Djibouti

Country Overview

Politics

Djibouti is a semi-presidential republic characterized by a strong executive branch and a unicameral legislative body. The legal system is mixed, with aspects of French common law, Islamic law, and customary law all recognized in official courts. The president has the power to appoint the head of state (prime minister) as well as the majority of Supreme Court justices. In 2010, the national assembly removed term limits on the presidency, and President Ismail Omar Guelleh is now in his third term in office. Opposition parties are often not legally recognized and subject to abuse at the hands of security forces. While the African Union declared the most recent Djiboutian elections to be “free and fair,” international observers tended to disagree.

Economy

Djibouti is classified by the World Bank as a “lower middle income” country. Over 20 percent of the population lives in “extreme poverty,” and the small east African nation is almost completely dependent on imports to insure its food, water, and energy supplies. This leaves the country especially vulnerable to international markets and price shocks. Unemployment hovered around 39 percent in 2015. Djibouti’s economy is almost completely reliant on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), income derived from various shipping ports, and rents from foreign military bases. GDP growth in 2016 was estimated at 6.5 percent, largely driven by port and railroad construction.

Social/Human Development

Djiboutian society is made up of three main ethnic groups: Somali (60 percent), Afar (35 percent), “other” (5 percent) (includes French, Arab, Ethiopian, and Italian). 94 percent of Djiboutians identify as Muslim, with the majority of the remaining 6 percent identifying as Christian. 75 percent of the population resides in cities and towns, and the vast majority are concentrated in the capital, Djibouti City. Djibouti’s Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2015 was 0.473 (putting the country in the low human development category), positioning it at 172 out of 188 countries and territories.

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 2 Watch List

Trafficking risk has not been documented in the *Trafficking in Persons Report* in Djibouti’s export supply chains, although the country is an important transit point for labor migrants from the Horn of Africa to the Gulf States.

Read the full TIP report at:
https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2017/271178.htm

Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Djibouti has a high migration rate with 5.9 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2016 est.), ranking it 19 in the world for incoming migrant flows. Djibouti’s location on the eastern coast of Africa makes it a hub of regional migration, with Somalis, Yemenis, and Ethiopians traveling through the country en route to the Gulf and northern Africa. Djibouti has received a massive influx of migrants from Yemen. Over 35,000 Yemenis had arrived in the country as of April 2016. None of the population is considered internally displaced. There are several large camps (set up for incoming Somali refugees), but many migrants choose to head for the capital city rather than live in the camps, which often lack sufficient supplies of food and water.
Migrants to Djibouti

- Somalia: 93,042
- Ethiopia: 12,323
- Yemen: 265

Legend:
- Somalia
- Ethiopia
- Yemen
Exports and Trade

Djibouti’s top exports in 2016 were miscellaneous commodities, live animals, coffee and wood.\(^9\)

The top importers of goods from Djibouti are Ethiopia, France, Spain, Somalia, and Qatar.\(^10\)
Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers’ Rights

Freedom of Association

The law in Djibouti allows workers to form unions, bargain collectively, and strike (after providing advanced notice to the Ministry of Labor) to some degree. Anti-union discrimination is legally prohibited. However, the law allows for employers to suspend a worker’s contract if they hold an office within a trade union.¹¹ State authorities reportedly actively infringed upon workers’ rights to free association and labor union related activities. Union registration is highly complex, with Ministry of Labor officials maintaining high degrees of authority and discretion.

Working Conditions

The national minimum wage was DJF 35,000 (USD 198) per month, and there is no legally mandated minimum wage in the private sector. There is also no law or regulation explicitly allowing for workers to remove themselves from hazardous working conditions. The Ministry of Labor had only one inspector and four controllers who conducted 30 inspections of worksites in the entire year of 2015. Illegal working conditions were found in 100 percent of the inspections conducted.¹²

Discrimination

Djiboutian law prohibits employment discrimination based on gender, age, race, color, social background, nationality or national ancestry, participation or nonparticipation in a trade union, or political and religious opinion. The law does not prohibit discrimination due to disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV-positive status, or having other communicable diseases. The Ministry of Labor reportedly did not enforce these laws adequately, and abuses remain widespread. There is also no law mandating equal pay for equal work. Migrant workers are legally entitled to the same protections as citizens under the law, but are reportedly denied them in practice.¹³

Forced Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced labor, but the U.S. Department of State has reported that enforcement is inadequate.¹⁴
**Child Labor**

The minimum age for work was 16, but enforcement was reportedly inadequate.\(^{15}\)

**Civil Society Organizations**

Civil society organizations are permitted to operate without government interference as long as their work is not considered “politically sensitive.” These groups have sometimes been subject to intimidation.\(^{16}\)

**Immigration Policies Limiting the Employment Options or Movement of Migrants**

Migrants are more reportedly more likely to suffer abuse at the hands of state security forces and in detention centers.\(^{17}\)

**Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILO 29 Forced Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 100 Equal Remuneration</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor</td>
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<td>ILO 111 Discrimination</td>
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<td>ILO 138 Minimum Age</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<td>ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 97 Migration for Employment</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Use of Export Processing Zones (EPZs)**

There are currently two economic “free zones” in Djibouti. Companies which operate within them do not pay corporate taxes, have a simplified registration process, and receive other benefits such as assistance obtaining work permits and visas.¹⁹

**Political Risk Factors**

**Political Instability or Conflict**

Djibouti scored an 89.7 in the 2016 Fragile States Index (FSI), placing it in the “high warning” category and ranking the country 39 out of 178. The FSI scale goes from 0 (indicating a “sustainable” political system), to 120 (indicating a political system on “high alert”).²⁰

**Level of Crime and Violence**

The overall level of crime in Djibouti was relatively low, although the potential for cross-border terrorism exists.²¹

**State Persecution**

There are reports of state security forces harassing same-sex couples in public under laws which prohibit attacks on “good morals.” State forces also act with impunity in refugee camps and towards undocumented migrants. There are reports that members of opposition political parties, academics, journalists, and demonstrators are arbitrarily arrested and detained without charge.²²

**Level of Corruption**

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index scores Djibouti as a 30 out of 100, where a 0 signals “Highly Corrupt” and 100 signals “Very Clean.” Djibouti ranked 123 out of 176 on that index.²³

**Socio-Economic Risk Factors**

**Level of National Economic Development**

Djibouti’s HDI value for 2015 was 0.473, which put the country in the low human development category, positioning it at 172 out of 188 countries and territories.²⁴ When adjusted for inequality, Djibouti’s HDI value falls to 0.310.²⁵
Level and Extent of Poverty

The United Nations Development Programme states that 26.9 percent of the Djiboutian population is living in “multidimensional poverty,” with an additional 16 percent living near that line. Root cause factors behind poverty and inequality are the lack of formal sector employment and the lack of minimum wage requirements.

Degree of Gender Inequality

Women in Djibouti face formal and informal discrimination. The legal code does not address spousal rape, and although rape is punishable by 20 years in prison, those cases are often settled through customary courts. Domestic violence remained prevalent, and police rarely intervened. The law does not prohibit sexual harassment. Sharia law dictates that men inherit more property than women, and although discrimination along the lines of gender is prohibited by law, many women found it hard to get work in formal sectors of the economy.

Environmental factors

The main environmental issues in Djibouti are the lack of arable land or adequate water resources.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Livestock

Livestock Overview

The trade of live animals to the Middle East is critical to the economy in Djibouti. Many animals traded via the port are actually raised in Somalia or Ethiopia.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Livestock

There is limited evidence that child labor is involved in raising livestock in Djibouti, as well as in Somalia and Ethiopia, where much of the livestock exported from Djibouti originates.
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Endnotes

21 https://www.osac.gov/Pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=19706