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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
FOR THE 53RD 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 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the 53rd session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Background

2. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a country located in the Caribbean Sea, and has a population of approximately 111,600 people.¹ The population is predominantly Christian, with approximately 27.6% of the population identifying as Pentecostal, 13.9% as Anglican, 11.6% as Seventh-day Adventist, 8.9% as Baptist, 8.7% as Methodist, 6.3% as Roman Catholic, 3.8% as Evangelical, 7.5% as nonreligious, and 11.7% as other.²

3. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' last review was held on November 3, 2021.³ As a result of the review, it received 156 recommendations, 81 of which it accepted.⁴ It was recommended by Malawi, and supported by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, that the government “[i]mprove the capacity of officials and institutions to investigate, prosecute and severely punish human trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation.”⁵ In our last report on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, we expressed concern over the country’s inability to prevent and prosecute cases of human trafficking. Additionally, no recommendations were made regarding religious freedom.

Legal Framework

4. Under Article 4 of the Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, “[n]o person shall be held in slavery or servitude. No person shall be required to perform forced labor.”⁶

¹ Adrian Fraser et al., *Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, BRITANNICA (Mar. 3, 2026), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Saint-Vincent-and-the-Grenadines>.

² *Id.*

³ *Universal Periodic Review - Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/vc-index> (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁴ *Infographic-Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, OHCHR, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Infographic_Saint_Vincent_Grenadine.pdf (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁵ *UPR of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (3rd Cycle – 39th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations*, OHCHR 7, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/UPR39_Saint_Vincent_Grenadines_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁶ CONST. OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES, 1979, art. 4, https://www.oas.org/juridico/PDFs/mesicic4_svg_const.pdf.

5. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2011 defines “trafficking in persons” as the:

recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person by means of the threat or use of force or other means of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of giving or receiving of payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.⁷

6. Individuals convicted of human trafficking are sentenced from twelve to twenty-five years in prison.⁸

7. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).⁹ Under 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

8. Additionally, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 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

⁷ PREVENTION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS ACT 2011 art. 2 (St. Vincent), <https://antislaverylaw.ac.uk/country/saint-vincent-and-the-grenadines/?dataset=adld>.

⁸ *Human Trafficking, a Global Phenomenon*, SEARCHLIGHT (Mar. 7, 2023), <https://www.searchlight.vc/news/2023/03/07/human-trafficking-global-phenomenon-20230307-1138-166357/>.

⁹ *Ratification Status for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, OHCHR, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=148&Lang=EN (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

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>.

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.

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>.

Human Trafficking

9. Human trafficking is a serious problem that impacts every region across the world.¹³ In 2022, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that there were about 4,300 victims of human trafficking across the Caribbean and Latin America.¹⁴ However, these are just the victims who were identified and there are likely millions of victims across the region who go undetected.¹⁵ Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is not immune to this problem.

10. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, human trafficking for both commercial sex and labor is a persistent problem.¹⁶ Human trafficking victims include citizens of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as well as citizens from other Caribbean countries and Asia.¹⁷ The main recruiting method for traffickers involves social media posts promising lucrative jobs.¹⁸ As noted by Corporal Garet Dopwell of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit:

So what you would find is that these traffickers would put ads in the paper or on social media seeking persons for various positions. The salary is eye catching and sometimes they say little to no experience needed . . . that they would provide airfare for these individuals and when you get there it is a completely different story[.]¹⁹

11. During its last UPR, Saint Vincent and Grenadines supported the recommendation that the government “[i]mprove the capacity of officials and institutions to investigate, prosecute and severely punish human trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation.”²⁰ However, it has failed to improve its capacity to combat human trafficking. This is seen through the government’s failure to identify a single victim of human trafficking since its last UPR. This is because it lacks the capacity to thoroughly investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking.²¹ Because of the lack of resources, there is a considerable backlog of investigations, and authorities are unable to adequately enforce existing laws.²² Further, while there is an Anti-Trafficking Persons Unit, this unit is underfunded and lacks the resources needed to monitor the country’s thirty-two islands, which human traffickers can exploit and go undetected.²³ These gaps in combating human trafficking are part of the reason why the government has been unable to prosecute a single case

¹³ *How Widespread Are Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling in Latin America and the Caribbean? And Other Questions Answered*, UNODC, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2024/September/how-widespread-are-human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-and-other-questions-answered.html> (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, GLOB. ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX, <https://ocindex.net/country/st-vincent-and-the-grenadines> (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Victims of Human Trafficking Walk Among Us – Police*, SEARCHLIGHT (July 26, 2024), <https://www.searchlight.vc/news/2024/07/26/victims-human-trafficking-walk-among-us-police/>.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *UPR of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (3rd Cycle – 39th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations*, *supra* note 5, at 7.

²¹ *St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, *supra* note 16.

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

of human trafficking since 2015, as we pointed out in our last report,²⁴ and has been unable to identify a single human trafficking victim since 2019.²⁵

12. However, just because victims have not been identified, it does not mean that human trafficking is not a problem in the country. Corporal Dopwell noted that “[v]ictims of human trafficking walk among us, but until we know what to look for, the average individual would not be able to identify.”²⁶

13. Further, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines appears to lack sufficient monitoring by law enforcement for cases of human trafficking.²⁷ St. Vincent and the Grenadines also lacks formal victim and protection programs and the government is limited in its involvement to assist victims.²⁸ Despite progress in preventing human trafficking through labor inspections and legal frameworks, there remains a decade-long lack of prosecutions and insufficient services for victims.²⁹ These gaps in combating human trafficking contribute to why the government has been unable to prosecute any case of human trafficking since 2015, and even that case was ultimately dropped because of insufficient evidence.³⁰

14. While Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has failed in many ways to adequately combat human trafficking, in 2023, the government amended the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act to enact stricter penalties for individuals convicted of human trafficking.³¹ Under the new amendment, individuals convicted of human trafficking shall be sentenced to jail for a period ranging from twelve to twenty-five years.³² Previously, individuals convicted of human trafficking were subjected to “a fine of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars or to imprisonment for fifteen years or both.”³³ While this is a welcome change to the law, it is ultimately meaningless if Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is unable to convict a human trafficker.

15. In February 2025, the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force met with the National Commission on Crime Prevention to help address its shortcomings in effectively combating human trafficking.³⁴ The meeting focused on the identification of risk factors contributing to crime, the strengthening of public safety initiatives, and the development of strategies to enhance efforts to reduce crime.³⁵ Both agencies also shared insights to align their objectives, ensuring a more coordinated approach to address crime in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.³⁶

²⁴ *Victims of Human Trafficking Walk Among Us – Police*, *supra* note 18.

²⁵ *St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, *supra* note 16.

²⁶ *Victims of Human Trafficking Walk Among Us – Police*, *supra* note 18.

²⁷ *St. Vincent and the Grenadines*, *supra* note 16.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Victims of Human Trafficking Walk Among Us – Police*, *supra* note 18.

³¹ *Human Trafficking, a Global Phenomenon*, *supra* note 8.

³² *Id.*

³³ PREVENTION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS ACT 2011 art. 5, *supra* note 7.

³⁴ See *Police & NCCP Discuss Innovative Approaches to Reduce Crime*, ST. VINCENT TIMES, https://www.stvincenttimes.com/svg-police-nccp-approaches-reduce-crime/#google_vignette (last updated Feb. 5, 2025, 9:09 AM).

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

Recommendations

16. As demonstrated by the fact that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has failed to identify any victims of human trafficking, nor prosecuted a singled human trafficking case in the last several years, and has yet to convict a single human trafficker, the government is not upholding its obligation under the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to “prevent and combat trafficking in persons” and protect victims.³⁷ We ask that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines take the problem of human trafficking seriously by allocating the resources needed to investigate cases of human trafficking, identify victims, and prosecute human traffickers to the fullest extent of the law.

³⁷ 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, *supra* note 12.