



A
PROJECT
OF



June 5, 2024

Ambassador Cindy Dyer
Ambassador-at-Large
Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP)
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Marcia Eugenio
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Ambassador Dyer and Director Eugenio:

Please find enclosed a report outlining our rationale for why the U.S. Department of State should strongly consider downgrading the Dominican Republic's status to Tier 3 in its forthcoming 2024 "Trafficking in Persons Report." Currently, the Dominican Republic is on the Tier 2 Watch List.

Given its government's clear lack of progress to reach minimum Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) standards, which this report outlines, the balance of evidence suggests that the Dominican Republic better fits the criterion established by TVPA for Tier 3.

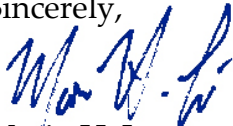
Recent reports from the U.S. Department of State itself as well as the U.S. Department of Labor, document the Dominican government's recent troubling pattern of behavior on critical human rights issues. The environment in the D.R. has been highlighted by President Abinader's administration's domestic response to neighboring Haiti's ongoing gang violence crises. In April 2024, Amnesty International led a coalition of civil society organizations in a letter to the Dominican government calling particular attention to its abuses against both Haitians and its own citizenry of Haitian descent.ⁱ

Given the TVPA's directive that the Secretary of State also consider patterns around forced labor as proof of a country's failure to make significant efforts to meet TVPA's standards, Secretary Blinken's role in furthering accountability for the Dominican government is particularly important.

Downgrading the Dominican Republic to Tier 3 would empower President Biden to use his discretion to withhold certain U.S. government "nonhumanitarian, nontrade-related foreign assistance" as defined by TVPA – a powerful source of leverage for driving positive change in the country.ⁱⁱ

Thank you very much in advance for your consideration and commitment to advancing important human rights reforms.

Sincerely,



Mario H. Lopez

Hispanic Leadership Fund / Dominican Justice Initiative

CC:

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ⁱ “República Dominicana: Carta abierta: Autoridades dominicanas deben respetar los Derechos Humanos de personas haitianas, personas dominicanas de ascendencia haitiana y activistas,” April 2, 2024, Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/es/documents/amr27/7897/2024/es>.

ⁱⁱ “Methodology – Funding Restrictions for Tier 3 Countries,” *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report*, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report>.