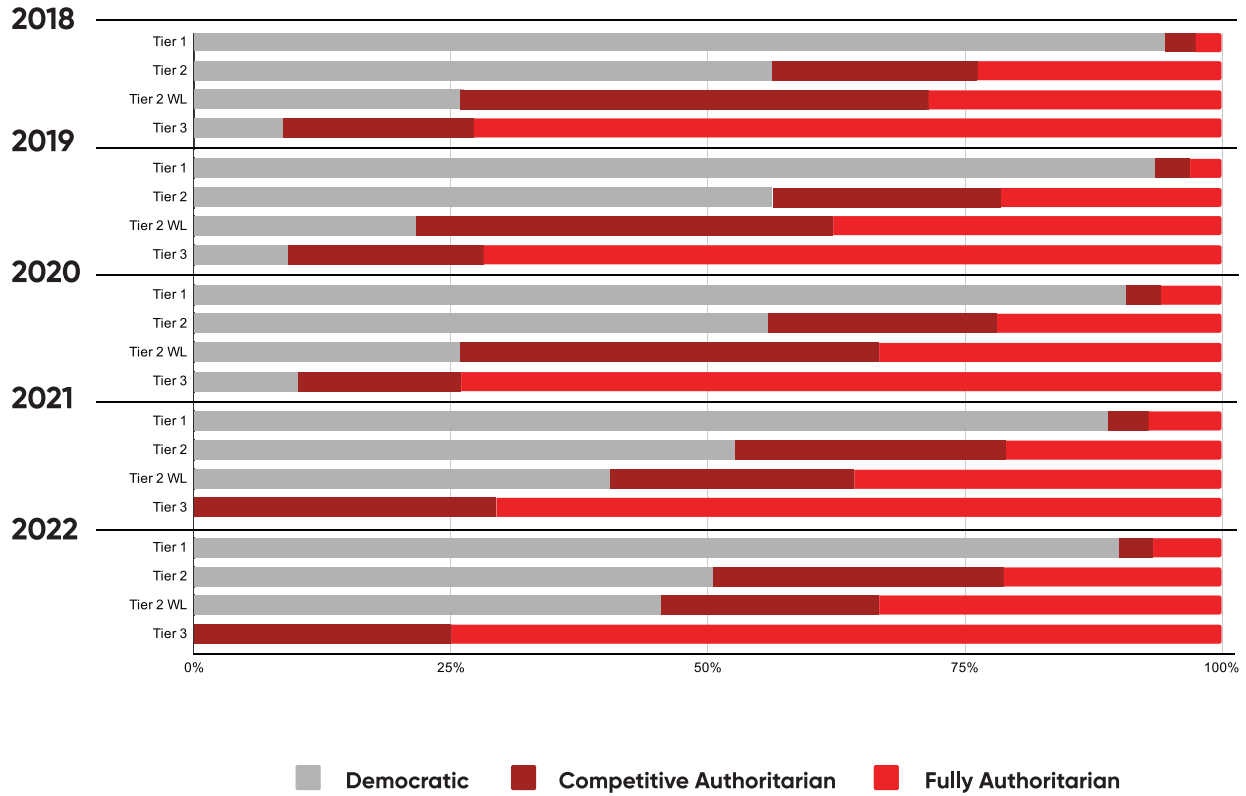
This trend has also been seen since the inception of the TIP Report, which was first published in 2001 and has evolved significantly since then. The table below shows the number of states and percentages from the first two years the TIP Report was published and the two most recent years the report was published. While the TIP reports in 2001 and 2002 ranked less states (81 and 87 countries, respectively), the statistics confirm democratic states were more likely to be in Tier 1, while authoritarian states were more likely to be in Tier 3. It is important to note that in 2001 and 2002, the category "Tier 2 Watchlist" did not exist.

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Countries in Tier 1 by Year

	2001	2002	2021	2022
Democratic	11, 91.67%	17, 94.44%	25, 89.29%	25, 90.00%
Competitive Authoritarian	1, 8.33%	1, 5.56%	1, 3.57%	1, 3.33%
Fully Authoritarian	0, 0.00%	0, 0.00%	2, 7.14%	2, 6.67%

Table 2. The first numbers indicate the number of countries and the second numbers represent the percentage of countries in Tier 1 for the years 2001, 2002, 2020, and 2021.

Table 3. Number and Percentage of Countries in Tier 3 by Year

	2001	2002	2020	2022
Democratic	8, 36.36%	4, 21.05%	0, 0.00%	0, 0.00%
Competitive Authoritarian	3, 13.64%	4, 21.05%	5, 29.41%	5, 25.00%
Fully Authoritarian	11, 50.00%	11, 57.89%	12, 70.59%	15, 75.00%

Table 3. The first numbers indicate the number of countries and the second numbers represent the percentage of countries in Tier 3 for the years 2001, 2002, 2020, and 2021.

FURTHER EVIDENCE

While most analysts have focused on how specific economic or labor policies influence trafficking, studies show that overall political structure greatly influences a state's trafficking policies. States that actively work to reduce human trafficking take steps such as identifying survivors, using justice mechanisms, addressing institutions that enable trafficking, and engaging with civil society. Additionally, these states ensure accountability mechanisms are in place for the government.[48] Conversely, states can incentivize behaviors that increase risk of slavery. These behaviors include state-sanctioned forced labor, government complicity and corruption, criminalization and deportation of victims, and poor protections for migrant workers.[49]

The Walk Free Foundation's 2016 Global Slavery Index revealed that the states that demonstrated the weakest efforts to combat slavery were predominantly authoritarian regimes. These countries are characterized by government complicity, weak or subservient political institutions, or high levels of conflict and political instability. Meanwhile, the strongest responses to modern slavery came from democratic regimes, characterized by strong political institutions, sufficient resources, and a robust civil society that holds governments to account.[50]

Walk Free's 2018 Index, which improved upon its prior methodology, also confirmed these findings. The 10 governments taking the most action toward combating human trafficking in the 2018 Index were democratic regimes, while the 10 governments taking the least action were authoritarian regimes. The majority of the 10 worst performing governments were defined by conflict, a lack of rule of law, and displacement.[51] Additionally, three of the 10 worst performers — North Korea, Eritrea, and Burundi — have state-imposed forced labor.[52]

The connection between authoritarianism and trafficking has also been confirmed by quantitative academic studies. A 2011 study, which developed a new index measuring governments' overall anti-trafficking policies for 177 countries over a 10-year period, found that the quality of a country's anti-trafficking policy was higher with democratic regimes.[53] Other significant factors that improved the quality of anti-trafficking policy included the perceived absence of corruption and better women's rights.[54]

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48 "The Global Slavery Index 2016," Walk Free Foundation, July 4, 2016, 10, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/resources/downloads/.

49 Ibid., at 168.

50 Ibid., at 9.

51 North Korea, Eritrea, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Mauritania, South Sudan, Pakistan, Cambodia, and Iran.

52 "The Global Slavery Index 2018," Walk Free Foundation, July 23, 2018, https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/resources/downloads/, 3.

53 Cho, Seo-Young, Axel Dreher, and Eric Neumayer. "The Spread of Anti-Trafficking Policies - Evidence from a New Index." CESifo Working Paper Series, no. 3376, 17 March, 2011, 12.

54 Ibid.

A 2014 study from Emory University found that states' autocratic or democratic leanings and commitment to human rights are significant factors in whether states will successfully implement anti-sex trafficking policies. Successful implementation requires states to have the will to adhere to human rights and to govern effectively; therefore, authoritarian regimes are less likely to have strong policies protecting victims of sex trafficking.[55]

Authoritarian regimes encourage corruption, lack rule of law, and actively undermine or criminalize civil society and the press. They are also more likely to engage in conflict. All of these factors allow traffickers to commit crimes with impunity.

Human trafficking is a lucrative crime and continues with the collusion of corrupt officials. Corruption exists across trafficking systems,[56] including within fishing, domestic service, the kafala system, and the construction for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.[57] In corrupt states, police and politicians can be bribed to look the other way when trafficking occurs or when cases are identified. In some situations, officials are actively involved in trafficking.[58] This involvement facilitates these crimes and assures the re-victimization of trafficked victims.[59]

Without rule of law, trafficking victims lack an avenue through which to challenge their abusers, and cannot count on the state to intervene to protect their rights. Authoritarian regimes tend to prosecute fewer trafficking cases and in some regimes, trafficking is state-sponsored.[60] The U.S. Department of State 2022 TIP Report found 11[61] governments with a documented "policy or pattern" of state-sponsored trafficking, 100 percent of which are fully authoritarian.[62]

Authoritarian regimes are also more likely to be embroiled in conflict than democratic countries. When conflict occurs, individuals are displaced and more vulnerable to human trafficking as they are cut off from social and safety networks. For example, Syrians that are displaced within Syria or are refugees in other countries are extremely vulnerable to trafficking.[63]

Lastly, authoritarian states also prevent civil society and advocacy groups from operating openly and effectively, if they are not banned outright. This prevents victims from receiving the help and advocacy they need.[64] In contrast, democracies are more likely to encourage transparency and accountability

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55 Amahazion, "Global Anti-Sex Trafficking: State Variance in Implementation of Protectionist Policies," 203.

56 See the case study on Saudi Arabia in Section IV for more information.

57 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2022," 46.

58 See Rohingya trafficking victims: "The Global Slavery Index 2016," pg 148.

59 "Human Trafficking and Corruption," Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Accessed 2 May, 2022, https://www.oecd.org/gov/ethics/human-trafficking.htm.

60 Vidwans and Jamal, "Authoritarianism and Trafficking in Persons."

61 Afghanistan, Burma, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Russia, South Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan, and Yemen.

62 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2022," 51.

63 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2019." Washington, D.C.: Department of State, United States of America, 2019, 444, Accessed 22 July 2022, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report.pdf.

64 Vidwans and Jamal, "Authoritarianism and Trafficking in Persons."

around anti-human trafficking efforts. In democracies, civil society groups can operate freely to provide services to victims and lobby representatives to improve anti-trafficking policies. The U.S. government, for example, recognizes the well-established role of civil society groups: the fourth "P" in the 3P para-digm includes "partnership" with civil society and local authority figures. Additionally, in democracies, victims are more likely to seek the help of law enforcement and pursue justice through the due process of law. A free press in addition to free and fair elections ensure that government leaders are responsive and accountable to the needs of vulnerable populations.[65]

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65 Ibid.

Case Studies

CHINA: HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

China, a fully authoritarian regime, has created a culture where trafficking is the norm through its state-sanctioned forced labor and repressive policies.

The Chinese government has engaged in state-sanctioned forced labor of Uyghur and other Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR or "Xinjiang") for the last several years. In 2017, investigations from the United Nations and NGOs found Chinese officials were imposing ongoing restrictive and oppressive measures against ethnic minorities in the region. According to 2017 reporting, one million Uyghurs had been rounded up by Chinese police forces and moved to "re-education" camps, where abuses such as torture, forced political indoctrination, and forced sterilization occurred.[66]

Further reporting found the Chinese government has facilitated the mass transfer of Uyghurs from Xinjiang to factories throughout the country to provide forced labor.[67] The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) estimated 80,000 Uyghurs were transferred out of Xinjiang to work in factories across China between 2017 and 2019. Some were sent directly from the detention camps. In the factories, Uyghurs face deplorable conditions with no pay. They typically live in segregated dormitories, undergo ideological training, and are subject to constant surveillance and limited freedom of movement.[68]

China's forced labor is heavily entwined with global supply chains. ASPI's report identified at least 82 global brands that benefited from forced Uyghur labor, including well-known companies such as Apple, BMW, Gap, Huawei, and Nike.[69] The Xinjiang region, which produces 85 percent of China's cotton and 22 percent of cotton worldwide, has seen an expansion of forced labor of Uyghurs who

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66 "Uyghur Forced Labour in Xinjiang and UK Value Chains," UK Parliament, 17 March, 2021, Accessed 22 July 2022, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmbeis/1272/127204.htm.

67 Ibid.

68 Xiuzhong Xu, Vicky, Cave, Danielle, Leibold, James, Munro, Kelsey and Nathan Ruser, "Uyghurs for Sale: 'Re-education,' Forced Labour and Surveillance Beyond Xinjiang," Australian Strategic Policy Institute and International Cyber Policy Centre, 1 March, 2020, 3, Accessed 22 July 2022, https://ad-aspi.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/2021-10/Uyghurs%20for%20sale%202020OCT21.pdf?VersionId=zlRFV8AtLg1lTtRpzBm7ZcfnHK-m6Z0Ys.

69 Ibid, 3.

are "absorbed" into the state-sponsored labor programs.[70] This has led to some action from the international community to block goods and discontinue business with companies connected to forced Uyghur labor.[71]

Other repressive policies from the Chinese government have indirectly lead to human trafficking. In 1980, China enacted its one-child policy, which restricted the majority of Chinese families to only one child as a response to the country's rapid population growth and severe shortage of goods. Under the policy, the Chinese government carried out massive sterilization and abortion campaigns. For example, there were 14.4 million abortions, 20.7 million sterilizations, and 17.8 million IUD insertions performed in 1983. A large portion of these procedures were involuntary.[72]

While China allowed families to have two children starting in 2016 and three children starting in 2021, the country-wide undertaking of family planning severely affected China's current population.[73] Under the one-child policy, many families used sex-selective abortion to determine their only child be a male. The country now has 30 to 40 million more men than women, creating a lucrative market for suitable wives. This has led to reports of bride trafficking in China, particularly from neighboring countries and minority groups. For example, HRW found women and girls in northern Burma who were tricked by brokers who promised employment in China. However, once in China, the women and girls were sold to Chinese families for $3,000 to $13,000.[74] In a 2021 study of 1,215 bride trafficking court cases in China, half of the women were foreign and a third were mentally or physically disabled.[75]

China was ranked at Tier 3 in the 2022 U.S. Department of State TIP Report. The report noted the government of China took some steps to address trafficking, but continued its government policy of widespread forced labor, including through the continued mass arbitrary detention of minorities in the Xinjiang Region.[76]

China routinely uses denial and propaganda in response to accusations of forced labor and trafficking within the country. In 2021, Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated, "These basic facts show that there has never been so-called genocide, forced labour, or religious oppression in Xinjiang" in response to the

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70 Laura T. Murphy, et al. "Laundering Cotton: How Xinjiang Cotton is Obscured in International Supply Chains," Sheffield Hallam University Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, November 2021, 10, Accessed 22 July 2022, https://www.shu.ac.uk/helena-kennedy-centre-international-al-justice/research-and-projects/all-projects/laundered-cotton.

71 "Forced Labor in China's Xinjiang Region," U.S. Department of State, 1 July, 2021, Accessed 22 July 2022 https://www.state.gov/forced-la-bor-in-chinas-xinjiang-region/.

72 Wang, Feng, Gu, Baochang, and Yong Cai. "The End of China's One-Child Policy," Brookings Institution, 20 March, 2016, Accessed 22 July 2022, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-end-of-chinas-one-child-policy/.

73 "China NPC: Three-Child Policy Formally Passed into Law," BBC News, 20 August, 2021, Accessed 22 July 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-58277473.

74 Barr, Heather, "China's Bride Trafficking Problem," Human Rights Watch, 31 October, 2019, Accessed 22 July 2022, https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/31/chinas-bride-trafficking-problem .

75 "A Story of a Trafficked Bride Shocks China," The Economist, 26 February, 2022. https://www.economist.com/china/2022/02/26/a-story-of-a-trafficked-bride-shocks-china.

76 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2022," 170.

United States determining China had committed genocide in Xinjiang.[77] In 2022, the Chinese government responded to a report by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) on labor abuses in Xinjiang, stating the claims of low wages were groundless.[78]

Recently, the Chinese government used its hosting of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics as an opportunity to clean its image, a phenomenon known as "sportswashing." Freedom House reported that China used multiple tactics to silence dissent around the Olympics, including manipulating online content, censorship, and arrests for contradictory views. An investigation from ProPublica and The New York Times discovered 3,000 fake Twitter accounts were created and promoted state media propaganda during the Olympics, using hashtags like #Beijing2022 to drown out criticism of China.[79]

China continues to employ state-sanctioned forced labor, amongst other human rights abuses, to minorities in the Xinjiang Region. For other forms of trafficking, such as bride trafficking, China does little to address the issue since it predominantly affects minorities. While international attention has elicited some response from China, victims will likely not receive justice from the state for the abuses it has created.[80]

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77 Nebehay, Stephanie, "China Rejects Genocide Charge in Xinjiang, Says Door Open to U.N," Reuters, 22 February, 2021, Accessed 22 July 2022, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-rights/china-rejects-genocide-charge-in-xinjiang-says-door-open-to-u-n-idUSKBN2AM1UX.

78 "China Continues its Labour Abuse Practices Against Uighurs: UN," Al Jazeera, 11 February, 2022, Accessed 22 July 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/2/11/china-continues-its-labour-abuse-practices-against-uighurs-un.

79 Datt, Angeli, "#Beijing2022: Winter Olympics a display of propaganda and censorship," Freedom House, 10 March 2022, Accessed 22 July 2022 https://freedomhouse.org/article/beijing2022-winter-olympics-display-propaganda-and-censorship.

80 Barr, "China's Bride Trafficking Problem."

CUBA: INVISIBILITY IN THE SYSTEM
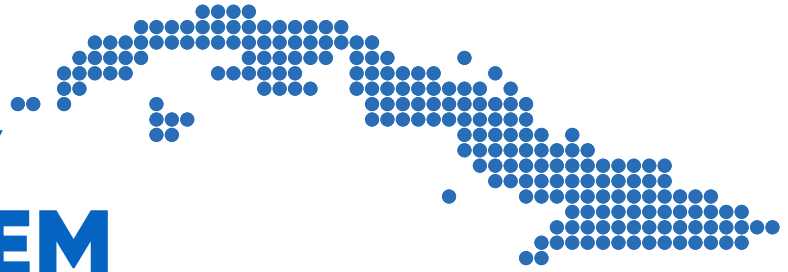
Cuba, a fully authoritarian regime, is likely one of the largest and most profitable traffickers in the world, largely because human trafficking is conducted by the government through multiple state enterprises and has the support of accomplices, participants, sponsors, and promoters globally.[81]

Most notably, Cuba has engaged in a state-run human trafficking enterprise involving its medical missions. Since the 1960s, Cuba has sent over 400,000 medical workers to 164 countries to provide support during short-term crises, natural disasters, and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic.[82]

While hailed by many as Cuba's "medical internationalism," credible organizations have reported on the coercive nature of the medical missions. The medical missions are a main source of foreign income for the island's authoritarian regime, with the country collecting $6 to $8 billion dollars annually from the export of its services.[83]

The Cuban government runs the island's healthcare system and holds disproportionate power over medical professionals and their conditions of employment.[84] Due to low pay for medical professionals in Cuba, many are compelled into the medical missions program. Additionally, many Cuban doctors fear rejecting the program will trigger reprisals from Cuban officials.[85] The hiring practice is deceptive, as the Cuban government does not inform the medical professionals of the terms of their contracts or allow them to retain a copy of their contracts.[86]

Once in the program, medical professionals often have their passports withheld and are limited in their movements. Participants have reported working long hours without rest and with inadequate living conditions. They receive only a portion of their salary, ranging from five to 25 percent. The Cuban government has reportedly retaliated against medical professionals who try to leave the program,

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81 Werlau, Maria C. and Mark P. Lagon, "Cuba's Human Trafficking Business: A Huge State-Run Enterprise." Human Rights Foundation and Cuba Archive, 14 April, 2017, Accessed 22 July 2022, http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/4a3a56_83430c53b8ba41209ae338c0b00af97e.pdf, 1

82 "Cuba: Repressive Rules for Doctors Working Abroad," Human Rights Watch, 23 July, 2020, Accessed 22 July 2022, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/23/cuba-repressive-rules-doctors-working-abroad.

83 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2021," 200.

84 "Forced/Compelled labor (Trafficking in Persons): Cuba's 'Internationalist Medical Missions.'" Cuba Archive and Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, 1 February, 2021, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021-TIP-Cuba-Information-Submission-Final.pdf.

85 "Cuba: Repressive Rules for Doctors Working Abroad."

86 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2021," 200.

including threats against family members, criminal penalties, exile, and family separation.[87] Notably, Cuban health professionals who leave the program can be subject to a de facto entry ban to Cuba of eight years.[88]

Other trafficking within Cuba is also influenced by limited economic opportunities, particularly outside the capital of Havana. For example, tourism in Cuba brings with it a demand for sexual services that incentivizes the trafficking for sexual exploitation. Trafficking for sex tourism, including of children, occurs in Cuba.[89] Victims of internal trafficking in Cuba are women, girls, and boys who are trafficked for sexual exploitation by either family members or close relatives.[90] Some migrants traveling through Cuba to reach the United States are also vulnerable to trafficking. For example, traffickers have been reported to exploit migrants from Africa and Asia to repay the migrants' travel debts.[91]

Cuba was ranked at Tier 3 in the 2022 U.S. Department of State TIP Report. The report noted that the government of Cuba did not take any efforts to report law enforcement efforts, identify or protect victims, or prevent sex trafficking or forced labor. In 2021, the government published official data for calendar year 2020 on prosecutions and convictions, using the government's annual report as the primary source of information while suppressing independent domestic sources.[92]

In 2018, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in her visit to Cuba noted that "invisibility" presents a hurdle for anti-trafficking in Cuba. The lack of data, nonexistent civil society, and weak government response mean that trafficking's "extent, trends, and manifestations are therefore unknown."[93] Additionally, because the main perpetrator of the trafficking is the Cuban state — through both state-sanctioned forced labor and through neglecting internal trafficking — victims have no opportunity to seek justice through the state.[94]

87 Ibid.

88 "Cuba: Repressive Rules for Doctors Working Abroad."

89 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2021," 200.

90 Giammarinaro, Maria Grazia, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children on her mission to Cuba." United Nations General Assembly. 30 April, 2018, 4, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahr-c3845add1-report-special-rapporteur-trafficking-persons-especially.
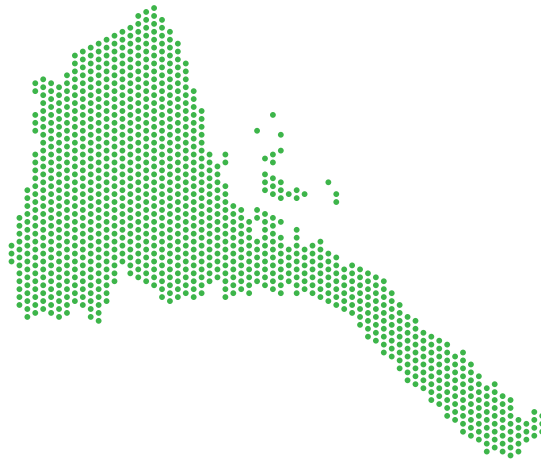
91 Ibid., at 3.

92 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2022," 193–194.

93 Giammarinaro, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children on her mission to Cuba," 4.

94 Werlau and Lagon, "Cuba's Human Trafficking Business: A Huge State-Run Enterprise."

ERITREA: NOWHERE TO RUN

Eritrea, is ruled by a fully authoritarian regime, with one of the world's most oppressive governments Since its independence in 1993, Eritrea has not implemented a legislature, an independent judiciary, or independent media. Its 1997 constitution guaranteeing civil rights has never been implemented.[95] Eritrean citizens face forced labor and conscription if they stay in their country, or face potential trafficking when fleeing their country.

The Eritrean government heavily restricts the rights and movement of its citizens. Mass roundups and arbitrary detention, especially for critics of the government, are common. Eritrea also has a compulsory military program, known as the National Service, for citizens aged 18 to 40. Eritreans are conscripted indefinitely into military or civil service, where they are unable to choose their career path and receive little pay.[96] Child labor is common, as students in Grade 12 (including some under the age of 18) are forced into the military program at the Sawa military complex. Students participate in forced military training exercises and forced agricultural labor on government-run farms. Those who refuse military service are unable to receive a high school diploma, a national ID card, a regional residence card, or any form of official employment.[97] Discharge from national service is arbitrary, with many conscripts serving beyond the 18-month requirement.[98] Some have reportedly been forced to serve since the war against Ethiopia began in 1998, and continue to serve despite the peace agreement struck with Ethiopia in 2018.[99]

The lack of political freedom, educational opportunities, and freedom of movement have been cited by Eritrean asylum seekers as reasons to leave the country. In a 2012 study, the most common motivation of Eritreans interviewed in Tel Aviv, Israel, was "being free."[100] However, convoluted exit visa requirements make it difficult for Eritreans to leave the country legally. Those who evade or desert the national service and try to exit the country can be subject to imprisonment and torture before being returned to military service.[101]

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95 "Eritrea: Events of 2020," Human Rights Watch, 2021, Accessed 2 June, 2022, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/eritrea .

96 Ibid.

97 "Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Eritrea," Bureau of International Labor Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor, 2, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2020/Eritrea.pdf.

98 "Eritrea: Events of 2020"

99 "Eritrea National Service, Exit, and Return," European Asylum Support Office, European Union, September 2019, https://reliefweb.int/attachments/a5b72429-77eb-3bbe-8065-e5328326897f/2019_EASO_COI_Eritrea_National_service_exit_and_return.pdf.

100 Humphris, Rachel, "Refugees and the Rashaida: Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt," United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, March 2013, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/research/working/51407fc69/refugees-rashaida-human-smuggling-trafficking-eritrea-sudan-egypt-rachel.html.

101 "Eritrea National Service, Exit, and Return."

Due to forced conscription, human rights abuses, and tight exit controls, many Eritreans illegally flee the country, either with or without the help of smugglers. Eritreans flee into the neighboring countries of Sudan and Ethiopia, often with the intent of reaching a secondary location, such as Western Europe through Libya or Israel through the Sinai Desert.[102] In 2018, there were over 500,000 Eritreans refugees globally, with most hosted in Ethiopia and Sudan.[103] From January to March 2020, 9,436 Eritreans fled to Ethiopia alone.[104]

Eritreans who make the dangerous journey as refugees are at risk of human trafficking and other human rights abuses. In 2013, Amnesty International reported kidnappings of asylum seekers and refugees from Sudan, where they were trafficked or held for ransom in Egypt's Sinai Desert.[105] From 2009 to 2013, between 25,000 and 30,000 people were trafficked through the Sinai Desert, 95% of whom were Eritrean.[106] From 2014 to 2018, human smuggler Tewelde Goitom (known as "Welid") operated warehouses in Libya to smuggle refugees to Europe, including Eritreans. Once the refugees were in Libya, Welid would extort the individuals for more money, and torture those who could not pay. Welid, who was charged with five counts of trafficking individuals in 2021, was just one of many smugglers extorting refugees.[107]

The war in Tigray, which began in November 2020, has increased the risk of trafficking of Eritreans. Both Eritrean forces and Tigrayans have targeted Eritrean refugees — the former targeting Eritrean refugees as vengeance for having fled their country, and the latter as vengeance for the abuses Eritrean forces have committed against Tigrayans. Since the start of the war, there has been a three-fold increase in smuggling, particularly for Eritreans fleeing to Sudan from Eritrea and Ethiopia. With few protections for Eritreans during the war and an already existing presence of trafficking in Sudan, Eritreans are at even higher risk of trafficking and other human rights abuses.[108]

Eritrea was ranked at Tier 3 in the 2022 U.S. Department of State TIP Report. The report noted the government continued to exploit its nationals in forced labor in its compulsory national service and citizen militia by forcing them to serve for indefinite or otherwise arbitrary periods. The government did not demonstrate any efforts to combat human trafficking. The government also did not report investigating, prosecuting, or convicting any traffickers, continuing its pattern of not reporting for the last 14 years.[109]

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102 Allison, Simon, "THINK AGAIN: Eritrean Authoritarianism and Human Trafficking in the Sinai," Institute for Security Studies, 29 July, 2014, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://issafrica.org/iss-today/think-again-eritrean-authoritarianism-and-human-trafficking-in-the-sinai.

103 "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018." United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. 2019, 17, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.unhcr.org/5d08d7ee7.pdf.

104 "Eritrea: Events of 2020"

105 "Egypt, Sudan: Kidnap and Trafficking of Refugees and Asylum-seekers must be Stopped," Amnesty International, 3 April, 2013. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/04/egypt-sudan-kidnap-and-trafficking-of-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-must-be-stopped.

106 Simon, "THINK AGAIN: Eritrean Authoritarianism and Human Trafficking in the Sinai."

107 Girma, Kaleab and Sally Hayden. "Infamous Human Smuggler sentenced to 18 years in Ethiopian prison." Al Jazeera. 15 June, 2021, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/15/infamous-human-smuggler-sentenced-to-18-years-in-ethiopian-prison.

108 "Nowhere to Run: Eritrean Refugees in Tigray"

109 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2022," 221.

Eritreans face extreme risk both within and outside their country. The Eritrean government imposes state-sanctioned forced labor and military service upon its citizens, giving them no option to pursue their own livelihoods. If they choose to leave or are forcibly displaced, they face the risk of trafficking in neighboring countries and on the route to democratic countries. With nowhere to run and no protections from the state, Eritreans face a cycle of trafficking and abuse.

SAUDI ARABIA: MIGRANT EXPLOITATION

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a fully authoritarian regime, has relied on cheap migrant labor for the last hundred years. In 2018, non-citizens comprised 37 percent of the country's total population, accounting for 76 percent of the employed population and 80 percent of the private sector workforce.[110] Given the country's heavy reliance on immigrant labor, Saudi Arabia continues to use its legal systems that make workers more vulnerable to exploitation in order to maintain the regime.

Migrants, particularly from Southeast Asia and East Africa, voluntarily migrate to Saudi Arabia to work in sectors including construction, agriculture, and domestic service.[111] Saudi Arabia uses the kafala, or sponsorship, system, where an employee's immigration status is bound to an individual employer or sponsor, known as the kafeel. In this system, the sponsor is solely responsible for the employee.[112] Therefore, only the sponsor can approve the employee to exit or re-enter the country, move to a new household, transfer to a new job, or bail the employee out from prison. If the employee leaves their residence or job without permission, the sponsor can register them as a runaway, subjecting them to arrest and deportation.[113]

Full control by the sponsor puts migrant workers at increased risk of trafficking. Reports show migrant workers in Saudi Arabia have experienced physical and verbal abuse, wage nonpayment, poor work-ing conditions, and restrictions on movement due to passport confiscation. In some cases, if a worker tried to leave an exploitative situation, they were threatened with nonpayment. With their movement limited, many workers face difficulty in contacting their embassies for assistance.[114] If a worker tries to leave the country without an exit visa, they can be subject to months or years of detainment at de-portation centers. In 2021, Amnesty International reported at least 41 Sri Lankan women had been held in a deportation center for anywhere from eight to 18 months. Several of the women were sent to the deportation center because they reported abuse by their sponsors to the police.[115]

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110 De Bel-Air, Françoise. "Demography, Migration and Labour Market in Saudi Arabia 2018," Migration Policy Center (MPC) and the Gulf Research Center (GRC). No. 5, 2018. https://gulfmigration.grc.net/media/pubs/exno/GLMM_EN_2018_05.pdf

111 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2021," 486.

112 Robinson, Kali. "What is the Kafala System?" Council on Foreign Relations, 23 March, 2021, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.cfr.org/back-grounder/what-kafala-system.

113 Shaker, Annas, "New Reforms and Ongoing Challenges in Saudi's Labour Justice System," Migrant Rights, 13 August, 2020, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.migrant-rights.org/2020/08/new-reforms-and-ongoing-challenges-in-saudis-labour-justice-system/.

114 "Saudi Arabia 2019 Human Rights Report." U.S. Department of State. 11 March, 2020, 57, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.state.gov/wp-con-tent/uploads/2020/03/SAUDI-ARABIA-2019-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf.

115 "Saudi Arabia: Dozens of Sri Lankan Women Wrongfully Detained for Months Due to Abusive Kafala System," Amnesty International, 15 April, 2021, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/04/saudi-arabia-dozens-of-sri-lankan-women-wrongfully-detained-for-months-due-to-abusive-kafala-system/

In 2021, the Saudi Arabian government announced its Labor Reform Initiative, which was aimed to ease restrictions on workers. The reforms included giving private sector workers the ability to change employers, obtain exit and re-entry visas, and obtain exit visas at the end of their contract or after one year, without the previous employer's permission. However, the reforms were not enough to dismantle the system. The exit permit, for example, was not abolished entirely.[116] Additionally, the reforms excluded domestic workers not covered by the Labor Law, such as household workers, private drivers, gardeners, and security guards.[117] These workers are already the least protected and therefore the most vulnerable to abuse.[118]

Saudi Arabia was ranked at Tier 2 in the 2022 U.S. Department of State TIP Report. The report recognized the government's improvements to anti-trafficking efforts, including establishing a 2021-2023 National Action Plan, continuing reforms to the sponsorship system, and supporting the creation of a NGO to specialize in combatting human trafficking. However, the report noted continued issues with the sponsorship system and the criminalization of trafficking victims for immigration violations. In particular, the recent sponsorship reforms do not apply to domestic workers, who continue to be at high risk for forced labor.[119]

While Saudi Arabia's reforms may limit abuse to some workers, the government's failure to fully dismantle the sponsorship system will allow the continuation of exploitation to migrants. Saudi Arabia must make meaningful reforms, not just cosmetic reforms to appease the international community. Additionally, the state needs to continue to increase convictions in forced labor cases, rather than criminalizing migrants who report abuse in their workplace. Otherwise, employers will continue to profit from the system through cheap and exploitative labor.

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116 "Saudi Arabia: Labor Reforms Insufficient." Human Rights Watch, 25 March, 2021, Accessed 26 July 2022, https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/25/saudi-arabia-labor-reforms-insufficient

117 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2021," 483.

118 "Saudi Arabia: Labor Reforms Insufficient."

119 "Trafficking in Persons Report 2022," 474.

Conclusion

Human trafficking is a worldwide phenomenon, with individuals exploited across regions and job sectors. Certain factors push individuals into trafficking, such as poverty and conflict. However, few studies consider a state's political regime type as a root cause.

In Section II, HRF's research and analysis suggests a strong correlation between a state's political regime type and its level of anti-trafficking efforts. Democratic states were more likely to rank as Tier 1 under TVPA standards, meaning they were more engaged in anti-trafficking efforts, such as enacting laws to criminalize trafficking, identifying and protecting victims of trafficking, curbing practices that can lead to exploitation, and engaging with civil society partners. In these states, there is more transparency around anti-trafficking efforts and victims can pursue justice. In contrast, authoritarian states were more likely to rank as Tier 3 under TVPA standards, meaning they were not making significant efforts to combat trafficking. These states may turn a blind eye to trafficking or even perpetuate it. They are less likely to pursue convictions of traffickers, protect victims, end exploitative practices, or work with civil society. In these countries, victims may not receive justice and, in some cases, be criminalized for coming forward.

The case studies in Section III bolster this connection, as all four either directly engage in trafficking or make little to no efforts to change the systemic issues that lead to widespread trafficking. These states also routinely violate the human rights of their citizens through arbitrary detention, torture, and limits on freedom of expression and freedom of movement.

The following section offers recommendations and calls to action relating to efforts to combat human trafficking.

Recommendations and Calls to Action

The correlation between trafficking and authoritarianism suggests that improving civil and political rights in authoritarian states will improve victim protection and simultaneously tackle the root causes of trafficking. Countries with more civil rights, a free press, strong institutions, and collaboration with civil society create space for victims to come forward and advocate for justice and change. Therefore, any state's anti-trafficking plan that does not promote democracy and individual rights advocacy is incomplete.

Further studies should be conducted on the correlation between state regimes and anti-trafficking efforts. In addition, the international community should advocate to authoritarian states for democratic reforms alongside anti-trafficking efforts to increase the success of combating human trafficking.

Appendix A

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND AUTHORITARIANISM ANALYSIS

Country Breakdown

Breakdown of Countries in TIP Reports by Number of Countries.

	2001	2002	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Democratic	43	45	96	92	93	92	92
Competitive Authoritarian	17	19	40	40	40	41	41
Fully Authoritarian	21	24	51	52	52	52	52
Authoritarian (CA and FA)	38	43	91	92	92	93	93
Total	81	88	187	184	185	185	185

Breakdown of Countries in TIP Reports by Percentage in Each Tier.

	2001	2002	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Democratic	53.09%	51.14%	51.34%	50.00%	50.27%	49.73%	49.73%
Competitive Authoritarian	20.99%	21.59%	21.39%	21.74%	21.62%	22.16%	22.16%
Fully Authoritarian	25.93%	27.27%	27.27%	28.26%	28.11%	28.11%	28.11%
Authoritarian (CA and FA)	46.91%	48.86%	48.66%	50.00%	49.73%	50.27%	50.27%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

*Note: It was not until 2004 that the categorization "Tier 2 Watch List" was introduced to the report.

*In our analysis of the 2001 and 2002 reports, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was excluded.

*4 countries in the 2018 TIP Report are categorized as a "Special Case," instead of under a specific tier.

*3 countries in the 2020 TIP Report are categorized as a "Special Case," instead of under a specific tier.

*3 countries in the 2021 TIP Report are categorized as a "Special Case," instead of under a specific tier.

*3 countries in the 2022 TIP Report are categorized as a "Special Case," instead of under a specific tier.

Tier Breakdown

Breakdown of Countries in Tier 1 in the TIP Reports by Number of Countries.

COUNTRIES IN TIER 1							
	2001	**2002**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Democratic	11	17	37	31	31	25	27
Competitive Authoritarian	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Fully Authoritarian	0	0	1	1	2	2	2
Authoritarian (CA and FA)	1	1	10	2	3	3	3
Total	12	18	39	33	34	28	30

Breakdown of Countries in Tier 1 in the TIP Reports by Percentage.

COUNTRIES IN TIER 1							
	2001	**2002**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Democratic	91.67%	94.44%	94.87%	93.94%	91.18%	89.29%	90.00%
Competitive Authoritarian	8.33%	5.56%	2.56%	3.03%	2.94%	3.57%	3.33%
Fully Authoritarian	0%	0%	2.56%	3.03%	5.88%	7.14%	6.67%
Authoritarian (CA and FA)	8.33%	5.56%	30.73%	6.06%	8.82%	10.71%	10.00%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Breakdown of Countries in Tier 2 in the TIP Reports by Number of Countries.

COUNTRIES IN TIER 2							
	2001	2002	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Democratic	24	24	45	51	49	50	50
Competitive Authoritarian	13	14	16	20	19	25	28
Fully Authoritarian	10	13	19	19	19	20	21
Authoritarian (CA and FA)	23	27	35	39	38	45	49
Total	47	51	80	90	87	95	99

Breakdown of Countries in Tier 2 in the TIP Reports by Percentage.

COUNTRIES IN TIER 2							
	2001	2002	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Democratic	51.06%	47.06%	56.25%	56.67%	56.32%	52.63%	50.51%
Competitive Authoritarian	27.66%	27.45%	20.00%	22.22%	21.84%	26.32%	28.28%
Fully Authoritarian	21.28%	25.49%	23.75%	21.11%	21.84%	21.05%	21.21%
Authoritarian (CA and FA)	48.94%	52.94%	43.75%	43.33%	43.68%	47.37%	49.49%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Breakdown of Countries in Tier 2 Watchlist in the TIP Reports by Number of Countries.

COUNTRIES IN TIER 2 WATCHLIST							
	2001	2002	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Democratic	--	--	11	8	11	17	15
Competitive Authoritarian	--	--	19	15	17	10	7
Fully Authoritarian	--	--	12	14	14	15	11
Authoritarian (CA and FA)	--	--	31	29	31	25	18
Total	--	--	42	37	42	42	33

Note the tier did not exist in the 2001 and 2002 TIP Reports.

Breakdown of Countries in Tier 2 Watchlist in the TIP Reports by Percentage.

COUNTRIES IN TIER 2 WATCHLIST							
	2001	2002	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Democratic	--	--	26.19%	21.62%	26.19%	40.48%	45.45%
Competitive Authoritarian	--	--	45.24%	40.54%	40.48%	23.81%	21.21%
Fully Authoritarian	--	--	28.57%	37.84%	33.33%	35.71%	33.33%
Authoritarian (CA and FA)	--	--	73.81%	78.38%	73.81%	59.52%	54.555
Total	--	--	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Note the tier did not exist in the 2001 and 2002 TIP Reports.

Breakdown of Countries in Tier 3 in the TIP Reports by Number of Countries.

COUNTRIES IN TIER 3							
	2001	2002	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Democratic	8	4	2	2	2	0	0
Competitive Authoritarian	3	4	4	4	3	5	5
Fully Authoritarian	11	11	16	15	14	12	15
Authoritarian (CA and FA)	14	15	20	19	17	17	20
Total	22	19	22	21	19	17	20

Breakdown of Countries in Tier 3 in the TIP Reports by Percentage.

COUNTRIES IN TIER 3							
	2001	2002	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Democratic	36.36%	21.05%	9.09%	9.52%	10.53%	0.00%	0.00%
Competitive Authoritarian	13.64%	21.05%	18.18%	19.05%	15.79%	29.41%	25.00%
Fully Authoritarian	50.00%	57.89%	72.73%	71.43%	73.68%	70.59%	75.00%
Authoritarian (CA and FA)	63.64%	78.95%	90.91%	90.48%	89.47%	100.00%	100.00%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%