Kuwait (Tier 2)

The Government of Kuwait does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Kuwait remained on Tier 2. These efforts included continuing to utilize its specialized trafficking unit to investigate potential trafficking crimes and increase prosecutions and convictions under the anti-trafficking law, including taking legal action against complicit officials. It provided shelter and protection services to victims of trafficking, executed new policies to protect workers vulnerable to trafficking, and launched an employment accreditation system in collaboration with two international organizations to protect vulnerable workers through the labor recruitment process. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Some officials continued to routinely use arbitration and administrative penalties to resolve grievances filed by domestic and other migrant workers instead of investigating such cases as human trafficking crimes; protracted litigation and subsequent appeals processes led most victims to decline to file court cases. The government did not regularly use standard procedures for proactively identifying victims and referring them for protection services, and it continued to detain, prosecute, and deport trafficking victims, including those fleeing forced labor.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Continue to increase law enforcement efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers, including Kuwaiti citizens and allegedly complicit officials, under the 2013 anti-trafficking law rather than treating potential forced labor cases as administrative violations. • Proactively screen for trafficking indicators among vulnerable populations including those in government shelters, during migrant roundups, and during amnesty periods to ensure victims are not wrongfully penalized or deported for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit. • Institute reforms to the sponsorship-based employment system, including by allowing all workers to change employers without necessitated employer approval, ceasing prosecution of workers who flee their employment, ensuring no recruitment fees are transferred to workers, and increasing oversight of recruitment agencies and companies. • In adherence to Kuwaiti labor law, increase
investigations and punishment of employers who illegally confiscate migrant workers’ passports. • Strengthen efforts to punish potential forced labor crimes criminally instead of administratively and refer instances of trafficking indicators, such as complaints of non-payment of wages, passport confiscation, and restriction of movement, for investigation as potential trafficking crimes. • Institute trainings for all relevant officials on mechanisms to proactively identify and refer to protection services all victims of human trafficking and routinely employ these procedures. • Continue to strengthen enforcement of the domestic labor law to ensure domestic workers’ rights are protected. • Commence construction on a shelter to accommodate male victims. • Given significant concerns about forced labor indicators in Cuban Medical Missions and experienced by Chinese nationals on projects managed by state-owned enterprises, screen Cuban medical professionals and Chinese nationals and refer them to appropriate services. • Continue to convene the official governmental committee and strengthen implementation of the national anti-trafficking strategy. • Expand efforts to raise anti-trafficking awareness, particularly among vulnerable populations, including migrant workers.

PROSECUTION

The government increased law enforcement efforts. The 2013 anti-trafficking law criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to 15 years’ imprisonment for offenses involving an adult male victim and up to life imprisonment for those involving an adult female or child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. In April 2019, the Constitutional Court annulled an article from the 2013 anti-trafficking law that required judges to issue a verdict in trafficking cases, arguing the stipulation undermined judicial independence and precluded judges from exercising discretion. As a result, judges retained broad discretion to defer and delay issuance of verdicts in trafficking cases, as they did in other cases. The Public Prosecutor’s Office (PPO) and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) continued to require all cases of buying and trading of fraudulent visas, withholding of salaries and passports in excess of three months, or forcing individuals into jobs different from those contractually agreed upon be prosecuted under the anti-trafficking law rather than the labor law.
The government’s specialized trafficking unit investigated 46 potential trafficking cases during the reporting year, compared with 51 in the previous reporting period. It received 42 referrals from the PPO, two from INTERPOL and two from the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM). In 2020, officials prosecuted 35 cases involving 109 suspects, up from 27 cases in 2019. The government issued verdicts in 16 cases involving 41 defendants; of those 41, the government convicted 28 traffickers and acquitted 13 defendants. All convicted traffickers received sentences from three to seven years’ imprisonment. In the previous reporting period, the government convicted an unknown number of defendants in seven cases and acquitted an unspecified number in one case. The remaining 11 cases were pending at the close of the reporting period compared to five pending prosecutions the year prior. The government did not report disaggregated information on convictions for forced labor versus sex trafficking crimes. In April 2020, the PPO prosecuted six defendants for human trafficking; the Criminal Court convicted and sentenced these six traffickers to penalties ranging from two years to life imprisonment with hard labor and 3,000 Kuwaiti dinar (KD) ($9,870) in fines. In a case stemming from the previous reporting period, in January 2021 the Criminal Court sentenced a Kuwaiti sponsor to death for the torture and murder of her Filipina domestic worker employee; the sponsor’s husband was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment for attempting to cover up the murder.

Some government officials allegedly sold work visas to illegal recruiters or even directly to migrant workers, potentially facilitating trafficking. During the reporting period, the government charged multiple Kuwaiti officials with trafficking-related crimes in two separate high-profile cases related to visa trading and bribery. In the first case, the court sentenced a MOI police colonel and his Egyptian partners to three years’ imprisonment with hard labor for illegally facilitating the entry of hundreds of workers into Kuwait. The MOI colonel reportedly operated a front company for which approximately 1,200 migrant laborers did not have valid residence permits and were vulnerable to trafficking. In the second case, courts sentenced a member of the Bangladeshi parliament (MP) to four years in prison and a fine of 1.9 million KD ($6.25 million) for bribing Kuwaiti officials to issue work visas. This allowed the MP’s company to bring in thousands of workers on fake or expired government contracts, making them vulnerable to labor trafficking; victims paid up to 3,000 KD ($9,870) each in exchange for visas, only to find they had no job after arriving in Kuwait.
also convicted several Kuwaiti officials, including a senior ruling family member and former MOI Assistant Undersecretary and a top official in PAM.

Generally, Kuwaiti authorities did not routinely categorize or investigate labor violations as potential trafficking and typically treated such cases as administrative infractions. In April 2020, the Minister of the Interior announced the formation of an interagency task force to investigate employers and recruiting companies that use deceptive techniques to lure migrant workers to Kuwait through unenforceable contracts, fraudulent visas, and nonexistent positions, leaving these workers highly vulnerable to trafficking; however, the government did not report on the actions of the task force during the reporting period. Nonetheless, officials commonly used arbitration, which resulted in monetary compensation and repayment of back-wages to victims, administrative fines, and closure of recruitment firms to resolve such cases. If a settlement could not be agreed upon, officials referred the case to the labor courts. If the complaint involved a severe abuse, such as assault or domestic worker abuse, authorities transferred the case directly to the PPO. Some domestic worker abuse cases were not prosecuted due to lack of evidence or witnesses. As a result, only severe cases of domestic worker abuse—usually involving significant bodily injury or death—were prosecuted as violations of other criminal laws. Although the withholding of workers’ passports was prohibited under Kuwaiti law, this practice remained commonplace among sponsors and employers of foreign workers. During the reporting period, PAM received 1,122 complaints of confiscated passports, of which 304 complaints were referred to the labor courts; the government did not report how many employers PAM ordered to return employees’ identification documents or if it referred any of these complaints for criminal investigation. The Domestic Workers Employment Department (DWED) arranged six internal training programs on general trafficking topics for 47 of its staff members, and 76 PAM and DWED employees participated in trainings organized by international organizations. Due to the pandemic, MOI’s Anti-Human Trafficking Department did not conduct any trainings during the reporting period.

**PROTECTION**

The government maintained efforts to protect trafficking victims. The government reported it identified 103 trafficking victims during the reporting period; it did not report the number of victims identified in the previous reporting period. All identified victims received assistance at the government-run migrant worker
shelter. In total, the government reported it assisted 461 vulnerable female workers at the government shelter, compared to 2,183 during the previous reporting period. The majority of those admitted to the shelter were potential victims of forced labor and had fled poor working conditions, including excessive hours and delayed payment of wages, or desired to return to their respective countries of origin. The government referred one of these residents not previously identified as a trafficking victim to the MOI’s anti-trafficking unit for further investigation. The DWED referred 185 vulnerable domestic workers to the shelter and provided repatriation assistance for 519 workers in total; the entity also recouped approximately 18,920 KD ($62,240) in unpaid wages for this vulnerable group. The Permanent National Committee for the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Trafficking implemented the national referral mechanism (NRM), adopted in 2018, to identify and prevent cases of trafficking; the mechanism contained six stages ranging from proactive identification of victims to their safe repatriation. The mechanism also aimed to improve intragovernmental coordination and expedite criminal charges in forced labor cases. Although the government reported that front-line officials and investigators continued to follow prescribed procedures regarding victim identification and used the NRM to refer abused workers and possible trafficking victims to the shelter, it did not report the extent to which it was employed. Representatives of labor-source countries reported that in some cases MOI or shelter staff turned away workers who were potential trafficking victims. During the year, the government-run shelter received referrals from embassies, NGOs, international organizations, churches, private citizens, and other migrant workers. The shelter served as a one-stop facility, providing medical and psychological care, food, rehabilitation support, and access to officials from various ministries to facilitate legal and repatriation assistance. The shelter employed a screening process to identify and categorize types of abuse and determine whether a resident was a victim of trafficking; during the reporting period, the government reported that one potential trafficking victim was identified through this screening process and was subsequently referred to MOI’s anti-trafficking unit for further investigation. Residents at the shelter had access to cell phones and legal assistance, as well as freedom of movement. Shelter management used a shift system wherein supervisors, medical staff, and investigators were on duty 24 hours per day. During the reporting period, the government reported that land had been identified for a second shelter for female residents of the current shelter; however, the government had not yet commenced construction on this new facility, planned since 2018, at the close of the reporting period. In April 2020, the
Minister of Economic Affairs and Social Affairs announced that companies referred to the PPO on charges of visa trading would be required to cover all costs associated with sheltering and repatriating their registered employees; however, the government did not report if this announcement was implemented or if any companies referred to the PPO paid for shelter and repatriation costs of their employees during the reporting period.

The government provided an annual budget of 100,370 KD ($330,160) for domestic worker shelter operations and protection programs for trafficking victims, a significant decrease compared to 2 million KD ($6.58 million) during the previous year. Embassies of the Philippines, India, and Sri Lanka maintained their own domestic worker shelters and worked closely with the Kuwaiti government to seek compensation and legal redress for their nationals subjected to exploitative working conditions in the country. However, during the reporting period, embassy workers allegedly “recycled workers” from their shelters by providing the worker new employment through illegal channels and receiving kickbacks, which rendered an unknown number of workers vulnerable to trafficking or re-trafficking. In cooperation with international organizations and foreign embassies, the government could assist victims in retrieving documentation and funding for repatriation. In the case of administrative deportation for vulnerable migrant workers, officials provided airline tickets and worked to recoup associated costs from the accused employers. The government allowed victims residing in its shelter to either change sponsors or be repatriated to their country of origin once their residency status was resolved or pending the resolution of a legal case or unpaid bills, without respective sponsor approval. Also, once the shelter admitted a victim, employers could not press “absconding” charges. The government did not report deporting those who faced retaliation or retribution in their respective home countries. Rather, the government allowed all trafficking victims to change employers and maintain residency in Kuwait or otherwise be resettled to a third country at the victims’ request; however, most shelter residents chose to be repatriated to their home country. During the reporting period, the government repatriated 617 shelter residents to their respective countries of origin and, in cooperation with two international organizations, provided repatriation, reintegration support, and transition assistance to more than 21 vulnerable domestic workers from nations without diplomatic representation in Kuwait who needed to procure travel documentation. In March 2020, the MOI established the “Leave Safely” amnesty campaign to repatriate residency violators, either from
residing in Kuwait illegally or becoming illegal after job loss due to the pandemic. The program granted violators amnesty through April 30, waived all penalties and fees, and provided violators free tickets back to their home countries, as well as the ability to return to Kuwait at a later time without being blacklisted (as a worker would be if they were deported for residing illegally in Kuwait). To facilitate the amnesty program, MOI set up repatriation centers in two neighborhoods where a large number of migrant workers resided. However, the government did not report screening for trafficking indicators among those participating in the amnesty program, and some potential victims may have remained unidentified. In July 2020, the MOI announced it would not deport an estimated 15,000 residency violators who were illegally present in Kuwait from January to February 2020 due to the closure of government ministries at the onset of the pandemic. The government granted these individuals temporary residency through August 31, ensuring they maintained their legal status to mitigate further vulnerability. In December 2020, MOI announced a second amnesty for the remaining 150,000 residency violators in Kuwait through March 2, 2021; however, unlike the first amnesty period, violators were required to pay the necessary fines to legalize their stay or pay for their repatriation flights, without being subject to a blacklist.

Authorities continued to arrest, detain, and administratively deport some workers who fled their sponsors without permission. The risk of penalization, coupled with protracted litigation processes and exorbitantly high legal fees, discouraged workers from appealing to police or other authorities for protection and adequate legal redress for their exploitation. In addition, it was not uncommon for sponsors to file counter-grievances against their employees, including trafficking victims who reported abuse. This sometimes resulted in administrative deportation or detention of the employees and victims. Within worker communities, there existed a persistent fear that confiding in authorities would result in deportation, imprisonment, or return to the employer in question. In July 2020, PAM announced it would prevent business owners and companies from filing absconding charges against employees forced to stay home due to the pandemic lockdowns. PAM noted that it had received dozens of absconding reports from employers who used them to avoid their legal obligations to pay wages and provide food and accommodation to their employees. The government reported public prosecutors willingly tried cases on victims’ behalf using their oral and written statements; however, it lacked privacy laws to protect victims against potential retribution and often was unable to provide adequate care for victims throughout
the duration of legal proceedings. Media reported the government directed settlements in response to individual civil suits against employers, but the government did not report the amount in civil damages paid out during the year. The government did not report how many victims received restitution.

PREVENTION

The government increased efforts to prevent human trafficking, although it did not take any new steps to reform the problematic sponsorship system. The Permanent National Committee for the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Trafficking, established in 2018, convened three times during the reporting period; the Committee included the MOI’s Anti-Trafficking Department and Residency Affairs Division, PAM, and the PPO. The government reported that agencies tasked with combating trafficking, including those on the Committee, continued to operate during the pandemic, although their operations were limited by social distancing measures. In September 2020, PAM announced a collaborative program with the Supreme Council for Planning and Development and two international organizations, entitled “Tamkeen,” which included the creation of an International Recruitment Integrity system, a voluntary accreditation mechanism that connects employers, employees, and recruiters to promote ethical recruitment. The government reported that Tamkeen was working to digitize PAM’s labor files in order to make the files trackable with the aim of eliminating the gaps in records of employment that allowed employers to circumvent the labor law previously; PAM officially launched the program in January 2021. In April 2020, the Council of Ministers instructed the Minister of Interior to form a working group with all stakeholder agencies to gather information and take legal actions necessary to counter visa trading, a significant indicator of trafficking. Additionally, MOI investigators questioned 1,600 residency violators that had signed up for the amnesty program and uncovered 28 “fake companies”; MOI referred the companies to the PPO for criminal proceedings. The government, in collaboration with an international organization, financially supported and conducted public awareness campaigns at shopping malls and the international airport to raise awareness of trafficking and warn against using illegal domestic labor recruitment companies. Various officials also took part in anti-trafficking awareness messaging on local television, radio, and social media platforms. The government continued to disseminate pamphlets to educate migrant workers on their rights, which were published in multiple languages and disseminated in
airports, embassies, and labor-recruitment agencies. Authorities continued to employ the services of the government’s Mobile Labor Disputes Office to help workers in remote areas of the country file complaints against employers for labor law violations. The mobile unit was run by an emergency team of investigators, inspectors, interpreters, lawyers, and volunteers. Officials also advertised to migrant laborers online services that allowed workers and employers to dock and track workplace issues electronically, receive alerts if an employer filed an absconding charge, notify the respective source country embassy, and challenge legal settlements incurred. PAM maintained a hotline to receive general workplace grievances and potential trafficking cases, while DWED had an email address for the same purpose. Although both hotlines remained operational during the pandemic, neither entity reported how many trafficking-specific calls they received during the reporting period.

The domestic labor law (Law 68/15) guaranteed domestic workers one day off per week, a maximum 12-hour workday, minimum wages paid per month, paid annual leave, and access to file formal grievances at the MOI, among other protections. The 2016 bylaws regulated implementation of this law. Amendments to the ministerial resolution of the 2010 labor law, passed in 2016, increased penalties for non-payment of wages, made mandatory documentation of all paid wages, and required prison time and fines for employers and government officials who failed to adhere to provisions of this law. Authorities continued to apply the amended provisions of the domestic labor law by building a monetary reserve to adjudicate cases of labor law violations to pay unpaid wages and cover the costs of repatriation. For issuance or renewal of a license for a domestic labor recruitment firm, it enforced the rule that single offices must submit financial deposits of 40,000 KD ($131,580) with a two-year validity and larger companies to present a letter of guarantee worth 100,000 KD ($328,950). During the previous reporting period, PAM formed specialized administrative and oversight teams within the DWED aimed at safeguarding the rights of domestic workers. The teams were composed of 34 employees to manage arbitration of workplace disputes, inspection of premises, and licensing of firms.

The DWED continued to investigate domestic worker recruitment agencies to ensure compliance with the 2015 domestic labor law. In addition, it initiated investigations based on grievances filed by domestic workers, employers, and embassies of labor-source countries. The government arbitrated such grievances
either through extrajudicial proceedings or through the labor courts. The DWED also reported it could refer suspected trafficking cases to the MOI for further investigation but did not report doing so during the reporting period. DWED officials received 2,634 work-related complaints, amicably resolved 867 in extrajudicial proceedings, referred 1,625 to the labor courts, and the others remained pending. With lockdowns and social distancing measures due the pandemic, the DWED conducted 10 inspections of domestic worker recruitment firms—which identified six fake recruitment offices. The recruitment offices were subsequently shut down, and the owners were referred to MOI’s General Investigation Department. DWED consequently suspended 37 recruitment firms for three to six months for violation of the domestic labor law, compared to 52 suspensions the previous year; officials did not report referring any of these for criminal investigation or prosecution. Separately, PAM received 10,498 official grievances from foreign laborers, the most common of which included pay discrepancies, denied requests to transfer employers after the required two years with an initial sponsor, and disputes regarding overtime pay issuances. Authorities reported resolving 90 percent of grievances in favor of the employees, to include transfer of employer or receipt of unpaid wages; it referred the remaining 2,693 unresolved cases via arbitration to the labor courts. At the close of the reporting period, the outcomes for a majority these cases were unknown, but PAM reported referring two cases to MOI’s anti-trafficking unit for criminal investigation. In 2020, PAM conducted and/or participated in more than 15,475 inspections to ensure labor and residency laws were fully implemented by employers; these inspections resulted in roughly 1,100 citations and fines against violating companies. Additionally, PAM identified hundreds of companies that engaged in fraudulent practices by sponsoring workers yet failing to provide legitimate employment. Accordingly, PAM officials referred 915 companies to MOI’s investigative department, permanently revoked files of 71 companies, and temporarily suspended files of more than 3,400 companies in contravention of local labor laws. As of November 2020, PAM had transferred around 417 company case files to the PPO over involvement in human trafficking since the onset of the pandemic; however, the government did not report the outcome of these referrals. Additionally, in the same month, PAM reported that it had formed crisis and emergency teams in addition to the existing inspection teams to monitor the conditions of expatriate workers during the pandemic. Under Kuwaiti law, a blocked file precludes companies from transferring workers to other employers, hiring new employees, and renewing their licenses to operate. In December 2020,
PAM announced that it would no longer conceal the types of violations and crimes by companies found guilty of trafficking by removing obscure codes for 10,000 companies’ files and replacing the codes with clear information on their violations and crimes, such as violating workers’ rights, failure to pay salaries, and visa trading. The government reported that this information would eventually become accessible to the public via a website to enable greater transparency and hold companies that previously were in violation accountable for past crimes.

In adherence to the domestic labor law, the government’s centralized recruitment company, Al Durra, worked to reduce recruitment costs, curb illegal recruitment fees, provide greater oversight of recruiting practices, hire male domestic workers, and secure labor agreements for female employees. However, in 2019, Al Durra stopped working with expatriate employers after complaints suggested the mechanism was established to help Kuwaitis and was subsequently made available for Kuwaiti citizens only. The most common nationalities hired previously through Al Durra included those from the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, and Burkina Faso. Kuwait maintained its agreement with the Philippine government to regulate the recruitment and employment of Filipino domestic workers in Kuwait to better safeguard their legal protections. The Commerce Ministry capped at 890 KD ($2,930) the ceiling for mandatory recruitment fees employers pay to agencies to recruit domestic employees; in actuality, a portion of these fees were transferred to the domestic employees. The government made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts by continuing to enforce the law that makes prostitution illegal and by carrying out raids on suspected sex rings and massage parlors allegedly engaged in commercial sex practices. The government provided annual anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit foreign victims in Kuwait. Men and women migrate primarily from South and Southeast Asia, Egypt, and other countries in the Middle East to work predominantly in the domestic service, construction, hospitality, and sanitation sectors, and the vast majority arrive voluntarily. Unskilled laborers and female domestic workers are especially vulnerable to forced labor, as they often have limited access to assistance outside their worksite or employer’s home, and in some cases, due to the absence of diplomatic representation in Kuwait. In October 2018, Kuwait and India signed an agreement on broader protections for domestic workers that resulted in the end of
India’s 2014 ban on Indian female domestic workers. However, as conditions for many remain perilous, numerous labor-source countries, including Bhutan, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, continue to restrict their female nationals from domestic employment in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti government has continued its recruitment of domestic employees from African labor-source countries, and many workers continue to defy the respective bans by transiting through third countries before arrival in Kuwait.

Upon arrival, some sponsors subject migrants to forced labor, and to a much lesser extent sex trafficking, through the following illegal measures: non-payment of wages, protracted working hours contrary to contractual agreements, deprivation of food, substandard housing, threats or harassment, physical or sexual abuse, and restrictions on movement, such as confinement to the workplace and passport confiscation. Although unlawful, passport withholding by employers is ubiquitous in Kuwait. Furthermore, many migrant workers pay exorbitant fees to recruiting agents in their countries of origin and/or are coerced into paying labor broker fees in Kuwait, which, according to Kuwaiti law should be paid by the employer, thereby plausibly rendering workers vulnerable to forced labor, including debt bondage. Visa trading continues to be a common manifestation of trafficking in Kuwait, and illicit visa trading markets increasingly expanded into social media during the reporting period. In some cases, officials do not provide workers copies of their contracts, or the contracts are not written in a language they can read.

Some illegal labor recruiting companies facilitate trafficking through the use of deceptive techniques to bring in migrant workers on the basis of unenforceable contracts, fraudulent visas, and nonexistent positions. Some officials allegedly take bribes or overtly sell work permits to illegal labor recruiting companies or directly to migrant workers. Civil society groups, press outlets, and members of parliament called for the government to increase its efforts to protect victims and punish traders and their enablers. Chinese nationals working in Kuwait may have been forced to work on projects managed by state-owned enterprises, and Cuban nationals working in Kuwait may have been forced to work by the Cuban government.
Kuwait’s sponsorship law, which ties a migrant worker’s legal residency and valid immigration status to their employer, restricts workers’ movements and penalizes them for leaving abusive workplaces. Domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to forced labor inside private homes, as dominant cultural attitudes—particularly regarding the sanctity of the private household—sometimes enabled the exploitation of foreign workers. Many workers report experiencing work conditions substantially different from those described in the contract. In addition, sources report runaway domestic workers are sometimes exploited in sex trafficking by agents or criminals, who utilize their illegal status to ensure workers will not report illegal activity to authorities. Due to the pandemic, many migrant workers were dismissed from employment and trapped in Kuwait due to travel restrictions and expensive flights without any means of support, rendering them illegal and heightening their risk to trafficking. Others faced increased risk of abuse by employers as curfews and neighborhood lockdowns left them confined to their employer’s homes. The current reporting period saw an increase in press reports where employers physically prevented their domestic workers from leaving the country or transferring to another employer due to shortages in the labor market caused by airport closures in Kuwait for several months. The use of fraudulently obtained visas and fake work permits remains common. The current reporting period saw fewer sit-ins and protests by employees who had been sub-contracted to work for Kuwaiti ministries for companies, compared to previous years, likely due to the pandemic’s related mitigation efforts including curfews and neighborhood lockdowns.