

National Coordinator on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, police General-Lieutenant, Mr. Vilayat Eyvazov's Annual Report on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

08.05.2018

Dear Mr. Chairman!

Dear Parliament Members!

The global community's efforts to combat human trafficking, one of the threats and challenges of the 21st century and it has intensified last year, with 14,897 cases and 66,520 victims identified and 9,071 convictions.

All measures set out in the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Azerbaijan, demonstrating commitment to universal values, were fully implemented in 2017 with the participation of central and local executive authorities, the Supreme Court, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Ombudsman and the Press Council.

First of all, I would like to note that the ongoing work in the reporting year on the formation of a legislative framework that meets global challenges has been important in the fight against these crimes.

Thus, the Council of Europe Convention on the Legalization, Search, Seizure and Financing of Terrorism, ratified by the law of the Republic of Azerbaijan, has opened up new opportunities for cooperation with partner countries in the fight against human trafficking, among other illegal acts.

The implementation of the State Program "Azerbaijani youth in 2017-2021" approved by the Presidential Decree - a series of measures to increase the level of awareness of young people in the fight against human trafficking has begun.

Draft normative acts have been prepared and were duly presented to prevent the spread of materials on social networks that contradict public morality and violate the education and psychological status of adolescents, to strengthen explanatory and educational work in the field of moral development of young people, to ensure their rights and interests.

Awareness-raising activities aimed at increasing the knowledge of the population about the dangers of human trafficking, the methods used by the criminal network, methods of protection provided by the state, administrative, criminal and other measures, and reducing the risk of human trafficking in general continued.

The issues of protection of children from human trafficking were discussed with more than 80,000 high school students and parents, and films made at

the initiative and with the financial support of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation were shown at these events.

Similar meetings were held with students of a number of universities, higher and secondary special education institutions.

As in previous years, the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations, which includes 45 public organizations, civil society institutions and the media played a key role in organizing the campaign, and 15 public associations were awarded by the Ministry of Internal Affairs for their initiative in this area.

Their 16 projects worth 104,000 manat were funded by the Council of State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

At the same time, taking into account the need to approach the training of law enforcement officers with new criteria, increase the effectiveness of the education system, training courses were organized for government officials and civil society representatives taking part in the fight against human trafficking and social rehabilitation.

Special police officers participated in 48 conferences, seminars and trainings held in 11 foreign countries and in our country, and were involved in a number of international trainings.

The teaching of human trafficking was continued in the training centers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Border Service, the State Customs Committee, and the State Migration Service, and special courses were organized for those who studied and worked in those institutions.

Employees of health, social protection and secondary schools participated in trainings and round tables on medical and psychological assistance to victims of human trafficking and their social rehabilitation.

The trainings with foreign and local experts, which involved more than 2,000 entrepreneurs, discussed the reintegration of victims of human trafficking and campaigned for the recruitment of potential victims. Specialists of special institutions for victims were taught the basics of providing professional medical, psychological and other assistance.

Given the transboundary nature of most human trafficking crimes, during the reporting period it was focused on interactions with foreign partners and organizations and the exchange of information.

Progress in the fight against human trafficking in Azerbaijan, prospects for cooperation, expanding the scope of joint projects - were discussed in

detail last year at meetings with representatives of the US Embassy in Azerbaijan, the International Organization for Migration, the International Center for Migration Policy Development.

During the visits to our country, representatives of the relevant government agencies of destination countries - Turkey Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates have exchanged views on increasing the intensity of information exchange, extradition of wanted persons and other important issues.

In general, effective cooperation with foreign counterparts, especially more than 100 agreements signed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the relevant government agencies of about 40 countries during the years of independence - in the operative identification of Azerbaijani victims of human trafficking in other countries, gives real results in carrying out the agreed measures.

At the same time, a large part of the work done with a number of authoritative international organizations, including the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the European Union, Islamic Cooperation, International Migration and others, has been related to human trafficking.

In order to study on the spot the implementation of the obligations arising from the relevant Convention of the Council of Europe, the Group of Experts of this organization (GRETA) visited our country last year and got acquainted with the projects and trainings implemented.

The prospects of bilateral relations were discussed in the format of the Joint Declaration signed between the European Union and Azerbaijan, which opened new opportunities for the development of cooperation in the fight against human trafficking, as well as at the 6th meeting of the EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Committee.

An international seminar organized in Baku with the organizational and financial support of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union had been attended by a large delegations from Azerbaijan, Turkey and Pakistan, as well as international experts from Italy and Belgium.

Effective negotiations were held with various countries and international organizations under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan to provide technical and advisory support in the fight against human trafficking, as well as the implementation of the project "Strengthening the Capacity to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings" in June last year.

At present, significant work is being done within the framework of this project to provide adequate assistance to victims or potential victims of human trafficking in foreign countries, as well as to increase the knowledge and necessary skills of diplomatic service personnel.

The reports of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), the International Organization for Migration and the International Labor Organization were studied in this field.

Particular attention was paid to the prevention of forced labor, the strengthening of activities to eliminate the conditions that create conditions for these illegal actions, and the forthcoming tasks were carried out in a planned manner.

As a result of operative-search measures, 6 cases of forced labor were revealed in the country last year, and 5 victims, including 2 foreigners, were exploited in the domestic service and agriculture. The investigation of the criminal cases initiated on each fact has been completed and the guilty verdicts have been handed down by the courts.

One of the most important measures in the prevention of forced labor was the identification and administrative prosecution of 20,285 foreigners violating the rules of stay and residence in the country, including the deportation of 6,330 people.

During raids to prevent child labor, 570 children were identified as working on the streets and begging outside the family environment, pedagogical and social media. Inspections did not confirm that the children were victims of human trafficking or forced labor.

However, in order to eliminate the relevant problems, to provide care and assistance to children, 450 materials were sent to the commissions, guardianship and trusteeship bodies under the local executive authorities for consideration. Administrative sanctions were taken against 220 parents who did not fulfill their responsibilities for the education and upbringing of their children.

Also, specialized legal and psychological assistance was provided to 150 minors and their parents who were subjected to street life in children's centers operating in Baku, Ganja and Guba.

Monitoring was carried out at the addresses of 124 adopted, guardian and foster children, and they were provided with necessary social and medical assistance.

The activities in the field of detection of human trafficking and prosecution of the perpetrators were also purposeful.

As a result of operative-search measures, 142 cases of human trafficking, 6 cases of forced labor, as well as 26 cases of illegal actions with documents for the purpose of human trafficking were revealed, 8 criminal groups consisting of 17 people were neutralized.

The investigation of 28 criminal cases on human trafficking and coercion was completed and 33 people (25 women, 8 men) were convicted.

Of the 55 defendants wanted for human trafficking, 32 have already been arrested.

Of the 71 identified victims (66 women and 5 men), 68 were citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan and 3 were foreign nationals. 65 of them were placed in temporary shelters and medical, psychological and legal assistance was provided to each of them and a one-time allowance in the amount of 400 manat was paid to them.

In total, 68 victims were referred to non-governmental organizations and the Center for Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking for social services, 21 were employed, 6 were sent to vocational courses, and 55 were later returned to their families.

The children of the victims were also kept in focus and 15 children were directed to the pre-school education program, 11 were provided with alimony and 9 were provided with relevant documents.

About 9,000 appeals received by the hotline on labor activity, education, marriage with foreigners, domestic violence, temporary registration of migrants, adoption and other issues were investigated and measures were taken in accordance with the law, and necessary explanations were given to the initiators.

Dear Parliament Members!

According to international experts, human trafficking is one of the most lucrative forms of criminal business after the illicit trafficking of drugs and counterfeit goods. The annual revenue from such crimes is about \$ 32 billion. Every year, about 2.5 million people, the vast majority of whom are women and children, becomes victims of human trafficking, including sexual exploitation, forced labor, begging, domestic slavery, and organ transplants.

In today's world, where the problem of human trafficking and forced labor has become a reality, Azerbaijan is taking full measures to prevent these

threats, to respond adequately to them and to make significant contributions to global work in this direction.

In particular, in the 15 years since 2003, when the fight against human trafficking began in the legal field in our country, great efforts have been made to prevent these illegal acts, carry out high-level criminal prosecution, protect victims and strengthen domestic and international cooperation.

Guided by national legislation and concepts, international criminal networks have been prevented from operating in our country, all necessary measures have been taken to identify the organizers and perpetrators of these crimes and their associates, and they are still being implemented systematically.

At present, maintaining and developing the positive results achieved in the fight against human trafficking, more targeted awareness-raising in this area, strengthening activities related to civil society institutions, improving legal mechanisms, increasing staff professionalism, raising operational capacity, international relations to a new level and more Important tasks are continued in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan, decrees and orders of the President, international obligations of our country. And while doing all this, the very important support of the country's leadership, personally, Mr. President, is always felt.

At the end of my speech, I would like to express my deep gratitude to you, esteemed deputies, representatives of civil society institutions and our media, for your fruitful cooperation that has greatly benefited the implementation of state policy in the fight against human trafficking.

Thank you for your attention!