

From the Chambers of the Attorney General.

Human Trafficking, a Global Phenomenon

The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2011 was amended by the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Act 2023 as it relates to the penalties for offences set out in the legislation.

The United Nations defines Human Trafficking as the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit”.

The heinous crime of human trafficking exists in almost every trade, including the hospitality industry, domestic work, agriculture, construction and commercial sex work. It can happen in any country around the world and victims of trafficking can be any age, gender, race or nationality. This means that individuals can often be recruited to work, only to be imprisoned, ill-treated and abused, forced into commercial sex work, sexually exploited or even persuaded into accepting risky job offers from companies and or individuals locally, regionally or internationally.

People don't always have to be transported across borders to different countries; trafficking can occur within a single country, village, or community. However, whilst trafficking reaches all demographics, victims of trafficking are in most cases, vulnerable, and human traffickers often exercise several tactics to establish control and hyper-dependency over their victims.

Suppose John who lives in Town A was recruited and lured into working for a company or a person ten minutes away in Town B, only to be imprisoned, abused and exploited for profit. In that case, John is a victim of human trafficking.

If Jackie was forcefully taken or abducted by Jim and then sold to James to perform sexual acts for profit, then Jackie is a victim of human trafficking

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LAW

The Prevention of Trafficking in persons Act 2011 equips law enforcement and criminal justice practitioners with the necessary tools to provide a comprehensive and coordinated campaign to eliminate forms of human trafficking.

The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2011 protects trafficking victims in several key ways;

- Part II of the Act 2011 –outlines the criminal offences and related provisions as it relates to the trafficking of persons;
- PART III of the Act 2011 – outlines ways and modes of assistance and protection as it relates to the victims of human trafficking;
- PART IV of the Act 2011– outlines the measures implemented to combat the misuse of commercial transportation; and
- PART V of the Act 2011 outlines establishing a national task force against the trafficking of persons.

WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Under the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Act 2023, any person convicted of an offence in contravention of this legislation is subject to lengthy jail time ranging from twelve to twenty-five years.

The safety of the public, as well as the victims of trafficking, is crucial to assist in the global war against human trafficking. Together with relevant source countries, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons unit(ATIPU) of the Royal Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force provides a solid strategic and national action plan (NAP) that enables the safeguarding and assistance of victims of human trafficking. This plan was reviewed by the Cabinet in 2021 and will expire in 2025.

In addition to the NAP, there is a signed Memorandum of Understanding between the ATIPU and the Department of Gender Affairs, the Department of

Labour, the Customs and Excise Department, the Passport and Immigration Department, His Majesty's Prisons, SVG Coast Guard Service, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As a community, anyone can join in the fight against human trafficking. If at any instance, you have reason to believe that someone is a victim of human trafficking or you suspect someone of committing a human trafficking offence, or even you have reason to believe that you might be a possible victim of human trafficking, contact the Anti-trafficking in Persons Unit at +784-456-1750 or 911/999 to make a report; or send an email to: svgantitraffickingunit@gmail.com or contact the team via its Facebook page at Anti-trafficking in Persons Unit – RSVGPF.

Remember, “if you see something, say something”.