



PRESS RELEASE:

ECPAT Child ALERT Trust acknowledges the latest Trafficking in Persons Report from the US Government released on Saturday. Whilst it is pleasing to see that NZ retains its Tier 1 status it concerns us that the report states New Zealand is a source country for children subjected to sex trafficking within the country.

Currently, New Zealand legislation only provides for the trafficking of children to be a punishable offence if it includes the child(ren) being trafficked between States, despite the intrinsic link between child trafficking and the use of children for the purposes of prostitution or production of child sexual abuse images, and the increase in vulnerability to exploitation that results from children being moved outside their protective environment.

The report also raises the concerns of the vulnerability of students and temporary visa holders to become forced labour in some parts of New Zealand. It suggests a small number of boys and girls, often of Maori and Pacific descent are subjected to street prostitution, and some are victims of gang-controlled trafficking rings. According to the report some children are recruited by other girls or compelled by family members into child prostitution. This is a real concern.

In order to change this and to be able to prosecute, legislation needs to change the current definition of child trafficking to be expanded to include internal trafficking within New Zealand.

All children need to be safeguarded from being exploited in this way.

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ECPAT Child ALERT NZ is a non-government organisation and part of a global network formed to end Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes.