

Japan Must Satisfy the Minimum Standards in Eliminating Human Trafficking

On June 27, the US Department of State released its annual report on trafficking in persons. The report ranks 184 countries and regions, including Japan, which is designated as a destination, source, and transit country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. The report ranks Japan as a country that does not satisfy the minimum standards required in eliminating trafficking in persons. It points out abuses practiced under the Industrial Trainee and Technical Internship Program (the so-called “foreign trainee program,” mainly for those from China and South-East Asia). These include debt bondage, restrictions on movement, unpaid wages and overtime, fraud, and taking away travel documents from trainees.

For the US report: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2011/index.htm>

While the Japanese Government released “Japan’s 2009 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons,” the document contains many paragraphs stating that it would “consider” the relevant matters. It is questionable how much of the Action Plan has been implemented thus far. There remain a lot of challenges ahead, including the restrictive conditions required for recognition as a victim, the yet to be created multilingual hotline, and the lack of a specific government office to exclusively work on this issue. IMADR-JC, together with the Japan Network Against Trafficking in Persons (JNATIP), will continue to follow up and monitor the government’s commitments and make necessary interventions.