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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY
FOR THE 52ND SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

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Introduction

1. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in the Republic of Paraguay (Paraguay) for the 52nd session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Background

2. Paraguay is a country located in south-central South America and has a population of approximately 6.2 million people.¹ The population is predominantly Christian, with approximately 89.6% identifying as Roman Catholic, 6.2% as Protestant, 1.1% as adherents to other Christian denominations, and 0.6% as belonging to other traditional beliefs.²

3. Paraguay's last review was held on May 5, 2021.³ As a result of the review, Paraguay received 210 recommendations, 202 of which it accepted.⁴ It was recommended by Georgia, and supported by Paraguay, that the government “[a]ccelerate the process of effective implementation of the national programme for the prevention of, combating of, and care of victims of, trafficking in persons and the national fund for investment in prevention and the care of victims of trafficking in persons.”⁵ No recommendations were made regarding religious freedom.⁶

Legal Framework

4. Under Article 10 of the Constitution of Paraguay, “[s]lavery, personal servitude, and the trafficking of the persons are proscribed.”⁷

5. Additionally, human trafficking is criminalized under Law 4788/12. Under Article 5 of this law:

¹ James E. Painter et. al., *Paraguay*, BRITANNICA, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Paraguay>.

² *Id.*

³ *Universal Periodic Review – Paraguay*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/py-index> (last visited Oct. 8, 2025).

⁴ *Infographic – Paraguay*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Infographics-PARAGUAY.pdf> (last visited Oct. 8, 2025).

⁵ OHCHR, UPR of Paraguay (3rd Cycle – 38th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/UPR38_Paraguay_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ CONST. OF PARAGUAY 1992 (rev. 2011) art. 10, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Paraguay_2011.

1 ° Who, for the purpose of subjecting another to a regime of sexual exploitation; Capture, transport, transfer, receive or receive the direct victim, shall be punished by imprisonment for up to eight years.

2 ° Who, for the purpose of subjecting another to a system of servitude, servile marriage, forced labor or service, slavery or any practice analogous to slavery; Capture, transport, transfer, receive or receive the direct victim, shall be punished by imprisonment for up to eight years.⁸

6. Paraguay is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).⁹ According to Article 8 of the ICCPR, “[n]o one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited. No one shall be held in servitude.”¹⁰

7. Additionally, Paraguay is a party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.¹¹ Under Article 9 sec. 1 of this Protocol:

1. States Parties shall establish comprehensive policies, programmes and other measures:

(a) To prevent and combat trafficking in persons; and

(b) To protect victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, from revictimization.¹²

Human Trafficking

8. According to the 2023 Global Slavery Index, an estimated 46,000 people are living in conditions of modern slavery in Paraguay.¹³ Paraguay is an origin and transit country for human trafficking.¹⁴ In Paraguay, thousands of people live in conditions of extreme poverty,

⁸ LAW 4788/2012 AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS art. 5 (Para.), <https://antislaverylaw.ac.uk/country/paraguay/?dataset=adld>.

⁹ *Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard—Paraguay*, OHCHR, <https://indicators.ohchr.org/> (last visited Oct. 8, 2025).

¹⁰ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art.8, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights> [hereinafter ICCPR].

¹¹ *Chapter XVIII Penal Matters 12. A Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*, U.N. TREATY COLLECTION, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18 (last visited Oct. 8, 2025).

¹² Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime art. 9 § 1, Nov. 15, 2000, G.A. Res. 55/25, U.N. Doc. A/RES/55/25, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>.

¹³ WALK FREE, MODERN SLAVERY IN PARAGUAY—COUNTRY SNAPSHOT 1 (2023), <https://cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2023/09/28135448/GSI-Snapshot-Paraguay.pdf>.

¹⁴ Bianca Schedlberger, *Human Trafficking in Paraguay*, HOPE FOR THE FUTURE, <https://www.hopeforthefuture.at/en/human-trafficking-in-paraguay/> (last visited Oct. 8, 2025).

particularly in rural areas.¹⁵ In these areas, members of the indigenous population are particularly at risk of being trafficked and targeted by human traffickers.¹⁶ These victims are sold by traffickers and exploited for labor and sexual services in other countries.¹⁷

9. For example, in September 2025, authorities arrested a twenty-five-year-old woman for sexually exploiting her teenage sister and forcing her into prostitution.¹⁸

10. In August 2024, authorities from the Specialized Unit in the Fight Against Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents conducted raids in the cities of San Lorenzo and Mariano Roque Alonso.¹⁹ Authorities were able to uncover an international criminal network that was responsible for trafficking women from Paraguay to Chile.²⁰ The women were offered domestic jobs in Chile.²¹ However, once they arrived in Chile, they were forced into prostitution.²² On the day of the raids, authorities arrested five individuals who were involved in trafficking thirty-five women.²³

11. In September 2022, authorities arrested two individuals for trafficking women to Brazil to be sexually exploited.²⁴

12. In 2022, a fifteen-year-old Paraguayan girl was rescued after she was kidnapped and trafficked to Brazil, where she was sold into sexual slavery.²⁵ While in Brazil, she was taken to a brothel and forced into prostitution.²⁶ She was rescued when police raided the brothel where she was working.²⁷ The four women who were responsible for trafficking her were arrested.²⁸

13. The above are just a few examples that show how victims are trafficked and exploited in Paraguay.

14. In Paraguay, traffickers use false promises as the primary method for luring in victims. They promise poor and desperate individuals a better job and life.²⁹ Victims believe that they

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Prosecutors and Police Arrest Woman for Human Trafficking and Rescue Her Sister During Undercover Operation*, MINISTERIO PÚBLICO (Sep. 3, 2025), <https://www.ministeriopublico.gov.py/nota/fiscalia-y-policia-detienen-a-mujer-por-trata-de-personas-y-rescatan-a-su-hermana-durante-operativo-encubierto-12624>.

¹⁹ *Alleged Members of an International Human Trafficking Network Were Arrested After Simultaneous Raids*, MINISTERIO PÚBLICO (Aug. 23, 2024), <https://www.ministeriopublico.gov.py/nota/presuntos-miembros-de-red-internacional-de-trata-de-personas-fueron-detenidos-tras-allanamientos-simultaneos-10922>.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ William Wojciechowski, *Interpol Arrests Human Trafficking Suspects at Border*, H2 FOZ (Sep. 10, 2022), <https://www.h2foz.com.br/en/fronteira/interpol-prende-suspeitos-de-traffic-de-pessoas-na-fronteira>.

²⁵ Mary Nikkel, *Girl Kidnapped from Paraguay Freed From Sex Trafficking in Brazil; 4 Traffickers Arrested*, THE EXODUS ROAD (May 20, 2022), <https://theexodusroad.com/operation-missing-girl>.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ EDUARDO CARILLO ET AL., *TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN ITS INTERSECTION WITH ICTS IN PARAGUAY 22* (Regina Bachero et al. eds., 2024), <https://www.tedic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Investigacion-Luna-Nueva-ENG.pdf>.

will be able to financially support themselves and their family.³⁰ Unfortunately, when the victims arrive at their destination, their passports are taken, they are locked away and forced into prostitution or labor.³¹

15. Between 2019 and 2023, authorities opened 455 cases of potential human trafficking.³² Additionally, in the first half of 2024, twenty-one cases were opened.³³ During the same time period, authorities were able to rescue 1,239 victims.³⁴ Women and girls accounted for the vast majority of victims who were rescued.³⁵ Unfortunately, the number of human trafficking cases opened every year has decreased since 2019.³⁶ In 2019, 141 cases of human trafficking were opened, compared with just seventy-one cases in 2023.³⁷

16. While Paraguay has done a good job of identifying cases and victims of human trafficking, recently its efforts have been declining as demonstrated by the statistics above. This is in part because authorities in Paraguay seem to be uninterested in dealing with the problem of human trafficking.³⁸ Contributing to Paraguay's decline in prosecution of human trafficking cases is corruption among authorities.³⁹ It has been reported that authorities accept bribes to overlook human trafficking cases in massage parlors and brothels. Public officials have also issued passports for trafficking victims,⁴⁰ which makes it easier for traffickers to move them in and out of the country. Also, impunity rates for government officials who are complicit is very high.⁴¹ In addition to corruption, the government has also failed to adequately fund human trafficking units, leading to a lack of resources needed to investigate cases of human trafficking.⁴²

17. In addition to failing to investigate cases of human trafficking, the government has also failed to provide adequate support services for victims. Rather than investing in shelters and aid for victims of human trafficking, the government mostly relies on a civil society organization to offer these services.⁴³ Currently, only two shelters exist in the country for victims of human trafficking. One was just recently opened in 2024 by the Ministry of Child and Adolescents and provides shelter for girls and adolescents who are victims of trafficking

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Statistical Data From the Public Prosecutor's Office: 455 Cases in the Last 5 Years Involving Punishable Acts of Human Trafficking, 21 Cases in the First Half of 2024*, MINISTERIO PÚBLICO (Sep. 30, 2024), <https://ministeriopublico.gov.py/nota/datos-estadisticos-del-ministerio-publico-455-causas-en-los-ultimos-5-anos-en-hechos-punibles-de-trata-de-personas-21-casos-en-el-primer-semester-del-2024-10732>.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ Schedlberger, *supra* note 14.

³⁹ Kler Teran, *The Issue of Human Trafficking in Paraguay*, THE BORGAN PROJECT (Jan. 30, 2022), <https://borgenproject.org/human-trafficking-in-paraguay/>.

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ Gita Howard, *Paraguay Anti-Corruption Sanctions and Their Lessons*, HUM. RTS. FIRST (Feb. 16, 2024), <https://humanrightsfirst.org/library/paraguay-anti-corruption-sanctions-and-their-lessons/>.

⁴² Teran, *supra* note 39.

⁴³ *Paraguay*, GLOB. ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX, <https://ocindex.net/country/paraguay>.

and abuse.⁴⁴ The second one is a women's shelter that provides aid for victims of human trafficking and receives no government funding.⁴⁵

18. To increase its efforts to combat human trafficking, in 2024, the government installed an Executive Secretariat of Human Trafficking.⁴⁶ This individual is tasked to coordinate with all relevant government institutions to combat human trafficking.⁴⁷

Recommendations

19. As of recently, Paraguay's efforts to combat human trafficking have been decreasing and it has been failing to provide adequate support for human trafficking victims. Paraguay must take efforts to weed out corruption among authorities and provide adequate resources to investigate human trafficking cases. Additionally, Paraguay must invest in providing resources and aid to victims. To do this, Paraguay must open shelters for victims and provide them with physical and psychological help to deal with their trauma and assist them in returning to society.

⁴⁴ *Rosa Virginia Shelter: Minna Guarantees Protection of Girls and Adolescents*, PARAGUAYAN INFO. AGENCY (Feb. 14, 2024), <https://www.ip.gov.py/ip/2024/02/14/albergue-rosa-virginia-minna-garantiza-proteccion-de-ninas-y-adolescentes>.

⁴⁵ Schedlberger, *supra* note 14.

⁴⁶ *Government of Paraguay Installs Executive Secretariat Against Human Trafficking with the Participation of Migration*, NAT'L DIRECTORATE OF MIGRATIONS (June 5, 2025), <https://migraciones.gov.py/gobierno-del-paraguay-instala-secretaria-ejecutiva-contr-la-trata-de-personas-con-participacion-de-migraciones>.

⁴⁷ *New Secretariat of Human Trafficking Formed*, THE NATION (June 6, 2025), https://www.lanacion.com.py/politica_edicion_impresa/2025/06/06/conforman-nueva-secretaria-de-trata-de-personas.