

[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Colombian President-elect Ivan Duque](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 28, 2018

The below is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:□

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo met with Colombian President-elect Ivan Duque today and congratulated him for his victory. Secretary Pompeo and President-elect Duque reaffirmed the enduring partnership between the United States and Colombia based on our shared democratic values. They discussed the need for continued action to reduce coca cultivation and cocaine production in Colombia. Secretary Pompeo reaffirmed U.S. support for a just and lasting peace in Colombia, and they reviewed the Hemisphere's support for the Venezuelan people and the restoration of their democracy.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: TURKEY: Travel Advisory Remains Level 3 – Reconsider Travel](#)

Media Note

Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 28, 2018

The Department of State renewed its Travel Advisory for Turkey on June 28, 2018. The Department continues to advise travelers to reconsider travel to Turkey. This replaces the previous Travel Advisory that was issued on January 10, 2018.

The full text of the new Travel Advisory is as follows:

Turkey – Level 3: Reconsider Travel

Reconsider travel to Turkey due to **terrorism and arbitrary detentions**. Some areas have increased risk. Read the entire Travel Advisory.

Do not travel to:

Areas along the Turkey-Syria border and the southeastern provinces of Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Sirnak, Diyarbakir, Van, Siirt, Mus, Mardin, Batman, Bingol, Tunceli, Hakkari, and Bitlis due to **terrorism**.

Terrorist groups continue plotting possible attacks in Turkey. Terrorist organizations explicitly target Western tourists and expatriates for kidnapping and assassination. Terrorists may attack with little or no warning, targeting tourist locations, transportation hubs, markets/shopping malls, local government facilities, hotels, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, parks, major sporting and cultural events, educational institutions, airports, and other public areas.

Under the State of Emergency, security forces have detained tens of thousands of individuals, including U.S. citizens, suspected of affiliation with alleged terrorist organizations based on scant or secret evidence and grounds that appear to be politically motivated. U.S. citizens have also been subject to travel bans that prevent them from departing Turkey.

Participation in gatherings, protests, and demonstrations not explicitly approved by the Government of Turkey can result in detention or arrest.

The U.S. government subjects its personnel in Turkey to certain security restrictions that are subject to change.

Read the Safety and Security section on the [country information page](#).

If you decide to travel to Turkey:

- Stay alert in locations frequented by Westerners, particularly at

popular tourist locations in Istanbul.

- Avoid demonstrations and crowds.
- Stay at hotels with identifiable security measures.
- Monitor local media and adjust your plans based on new information.
- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Follow the Department of State on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- Review the [Crime and Safety Report](#) for Turkey.
- U.S. citizens who travel abroad should always have a contingency plan for emergency situations. Review the [Traveler's Checklist](#).

Southeast Turkey and the Syrian Border – Level 4: Do Not Travel

Southeastern Turkey, including the provinces of Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Sirnak, Diyarbakir, Van, Siirt, Mus, Mardin, Batman, Bingol, Tunceli, Hakkari, and Bitlis, is vulnerable to terrorist activities. Terrorist attacks, including suicide bombings, ambushes, car bomb detonations, improvised explosive devices, as well as kidnappings for ransom, shootings, roadblocks, and violent demonstrations have occurred in these areas.

Do not to travel to the large urban centers near the Turkish/Syrian border due to the continued threat of attacks by terrorist groups based in both Turkey and Syria. The government of Turkey prohibits border crossings from Syria into Turkey, even if the traveler previously entered Syria from Turkey.

The U.S. government has very limited ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens traveling in southeastern Turkey as the U.S. government restricts its employees from traveling to the region.

Visit our website for [Travel to High-Risk Areas](#).

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Secretary's Determination of Six Months'](#)

[Suspension Under Title III of LIBERTAD Act](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
June 28, 2018

The Secretary of State reported on June 28, 2018 to the appropriate Congressional committees that, consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (22 U.S.C. 6021 – 6091) and the authority delegated to the Secretary by the President on January 31, 2013, the Secretary had made the statutorily required determination in order to suspend for six months beyond August 1, 2018, the right to bring an action under Title III of the Act.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Remarks at the 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report Launch Ceremony](#)

Remarks
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Dean Acheson Auditorium
Washington, DC
June 28, 2018

MS JOHNSTONE: Hello, and welcome to the Department of State. My name is Kari Johnstone and I'm the acting director for the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Thank you all for joining us today to mark the release of the 18th annual Trafficking in Persons or TIP Report. It is an honor to be here today with Secretary Pompeo and Advisor to the President Ivanka Trump. We thank you both very much for elevating the issue of human trafficking and for your support for our office.

A quick word about today's program. First, Secretary Pompeo will give keynote remarks. Following that, Secretary Pompeo and Ms. Trump will honor our 10 remarkable TIP report heroes and we will hear brief remarks from one of them. After the event concludes, I will invite you to pick up a copy of the report at the back of the auditorium. And now, ladies and gentlemen, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo. (Applause.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Welcome, everyone to the State Department. We are incredibly proud to be hosting this event today.

I want to thank Ivanka Trump for joining us at this event for the second year in a row now. Your personal engagement with this issue matters an awful lot. It illustrates the administration's complete commitment to and the priority

we place on human trafficking both at home and abroad, so thank you very much for being with us today. Your advocacy matters, and we'll talk about that today.

I'm also honored to have Senator Corker. I saw Representative Smith and Representative Donovan. Thank you all for being here and joining us today as well. We know that putting an end to human trafficking is a bipartisan objective. It supersedes any politics here in the United States. Our commitment to fighting and ending this together is incredibly strong.

I also want to welcome all the ambassadors and representatives from the foreign diplomatic corps present here today. You're important partners here for this issue as well.

And none of this happens just with the work of the State Department. We are grateful for the many federal agencies, individuals, nongovernmental organizations, and international organizations who continue to help us better understand the many manifestations of human trafficking and the most effective ways to combat it.

Finally, we're thankful for the work of the United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking. This March, President Trump appointed nine members to this advisory council. Each member is a survivor of human trafficking, representing many different backgrounds, experiences, and it advises the Trump administration on federal anti-trafficking policies and programs.

The council also serves as a model, one that we hope other governments will consider creating as well. It gives survivors a meaningful seat at the table to help guide the creation of anti-trafficking policies and ensure governments adopt a victim-centered approach to resolving this.

And today we also have the incredible, extraordinary opportunity to honor 10 individuals who have committed their lives to this effort and often have put their own lives at risk in doing so. The 2018 TIP Report Heroes will be recognized formally in a few minutes, but I wanted to personally thank them and express my admiration for the tremendous, awe-inspiring work that each of you do. To this year's heroes, we salute you. (Applause.)

Every year our report focuses on a specific thing. This year's TIP Report highlights the critical work of local communities to stop traffickers and provide support to victims. Human trafficking is a global problem, but it's a local one too. Human trafficking can be found in a favorite restaurant, a hotel, downtown, a farm, or in their neighbor's home.

I can speak to this personally. When I was a member of Congress from south central Kansas, frankly, under the tutelage of now-Ambassador, then-Governor Brownback, we saw the impact of human trafficking in a place like Wichita, Kansas. I-35 passes through the city to the south, and we saw the impact it had on our community, but more importantly, on the persons being trafficked through our community. It has been important to me since then, and I'm proud to be here today to present this report.

If we're going to win this fight, national governments must empower local communities to proactively identify human trafficking and develop local solutions to address it.

As we have every year, the report also points out which countries are improving efforts – their efforts to tackle the crime and which countries are making it easier to carry it out. I'm glad to say we have several good news – progress to report.

In Estonia, the government implemented a new law that will help victims come forward and get the support that the victims need to recover.

The Government of Argentina convicted officials complicit in trafficking crimes, established additional legal protection for victims, and bolstered efforts to train frontline responders.

In Bahrain, the government worked to hold local traffickers criminally accountable and developed a mechanism to get victims needed shelter.

The Government of Cyprus bolstered efforts to convict traffickers and improve protections for victims as well.

We saw some positive movements across entire regions as well. Of the 48 African countries included in the report, 14 received upgrades – meaning we observed a strong trend of increased efforts to improve their overall response. Despite significant security threats, migration challenges, other financial constraints, and other obstacles, the region improved significantly.

We commend those countries taking action, but we also will never shy away from pointing out countries that need to step up.

We read the horrific accounts of human trafficking and abuse of African migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers in Libya, resulting in modern-day slave markets. We've engaged the Libyan Government of National Accord to bring the perpetrators to justice, including complicit government officials. We welcome its commitment to doing so and look forward to seeing real action.

In Southeast Asia, Burma's armed forces and others in the Rakhine State dislocated hundreds of thousands of Rohingya and members of other ethnic groups, many of whom were exploited through the region as a result. Some in the Burmese military also recruited child soldiers and subjected adults and children from ethnic minority groups to forced labor.

We see the tragic examples of forced labor in North Korea as well. Untold number of North Korean citizens are subjected to forced labor overseas by their own government, in many cases with the tacit approval of host governments.

And in Iran, trafficking victims are punished – the victims are punished – for acts they are forced to commit. For example, sex trafficking victims may face the death penalty for committing adultery. This is a horrible perversion of justice by a corrupt regime.

We take these stories to heart. We use them as fuel to motivate us to action as we work together to end human trafficking once and for all.

You'll see from today's report that there remains a great deal of work left to do. The world should know that we will not stop until human trafficking is a thing of the past.

Before I conclude, I'd like to thank Acting Director Johnstone for leading the TIP Office over the last year. Thank you, Kari. Thank you for your dedicated and talented staff at the TIP Office. Your long hours and hard work have produced a report that will not go unnoticed. It's a team and department-wide effort. Thank you to you and your team. (Applause.)

With that, please join me in welcoming Advisor to the President Ms. Ivanka Trump as we present awards to the 2018 TIP Heroes. (Applause.)

MS JOHNSTONE: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your meaningful words and for using your voice for this important issue. And now we will ask each TIP Report Hero to stand up when I call out their name and country and join us to receive their award.

Mr. Ausamah AlAbsi from Bahrain. (Applause.) In recognition of his perseverance in advocating for victim-centered policies within the government by establishing one of the region's top shelters for trafficking victims, launching the government's new national referral mechanism for trafficking victims, and spearheading efforts to reduce the vulnerability of foreign workers by reforming the government sponsorship system.

And next, Mr. Josue Ango from Burkina Faso. (Applause.) In recognition of his exceptional commitment to fighting human trafficking throughout his career, his key role in building Burkina Faso's comprehensive and multinational anti-trafficking network, and his invaluable contributions to strengthening the governance response to combating child labor and supporting youth who are vulnerable to human trafficking. (Applause.)

Francisca Awah Mbuli from Cameroon. (Applause.) In recognition of her unwavering resolve to prevent forced labor within vulnerable communities in Cameroon, her commitment to raising awareness throughout the country and around the world in partnership with media outlets and international organizations, and her innovative programs to economically empower women who are survivors of human trafficking. (Applause.)

Yanira Violeta Olivares Pineda from El Salvador. (Applause.) In recognition of her dynamic leadership in combating modern slavery as the head of El Salvador's specialized trafficking in persons unit, her success in prosecuting traffickers and dismantling their domestic and international criminal operations despite limited resources, and her vital role in elevating anti-trafficking efforts as a government priority. (Applause.)

Maizidah Salas from Indonesia. (Applause.) In recognition of her unwavering efforts to empower Indonesian migrant workers through skills training, public awareness, and family assistance. Her central role in forming the first

migrant worker community in Indonesia and her courage in demanding stronger protections for vulnerable workers and trafficking survivors through sustained engagement with authorities and the public. (Applause.)

Sunita Danuwar, from Nepal. (Applause.) In recognition of her exceptional leadership in founding the first comprehensive victim services organization in Nepal, established and run by survivors of trafficking; her persistent community outreach and engagement with vulnerable communities to prevent human trafficking; and her unrivaled commitment to protect and empower survivors. (Applause.)

Blessing Okoedion, from Nigeria. (Applause.) In recognition of her extraordinary courage and using her lived experiences to spread awareness about and prevent human trafficking, her selfless efforts to assist survivors and lend a helping hand to those still subjected to the crime, and her unwavering advocacy for greater protections for vulnerable groups and victims of trafficking across Italy and Nigeria. (Applause.)

Ivana Radovic, from Serbia. (Applause.) In recognition of her pivotal role in driving the work of one of Serbia's premier anti-trafficking organizations, her persistent advocacy efforts for trafficking victims, and her unparalleled contributions to strengthening Serbia's anti-trafficking response by building the capacity of government and private sector institutions. (Applause.)

Kim Jong-chul, from South Korea. (Applause.) In recognition of his commitment to expose forced labor conditions and practices through his groundbreaking investigative research on human trafficking in South Korea and globally, particularly of migrant fishermen on South Korean flagged vessels, and his tireless work in fighting for the rights of vulnerable groups and human trafficking victims. (Applause.)

Dr. Yosief Abrham Mehari, from Sudan. (Applause.) In recognition of his selfless service as a medical doctor and advocate to provide critical assistance to trafficking victims, his unparalleled generosity in dedicating his time and resources to ensure survivors receive quality medical care and support, and his collaboration with Sudanese authorities to connect victims of human trafficking with services to help them successfully rebuild their lives. (Applause.)

And now, I am pleased to introduce TIP Report Hero Francisca Awah Mbuli, a survivor of human trafficking and the founding director of Survivors' Network in Cameroon. (Applause.) As a survivor of domestic servitude, Ms. Awah Mbuli uses her experience and creativity to raise awareness among communities throughout Cameroon and advocate for better services for trafficking victims. Her organization has built a unique approach to survivor empowerment by focusing on economic independence and fostering entrepreneurship among women and girls. We are honored to have her here with us today to speak on behalf of this year's Trafficking in Persons Report Heroes.

MS AWAH MBULI: Dear Secretary of State Pompeo and distinguished guests, on behalf of all survivors and TIP Heroes, the recognition you bestow on us is an honor. Thank you, sir. (Applause.)

The TIP Office is recognized internationally for its leadership in ending the atrocity of slavery. Your highlighting our effort to end human trafficking bolsters our credibility internationally and puts us in a network of freedom fighters around the world.

A few years ago, I could have only dreamt of such an honor. Three years ago, I accepted a job offer to teach English in the Gulf Cooperation Council. This was after returning home from Norway, where I was pursuing a master's degree in human rights and multiculturalism but couldn't afford to live there.

When I arrived the Gulf Cooperation Council, there wasn't a job teaching English. I was trafficked into slavery as a domestic worker, where I didn't earn anything but inhuman treatment and sexual abuses. When I said that I wanted to go home, they told me that I had a debt of \$3,000 U.S. dollars which I had to pay, and then pay my flight back home. This was a lie.

However, I considered selling a kidney to pay the \$3,000 U.S. dollars and get out. Other girls were in such desperate situations that they went into brothels. Some were never heard from again. All of the women I met on my way to the Gulf Cooperation Council had been promised jobs with higher pay than we could have ever received in our home country. None had received a job or pay they were promised.

All of us left our homes so that we could find a way to support our families. In many cases we were the hope of our families, the one who was put through college. With the help of an NGO, I was able to escape my captors and return home. Then we helped 27 other women return home. Many others were not as lucky.

There are limited resources available through international aid. That is why I made it my mission and my organization, Survivors' Network's mission, to build a grassroots movement in Africa to create an awareness program to prevent human trafficking. My sisters and brothers need to learn the signs of false work promises. To prevent trafficking, people need vocational training to build skills so that they can work and become self-sufficient in their home countries.

Microfinance can help those who have skills start businesses, however even more than that is necessary. There is need to be social and economic empowerment education so that men cannot control women's futures. Perhaps a great example of one way that anti-trafficking organizations have historically impacted many women's self-sufficiency.

When it comes to communities, awareness campaigns about human trafficking and modern-day slavery can help to educate and protect people of all ages. Grassroot activities in towns, schools, churches, bus stops, radio and television stations, on the internet and social media, all contribute to awareness and increase the possibility that a bystander will intervene or an abuser will think twice.

This in no way diminishes the importance of rescuing and caring for the 25 million people who are currently enslaved. It is especially important that

once victims are rescued they have a supportive network and infrastructure that they can lean on to prevent being re-trafficked.

Thank you for supporting me and my fellow TIP Report Heroes in our mission. This recognition means so much to all of us and revalidates our efforts and amplify our abilities to fight this terrible crime. Despite being named heroes, not just us but anyone can and should get involved in fighting human trafficking. We can all talk about this issue in our schools and workplaces and over dinner with our families. The more people who know and care, the more people we will save.

We are just beginning the anti-trafficking movement in Cameroon. But I know that together, we can end modern-day slavery.

Thank you. Thank you, everyone. (Applause.)

MS JOHNSTONE: Thank you, Francisca, for your inspiring remarks. We have a lot to learn from your journey. Your strength and perseverance go a long way toward ensuring that others can live a life filled with promise.

It is both an honor and a humbling experience to share this platform with so many human rights defenders who are undaunted in their search for freedom. I am thrilled that these heroes will have the opportunity to share their insights beyond the State Department halls when they meet with local leaders and organizations. Connecting leaders, experts, and activists from communities around the world to exchange stories, promising practices, and lessons learned advances our global fight against human trafficking.

We believe so strongly in collaboration and partnership, especially at the state and local level, that we focused this year's TIP Report introduction around this theme. My team and I have learned that some of the most innovative ideas, strategies and solutions come from grassroots organizations, whether in the United States or abroad. We have seen again and again that individuals make the difference. Whether this is the Sacramento Uber driver who overheard a conversation between a teenage passenger and her traffickers and called the police, or the Chicago restaurant manager who noticed two employees with identical burns on their faces and encouraged them to contact the police, who charged their landlord with forced labor.

Last year, I was moved to see traditional leaders and elders in Ghana working with volunteers and social workers to develop a proactive community approach to combating human trafficking. The collective works of these individuals and others like them helped remove more than 180 children from forced labor, and it prevented numerous others from suffering such exploitation. Whether a good Samaritan, local leader or someone who's made anti-trafficking their life's work, individual actions matter.

At the State Department, we are committed to partnering with a broad range of stakeholders so that together, we may better prevent the crime from occurring, hold traffickers to account, and assist survivors of trafficking through a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach. Let us all draw inspiration from all of these heroes on the stage today, and from those doing

what they can in their communities and around the world to fight trafficking. While the magnitude of the crime and myriad challenges may sometimes seem daunting, we must all roll up our sleeves and work together to break the bonds of modern slavery. Collectively, let us ensure that justice and freedom prevail.

Thank you all for coming today. Please remain in your seats until the Secretary, Ms. Trump and our heroes have left, and then I welcome you all to stay for a few minutes and mingle, and then exit out toward the back where you can pick up your own personal copy of the 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report. Thank you so much. (Applause.)

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Senior State Department Official on the 2018 Trafficking in Persons \(TIP\) Report](#)

Special Briefing
Senior State Department Official
Via Teleconference
June 28, 2018

MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us for today's background call on the release of the 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report. We are joined today by [Senior State Department Official], who will be referred to as a Senior State Department Official. As a reminder, today's call is on background and will be embargoed until Secretary Pompeo begins his remarks at approximately 2 o'clock p.m. today.

With that, I'm happy to turn it over to our Senior State Department Official for some brief opening remarks, and then we'll open it up for questions.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thank you very much, [Moderator], and thank you all for joining. It is my pleasure to speak with you today on the release of the 18th Annual Trafficking in Persons Report. The TIP Report is a culmination of a year of diplomatic engagement, research, and reporting by the TIP office, our regional bureaus, U.S. diplomatic missions around the world, and our interagency colleagues. The report is informed by foreign government officials, NGOs, faith groups, and international organizations, making this report a symbol of U.S. leadership in working collaboratively to combat human trafficking. The robust year-round effort we undertake shows both how important this issue is to U.S. Government and the American people as well as how much work remains in the fight against this devastating crime.

The report is our principal diagnostic tool to assess government efforts across what we call the three Ps of prosecuting traffickers, protecting and empowering victims, and preventing future trafficking crimes. Since it was first published in 2001, the report has proven effective in motivating tangible progress. It has prompted governments to enact legislation, establish national action plans, and implement anti-trafficking policies and programs.

The report currently provides country-specific narratives for 187 countries and territories, including the United States, and places them on one of four tiers, reflecting the extent to which the government meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, as required by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, or TVPA, the U.S. law that created the report. Tier 1 is for countries that are meeting the minimum standards. Tier 2 countries have not met the minimum standards but are making significant efforts to do so. Tier 2 Watch List is for countries that are making significant efforts but deserve closer scrutiny. Finally, Tier 3 is for countries that have not met the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

Under the TVPA, governments with a Tier 2 Watch List ranking can only retain that ranking for up to four consecutive years maximum. Any country ranked Tier 2 Watch List for four consecutive years is ineligible to stay on a Watch List and must be ranked Tier 3 if it does not meet the criteria to merit a ranking of Tier 2 or Tier 3.

Every year, many countries move between tiers. The 2018 report includes 29 upgrades and 20 downgrades. While combatting trafficking is difficult, the tier ranking system itself is fair. For example, take Antigua and Barbuda. It was on the Watch List for four consecutive years and faced an automatic downgrade this year. Despite the island of Barbuda being devastated by Hurricane Irene, the government, among all the other things it had to deal with, conducted its first ever anti-trafficking raid, developed a new victim referral system, created a new mechanism for police immigration coordination on trafficking, identified twice as many victims, and increased its investigations of trafficking crimes. The government earned an upgrade to Tier 2 this year, demonstrating that governments that prioritize the fight against trafficking can do a lot, even in extremely challenging circumstances.

Regardless of tier ranking, every government can and should do more to combat

trafficking, which is why the TIP report offers concrete recommendations for improvements for every country in the book. The recommendations serve as a country-specific roadmap to better combat trafficking, to make real institutional change that can put more traffickers behind bars, better find and assist victims, and prevent exploitation of the vulnerable.

The theme of this year's report is "Local Solutions to a Global Problem: Supporting Communities in the Fight Against Human Trafficking." Local communities feel the impact and consequences of human trafficking most acutely. Their stake in keeping their community safe and their familiarity with local trafficking trends make them powerful and necessary forces in the fight against modern slavery. We hope governments will take note and partner with, empower, and listen to stakeholders from all levels and sectors to devise a nuanced, effective approach to combating trafficking.

Everyone has the potential for making a meaningful contribution to this fight. As journalists, I ask you to continue using your platforms to inform the public about human trafficking and how individuals can have an impact. Please speak with the TIP Heroes featured in our report and in our rollout event today. Help us elevate their work and inspire others to act in their communities.

In closing, the TIP Report is an important tool not just for governments, but for anyone combating human trafficking anywhere in the world. We are very proud of the hard work of our partners throughout the State Department and around the world to produce this report and to make progress against this crime. I'd be happy to answer your questions.

OPERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, if you'd like to ask a question, please press * then 1 on your touchtone phone. You will hear a tone indicating you've been placed in queue, and you may remove yourself from queue at any time by pressing the pound key. If you're using a speakerphone, you will need to pick up the handset before pressing the number. Once again, for questions or comments, it's *1 at this time.

And our first question comes from the line of Carol Morello of *The Washington Post*. Please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi, thank you for doing this. This report has a fairly lengthy section on the detrimental psychological damage that can be done to children who are institutionalized, whether in private institutions or in government-run facilities. I was wondering what you think that section says about the institutionalization of children who have been taken from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thank you very much for the question. We do note in the report in general, including in the introductory section that you commented on, about the challenges and vulnerabilities of children that are in institutional settings as well as in the U.S. narrative this year. We note the vulnerabilities of children, whether they are unaccompanied or in institutionalized settings, as they are anywhere in the world.

For specific questions about what is happening within the United States and care of children in the States, we would refer you to our colleagues in the Department of Health and Human Services that oversee the care of children in their care – in institutions.

OPERATOR: Thank you. And our next question will come from the line of Gardiner Harris of *The New York Times*.

QUESTION: Hi. Like Carol, I'm interested in that section. I think you need to do better than just simply refer us to Health and Human Services. You are telling countries around the world that it's a bad idea to take children from their families and place them in institutionalized setting. You are saying that, thus, these children then can become victims of trafficking. It is a lengthy section and seems to contrast sharply with what the practice is.

Also, I wanted you – I wanted to understand – the President has been saying that his policies on the border are driven in part by a wave of child smuggling that is taking place at the border. I don't see anywhere in your report any notion that there is some sort of wave of child smuggling either in Honduras or El Salvador or Mexico. Can you explain the President's remarks? I think his quote was, "We're talking about child smuggling. We're talking about women smuggling...The worst it's been in history."

Is child smuggling and women smuggling now "the worst it's been in history," including, as he said, dating "back 200, 500, 1,000 years ago – the worst it's ever been"?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thank you for the question. Let me first take the second part of that question with respect to smuggling of children and women.

There are two distinct crimes of human trafficking and human – migrant smuggling is the term that we use. Our report and the work of our office focused on human trafficking, which is a crime of exploitation of individuals, whereas smuggling is a crime against the state and the illegal crossing of a border entry into a country, so it's a crime of movement that is not necessary.

Sometimes it may be part of the crime of human trafficking, but our work focuses on the exploitation, so not smuggling. So we are really not the experts on statistics, whether in the United States or elsewhere, about human smuggling, and I would have to refer you to our colleagues in DHS that have the lead on human smuggling. We focus in the report and all of our work year-round, both in our engagement with other governments and the report itself, as well as working with our colleagues here in the interagency through the President's Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking in particular.

And we do note in the report that when there are issues that come up of children – the first part of your question – whether they are unaccompanied children or children that are in institutional facilities, that there should be screening in place. And we do have those mechanisms in place with our colleagues in DHS that do screen for trafficking indicators when children

either cross the border unaccompanied or if they are in their care separated from their parents.

And then the important thing for the U.S., as in any other government, is if there are problems that come up, whether they are problems in detention facilities or that people have been identified as trafficking victims, that they're referred to care and that there is an investigation of the traffickers, whether that is taking place in or outside of a government facility. And that is where we do note in the U.S. narrative as well we have those systems in place, and investigations do happen when problems arise.

QUESTION: Thank you.

OPERATOR: And once again, for questions it's *1 at this time. And our next question comes from the line of Susannah George of the Associated Press.

QUESTION: Hi there, thanks so much for doing this call. I just want to follow up a bit more on the section about institutionalization of children. How does this square with what we've seen unfold at the southern border? It seems like the zero-tolerance policy is creating a situation there which, by definition of this report, is creating – is putting a lot of children at greater risk of being trafficked.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: So thank you again for that question. I will note that the report that we are releasing today covers the reporting period from April 1, 2017 through the end of March 2018. And we've noted, as you have also said, that there are vulnerabilities in the United States as elsewhere, when there are children either crossing borders alone or in government care, whether temporary or long term. And again, we work with our colleagues and they have systems in place to search for trafficking indicators, so that if there are cases where there are victims already or that problems arise that they identify those problems, get the victims the care that they need, and investigate the crimes.

OPERATOR: Thank you. And our next question comes from the line of Alicia Rose of NHK.

QUESTION: Hi. Thank you for doing the call. I was wondering if you could discuss the decision to downgrade Burma to Tier 3. And also, it's my understanding that this is the first time that Japan is listed as a Tier 1 country. What led to those decisions?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Sure. Thank you very much for those questions.

On Burma, we have tracked the situation of trafficking in Burma for a long time and had concerns about it for a long time. In this past year, we assessed that the government does not fully meet the minimum standards and is not making significant efforts, therefore it was put on Tier 3, as you noted. Our concerns include that Burmese Armed Forces operations in Rakhine State dislocated hundreds of thousands of Rohingya and members of other ethnic groups, many of whom were exploited throughout the region as a result. In

addition, unlawful child soldier recruitment by the Burmese Armed Forces and ethnic armed groups continued. Authorities punish former child soldiers for desertion, alleged fraud and defamation, and authorities also continue to prevent the UN from playing a constructive role in eradicating the recruitment and use of children by ethnic armed groups. In addition, the military continued to subject adults and children to forced labor. Government officials were reportedly complicit in both sex and labor trafficking.

We urge Burma to implement all the recommendations in the TIP Report, especially those related to ceasing all unlawful recruitment of and use of children in the armed forces, and allowing the UN to conduct this work with armed – ethnic armed groups. We also urge the government to end its officials involvement in sex trafficking and forced labor and to hold such officials criminally accountable for these crimes.

And your second question was on Japan. You are correct that this is the first time that Japan has been ranked on Tier 1. It did so because of key achievements they made during the reporting period, which again is April 1, 2017 through the end of March. These achievements by the Government of Japan include establishing a new interagency taskforce to combat child sex trafficking in “JK businesses” they’re called – I put those in quotation marks – which are dating services connecting adult men with underage girls and in forced pornography. The government also operationalized regulations and a new oversight mechanism for its technical intern-training program. And finally, it acceded to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the 2000 TIP Protocol.

As with any Tier 1 country, however, there are key areas of improvement that remain for Japan. Authorities continue to prosecute traffickers under laws carrying lesser sentences, which courts often suspended in lieu of incarceration. Japan did not fully enforce the reform law provisions in the intern-training program aimed at blocking foreign-based recruitment agencies from charging excessive fees, a key driver of debt bondage. Authorities detained, charged and in some cases deported TITP interns who absconded from exploitive conditions and their contracted agencies rather than screening them and referring them to protective services. And many suspected cases of child sex trafficking and forced labor were addressed with administrative penalties or loss of business licenses rather than criminal investigations or prosecution. So you see, even for Tier 1 countries, we also have a lot to do, but we acknowledge that there were some key improvements made by the Government of Japan this year as well.

MODERATOR: Okay. Thank you. That’s all the questions we have time for today. As a reminder, this call was on background, and is embargoed until Secretary Pompeo begins his remarks at approximately 2:00 p.m. this afternoon. Thank you again for joining us, and we’ll see you at 2:00 p.m.

*as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department.
External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an
endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.*