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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
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 the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (Trinidad and Tobago) for the 53rd session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Background

2. Trinidad and Tobago is comprised of two main islands and numerous small islands in the West Indies,¹ and has an estimated population of 1.5 million people.² Approximately 32.1% of the population identifies as Protestant, 21.6% as Roman Catholic, 18.2% as Hindu, and 4.9% as Muslim.³

3. Trinidad and Tobago's last review was held on November 9, 2021.⁴ As a result of the review, Trinidad and Tobago received 166 recommendations, sixty-five of which it supported.⁵ No recommendations were made regarding religious freedom. On the issue of human trafficking, it was recommended by Mexico, and supported by Trinidad and Tobago, that the government:

Strengthen measures against trafficking in persons by creating awareness programmes for law enforcement officials and the population to encourage the reporting of cases of trafficking, and continue efforts to investigate, prosecute and punish those who commit this crime.⁶

4. In our last report on Trinidad and Tobago, we also urged the government to implement procedures and allocate resources to combat human trafficking.

¹ Bridget M. Brereton et al., *Trinidad and Tobago*, BRITANNICA (Apr. 5, 2026), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Trinidad-and-Tobago>.

² *Trinidad and Tobago*, WORLD POPULATION REV., <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/trinidad-and-tobago-population> (last visited Apr. 6, 2026)

³ Bridget M. Brereton et al., *People of Trinidad and Tobago*, BRITANNICA (Apr. 5, 2026), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Trinidad-and-Tobago/People>.

⁴ *Universal Periodic Review - Trinidad and Tobago*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/tt-index/> (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

⁵ *Infographic – Trinidad and Tobago*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/2022-06-28/Infographics-trinidad-tobago.pdf> (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

⁶ OHCHR, *UPR of Trinidad and Tobago (3rd Cycle – 39th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations*, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UPR39_Trinidad%20and%20Tobago_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

Legal Framework

5. Under the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the dignity of both men and women is recognized as having “equal and inalienable rights . . . endowed by their Creator.”⁷ It further states that “there should be adequate means of livelihood for all . . . [and] that labour should not be exploited or forced by economic necessity to operate in inhumane conditions but that there should be opportunity for advancement on the basis of recognition of merit, ability and integrity.”⁸

6. Part 1 of the Constitution enshrines protections for “the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law” without regard to “race, origin, colour, religion or sex.”⁹

7. Under Article 4 of Trinidad and Tobago’s Trafficking in Persons Act:

The object of the Act is to prescribe measures to prevent and combat trafficking in persons including children, by – (a) protecting and assisting victims of trafficking; (b) facilitating the efficient investigation of cases of trafficking in persons; (c) facilitating the prosecution of individuals and organisations involved in trafficking in persons; and (d) promoting co-operation between Trinidad and Tobago and other States in order to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons and to punish offenders.¹⁰

8. Trinidad and Tobago is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).¹¹ 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.”¹²

9. Additionally, Trinidad and Tobago 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.¹³ Under Article 9 sec. 1 of this Protocol:

⁷ THE CONST. OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRIN. & TOBAGO,

https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/mesicic3_tto_constitution.pdf (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.* part 1.

¹⁰ Trafficking in Persons Act art. 4,

https://www.unodc.org/cld/uploads/res/document/trafficking-in-persons-act_html/Trafficking_in_Persons_Act.pdf (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

¹¹ *Ratification Status for Trinidad and Tobago*, OHCHR,

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=177&Lang=EN (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

¹² 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].

¹³ *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.

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.¹⁴

Human Trafficking

10. In Trinidad and Tobago, human trafficking remains a persistent issue and primarily involves the trafficking of women and girls from Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Colombia.¹⁵ Often, these women and girls are recruited by traffickers using deception and false promises of jobs.¹⁶ However, these victims are instead forced into sex work or domestic service.¹⁷

11. For example, in November 2025, authorities rescued a fourteen-year-old Latin American girl who was trafficked to Trinidad and Tobago.¹⁸ Additionally, authorities arrested two Trinidadian men and two Venezuelan men for their role in trafficking human beings.¹⁹

12. Further, in June 2025, authorities arrested forty-five people as they busted two suspected human trafficking rings²⁰ and rescued twelve women and two men.²¹

13. In our last report on Trinidad and Tobago, we urged the government to adopt more robust procedures for combating human trafficking. After that, in October 2022, the government approved the National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons 2021-2025, setting out measures aimed at strengthening victim and witness identification and improving the prosecution of human trafficking cases.²² As part of this plan, the government:

- Developed a new Standard Operating Procedure for referring potential trafficking victims.

¹⁴ 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>.

¹⁵ *Trinidad and Tobago*, GLOB. ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX, <https://ocindex.net/country/trinidad-and-tobago>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Sasha Baptiste, *Trinidad: 14-Year-Old Girl Rescued, Four Arrested in Major Anti-Trafficking Operation 'Ironheart'*, WIC NEWS, <https://wicnews.com/trinidad-tobago/trinidad-14-year-old-girl-rescued-four-arrested-in-major-anti-trafficking-operation-ironheart> (last updated Apr. 5, 2026, 7:53 AM).

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *45 Held as Two Human Trafficking Rings Busted*, TRIN. & TOBAGO GUARDIAN (June 7, 2025), <https://www.guardian.co.tt/news/45-held-as-two-human-trafficking-rings-busted-6.2.2326622.036616bf3c>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *In Dialogue with Trinidad and Tobago, Experts of the Human Rights Committee Commend Women's Representation in Public Bodies, Raise Issues Concerning Summary Executions by the Police and Ongoing Deportation of Refugees*, OHCHR (Oct. 19, 2023), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/meeting-summaries/2023/10/dialogue-trinidad-and-tobago-experts-human-rights-committee-commend>.

- Standardized screening forms and discussed rapid screening for first responders.
- Expanded public awareness through TV and radio appearances, bilingual banners, and media sponsorships.
- Engaged the community with a Secondary School Spoken Word Competition and art submissions.
- Partnered with UNDP and local organizations for awareness initiatives, including a wrapped bus and two billboards.²³

14. Additionally, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service operates the Victim and Witness Support Unit and the Justice Protection Units.²⁴ These units work to provide victims of human trafficking with psychological and social support, legal assistance, shelter, and relocation services.²⁵ In 2023, the government also opened its first shelter designed specifically for victims of human trafficking.²⁶

15. Further, in 2024, the Counter Trafficking Unit (CTU) intensified its sensitization and awareness efforts as part of its mandate to combat human trafficking, delivering targeted campaigns across public, private, and educational sectors.²⁷ Activities included observing Human Trafficking Prevention Month through staff engagement and a film screening, conducting sensitization sessions with students nationwide, outreach to financial institutions and finance professionals in collaboration with key regulatory bodies, and capacity-building sessions for immigration officers.²⁸ Through these initiatives, the CTU provided critical education on the nature of human trafficking, key indicators, reporting mechanisms, legal frameworks and sector specific risks, and reinforcing a coordinated national approach to prevention, detection, and response.²⁹

16. These new measures have had an immense impact on Trinidad and Tobago's ability to investigate cases of human trafficking. In 2023, authorities secured their first human trafficking conviction under the Trafficking in Persons Act.³⁰ Further, that same year, CTU received 100 reports of suspected trafficking, conducted eight operations, identified forty-three victims (thirty-three adults, ten minors), and charged twelve offenders.³¹ In 2024, the CTU received eighty-six reports, conducted twelve operations, identified thirty-one victims (twenty-four adults, seven minors), and charged nine offenders.³² This is a drastic increase from the number of victims

²³ *The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Annual Report on Trafficking in Persons*, MINISTER OF NAT'L SEC. 6 (2024),

<https://papers.ttparliament.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/The-Annual-Report-on-Trafficking-in-Persons-in-the-Republic-of-Trinidad-and-Tobago-for-the-year-2024.pdf>.

²⁴ *Trinidad and Tobago*, *supra* note **Erreur ! Signet non défini.**

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Annual Report on Trafficking in Persons*, *supra* note 23, at 6.

²⁸ *Id.* at 13-16.

²⁹ *Id.* at 6-7, 15-16, 32.

³⁰ *First Conviction Under the Trafficking in Persons Act*, JUDICIARY TRIN. & TOBAGO (Nov. 3, 2023),

<https://www.tlawcourts.org/index.php/newsroom-69/news/12720-first-conviction-under-the-trafficking-in-persons-act>.

³¹ Sean Douglas, *Trafficking Reports Reveal Low Rate of Conviction*, TRIN. & TOBAGO NEWSDAY (Dec. 16, 2025), <https://newsday.co.tt/2025/12/16/trafficking-reports-reveal-low-rate-of-conviction-2/>.

³² *Id.*

identified between 2013 and 2020.³³ During that seven year period, the government identified only eighty-four total victims of human trafficking, meaning that just more than ten victims were identified on average each year.³⁴

While these numbers are encouraging, Trinidad and Tobago has difficulty prosecuting individuals who have been charged with human trafficking.³⁵ Since 2013, eighty-five people have been charged with human trafficking, while only thirteen have faced trial.³⁶

Conclusion

17. We commend Trinidad and Tobago for the steps it has taken to increase its capacity to combat human trafficking. This can be seen through the adoption of a National Action Plan and outreach efforts conducted by the CTU. Since implementing these measures, authorities have been able to identify victims of human trafficking and investigate cases. While these steps are good, Trinidad and Tobago must do more to convict human traffickers who have been arrested and charged with this heinous crime.

³³ *The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Annual Report on Trafficking in Persons*, TRIN. & TOBAGO PARLIAMENT 9, 14 (2020), <https://papers.tparliament.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/The-Annual-Report-on-Trafficking-in-Persons-in-Trinidad-and-Tobago-for-the-year-2020.pdf>.

³⁴ *Id.* at 9.

³⁵ Douglas, *supra* note 31.

³⁶ *Id.*