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**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW
53RD SESSION**

**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME
FOR THE 53RD SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

www.ECLJ.org
4, quai Koch
67000 Strasbourg, France
Phone: +33 (0)3.88.24.94.40

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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 Suriname (Suriname) for the 53rd session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Background

2. Suriname is a country located along the northern coast of South America and has a population of approximately 651,700 people.¹ Approximately 48.4% of the population identifies as Christian, 22.3% as Hindu, 13.9% as Muslim, 7.9% as other, and 7.5% as atheist.²

3. Suriname's last review was held on November 1, 2021.³ As a result of the review, Suriname received 147 recommendations, 124 of which it accepted.⁴ It was recommended by Italy, and supported by Suriname, that the government “[s]ustain the endeavours to prevent and combat human trafficking and guarantee assistance to the victims.”⁵ In our previous report on Suriname, we also recommended that the government take steps to provide assistance for victims of human trafficking and increase identification efforts. No recommendations were made regarding religious freedom.

Legal Framework

4. Article 15 of the Constitution of Suriname states that “[n]o one shall be obliged to do forced or compulsory labour.”⁶

5. Under Article 334 of the Penal Code of Suriname:

1 °. Any person who by force, violence or other act or threat of violence or other act, by extortion, fraud, deception or by abuse of authority arising from the actual ratios, by abuse of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person who control over this other person

¹ Henk E. Chin et al., *Suriname*, BRITANNICA (Apr. 5, 2026), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Suriname>.

² *Id.*

³ *Universal Periodic Review – Suriname*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/sr-index> (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

⁴ *Infographic – Suriname*, OHCHR, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/suriname_infographic.pdf (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

⁵ OHCHR, *UPR of Suriname (3rd Cycle – 39th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations*, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/UPR39_Surinam_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.doc (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

⁶ CONST. OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURIN. 1987 art. 15, https://www.oas.org/juridico/pdfs/mesicic4_sur_const.pdf.

recruits, transports, transfers, accommodates or shelters with the intention of exploiting that other person or removing his or her organs;

2 °. the person who recruits, transports, transfers, accommodates or shelters with intention of exploiting that other person or removing his or her organs, while that person has not yet reached the age of eighteen years;⁷

The law further provides that individuals convicted of human trafficking may be sentenced to prison not exceeding nine years and may be forced to pay a fine.⁸

6. Suriname is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).⁹ Article 8 of the ICCPR states that “[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, Suriname 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 Penal Code of Suriname (Rev. 2012) art. 334, <https://antislaverylaw.ac.uk/country/suriname/?dataset=adld>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Ratification Status for Suriname*, OHCHR,

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=166&Lang=EN (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

¹⁰ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 8, 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 (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

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, *adopted* 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

8. In Suriname, women and girls from other countries are the most susceptible to human trafficking,¹³ and nearly all identified victims of human trafficking were trafficked for sexual exploitation.¹⁴ Recently, there has been an increase in victims being trafficked from Venezuela, Haiti, Brazil, Cuba, and Asia to Suriname.¹⁵ Once these victims arrive in Suriname, the traffickers often sell them to club owners who sexually exploit them.¹⁶

9. For example, on February 21, 2025, authorities arrested a Cuban couple during a raid after they were suspected of human trafficking.¹⁷ The couple had taken the passports of eight Cuban women and forced them to carry out sexual acts with clients in Suriname.¹⁸ After the raid, the victims were taken to a safe location by the authorities.¹⁹

11. On January 12, 2024, authorities arrested a forty-nine-year-old male for trafficking and sexually exploiting a fifteen-year-old girl.²⁰

12. In October 2023, authorities arrested five individuals who were suspected of human trafficking.²¹ Authorities also identified thirteen victims from Cuba and Venezuela who were being housed in a bar and forced to perform sex work.²²

13. In May 2023, authorities arrested a Dutch man and a Cuban woman for trafficking and forcing their victims to engage in prostitution.²³ All of the victims were foreign women, and they had initially been promised jobs to work as dancers in a nightclub.²⁴

14. In our last report, we recognized the steps Suriname had taken to combat human trafficking. We urged Suriname to continue to fight the scourge of human trafficking and provide aid to the victims.

¹³ *Suriname*, GLOB. ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX 3, https://ocindex.net/assets/downloads/2023/english/ocindex_profile_suriname_2023.pdf.

¹⁴ *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024*, UNODC 19 (2024), https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2024/SouthAmerica_GLOTIP2024.pdf.

¹⁵ *Suriname*, *supra* note 13, at 3.

¹⁶ Max Edmund, *Facts About Human Trafficking in Suriname*, THE BORGENT PROJECT (Mar. 4, 2023), <https://borgenproject.org/human-trafficking-in-suriname/>.

¹⁷ *Cuban Couple Arrested for Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling*, SURINAME HERALD (Feb. 27, 2025, 7:29 PM), <https://www.srherald.com/suriname/2025/02/27/cubaans-koppel-gearresteerd-voor-mensenhandel-en-mensensmokkel/>.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *49-Year-Old Man Suspected of Involvement in Human Trafficking and Sex with Underage Girl (15)*, DAGBLAD SURINAME (Jan. 24, 2024), https://www.dbsuriname.com/2024/01/24/49-jarige-man-verdacht-van-betrokkenheid-bij-mensenhandel-en-seks-met-minderjarig-meisje-15/?utm_source=chatgpt.com#google_vignette.

²¹ Ben McLeod, *Human Trafficking Raid: 13 Women Rescued in Suriname Operation*, CARIBBEAN NAT'L WKLY. (Oct. 30, 2023), <https://www.caribbeannationalweekly.com/news/caribbean-news/human-trafficking-raid-13-women-rescued-in-suriname-operation/>.

²² *Id.*

²³ *Dutch Man Arrested on Suspicion of Trafficking Women in Suriname*, DUTCH NEWS (May 22, 2023), <https://www.dutchnews.nl/2023/05/dutch-man-arrested-on-suspicion-of-trafficking-women-in-suriname/>.

²⁴ *Id.*

Thankfully, since it's last review, Suriname has increased its anti-trafficking capabilities, leading to the identification of more human trafficking cases and rescued a number of victims.

15. For example, after its last UPR, Suriname adopted formal mechanisms for referring victims of human trafficking so that they can receive support, and shelter.²⁵ Further, the government increased awareness campaigns and conducted human trafficking information events for the police to better educate the public on human trafficking.²⁶ These efforts have already led to an increase in the number of cases identified and victims being rescued. For example, in 2019, fewer than five cases of human trafficking were identified, but in 2022, there were fourteen.²⁷ In 2019, less than five people were taken to police under suspicion of human trafficking, but in 2022, there were forty-two.²⁸ In 2019, there were less than five victims identified and in 2023 there were 26.²⁹ Unfortunately, while the number of identified human trafficking cases has increased, very few convictions have occurred. In 2022, fewer than five individuals were convicted of human trafficking, despite there being twelve people prosecuted and forty-two suspects taken to police.³⁰

Recommendations

16. While Suriname has taken steps to combat human trafficking, which has led to an increase in the number of cases and victims being identified, the number of convictions still remains low. Suriname must take prosecuting human traffickers seriously and prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law. In order to reduce human trafficking, Suriname must ensure that it is able to thoroughly prosecute these cases and secure convictions.

²⁵ *Suriname*, *supra* note 13, at 6.

²⁶ *Successful Year for TIP Department: 17 Victims Liberated, 8 Arrests Made*, WATERKANT (Jan. 14, 2025), <https://www.waterkant.net/suriname/2025/01/14/succesvol-jaar-voor-tip-afdeling-17-slachtoffers-bevrijd-8-aanhoudingen-verricht>.

²⁷ *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024*, *supra* note 14, at 19.

²⁸ *Id.* at 18.

²⁹ *Id.* at 18-19.

³⁰ *Id.* at 18.