

The UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, urged the Government of Thailand to "do more to combat human trafficking effectively and protect the rights of migrant workers who are increasingly vulnerable to forced and exploitative labour." "Thailand faces significant challenges as a source, transit and destination country," said the UN expert at the end of her 12-day mission to Thailand from August 8 to 19.

"The trend of trafficking for forced labor is growing in scale in the agricultural, construction and fishing industries," said Ms. Ezeilo. She also found that "internal trafficking in children is rampant," particularly highlighting the vulnerability of migrant, stateless and refugee children, including those belonging to hill tribes, to trafficking and exploitation.

While commending the enactment of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2008 in line with relevant international standards, the Special Rapporteur warned that the implementation and enforcement of the law remains "weak and fragmented", often hampered by the deep-rooted corruption, especially among low-cadre law enforcement officers at provincial and local levels.

Observing the vulnerabilities of migrant workers and their families to all forms of human trafficking, the UN expert pointed out that "root causes of trafficking, particularly demands for cheap and exploitative labor provided by migrant workers, are not being effectively addressed."

The Special Rapporteur also expressed concerns about the frequent misidentification of trafficked persons as irregular migrants subject to arrest, detention and deportation, as well as long stays at shelters by victims of trafficking, turning the shelters into "detention centers and a vehicle for violations of human rights, especially the right to freedom of movement and to earn an income and live a decent life."

Ezeilo urged the Thai Government to promote zero tolerance to corruption and to scale up capacity building trainings for all actors, especially the law enforcement officers, immigration officials and labor inspectors. As a prevention measure, she called on the Government to review its labor and immigration laws and to increase safe migration options in order to eliminate the vulnerabilities of migrants to trafficking. Recognising the regional dimension to trafficking in Thailand, the Special Rapporteur also recommended the Government to cooperate with the neighboring countries more effectively in preventing and combating trafficking in persons.

From:

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/home/2011/08/23/national/Thailand-must-show-clear-leadership-30163503.html>