



Human Trafficking Continues to Plague Colombia

OE Watch Commentary: Spanish media has been reporting that Colombia is a country of origin for human trafficking and the prevalence of this activity continues to thrive despite government efforts to stop it. Accurate statistics regarding the number of human trafficking victims in Colombia are difficult to discern, because some sources report as few as 223 victims per year, while NGOs report up to 70,000 victims a year, 70 percent which are said to be women according to the accompanying excerpted article from *RCN Noticias*. This same source indicates that although authorities are currently investigating 430 cases, 99 percent of them will never be prosecuted as human trafficking is a crime committed with nearly complete impunity.

Colombia has been classified as having the second highest number of human trafficking victims in Latin America following Brazil. In terms of prevalence, the majority of human trafficking victims are taken from the coffee growing regions. Once in the hands of traffickers, victims are commonly sent to countries including China, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay, and the United Arab Emirates according to the excerpt from *El Tiempo*. Since 2014, the Colombian Chancellery has responded to 338 cases from Colombian women abroad looking for help to return home. In terms of ending this phenomenon, Colombia has implemented multiple laws and decrees but according to the excerpt from *El Heraldo*, many are not enacted nor is there a budget to effectively fight human trafficking in the country. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“At present time, more than 480 human trafficking cases are actively being investigated, but according to this source, 99% of human trafficking cases are carried out with complete impunity and never prosecuted.”

Source: “Más de 480 investigaciones por trata de personas se adelantan en Colombia (More than 480 Human Trafficking Investigations Underway in Colombia),” *RCN Noticias*, 30 July 2018. <https://www.rcnradio.com/colombia/mas-de-480-investigaciones-por-trata-de-personas-se-adelantan-en-colombia>

Human trafficking in Colombia remains an issue despite steps authorities have taken to thwart this activity. At present time, more than 480 human trafficking cases are actively being investigated, but according to this source, 99% of human trafficking cases are carried out with complete impunity and never prosecuted.

Source: “Colombia es origen, tránsito y destino de trata de personas (Colombia is an Origin, Transit and Destination Source for Human Trafficking Victims,” *El Tiempo*, 17 January 2017. <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/justicia/trata-de-personas-en-colombia/16791863>

Those departments within Colombia with the highest numbers of reported human trafficking cases include Valle del Cauca, Antioquia, Risaralda, Quindío, Cauca, Cundinamarca, Córdoba and Nariño. Of these departments, six are located in what is known as the “coffee region” of Colombia. Las Paisitas gang actively recruits in these regions and promises girls modeling contracts, fame, and fortune. Once recruited, they are generally sent to Bogotá or out of the country. The most common destinations for human trafficking victims taken from Colombia are reported as China, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay, and the United Arab Emirates.

Source: “Cancillería ha atendido 338 víctimas de trata de personas entre 2014 y 2018 (Chancellery Assists 338 Victims of Human Trafficking between 2014 and 2018),” *El Heraldo*, 30 July 2018. <https://www.elheraldo.co/colombia/cancilleria-ha-atendido-338-victimas-de-trata-de-personas-entre-2014-y-2018-524934>

Although the Colombian Chancellery actively works to bring human trafficking victims back to Colombia, lack of funds dedicated to this activity are scarce. Secondly, laws and decrees dedicated to minimizing human trafficking in the country (Law 985 and decrees 1069 and 1066) are not as effective as the Colombian government would like. However, NGO’s who work with trafficking victims claim that the Colombian government is actively attempting to implement a better plan to thwart this phenomenon.



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