

The Obama Administration’s “See-No-Evil” Approach to the TPP

Ignoring Malaysia’s Mass Graves, Brunei’s Anti-LGBT Law, Vietnam’s Child Labor...

Just after the discovery of mass graves for human trafficking victims in Malaysia, the Obama administration has decided to remove Malaysia from the State Department’s list of the world’s worst human trafficking offenders. Members of Congress, leading human rights organizations and religious groups [have denounced the shocking move](#) as a cynical bid to salvage the controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which would grant Malaysia privileged access to the U.S. market.

By turning a blind eye to Malaysia’s grave human trafficking abuses for the sake of the TPP, the Obama administration has already belied its hollow [claim](#) that the TPP would “reflect our values, especially when it comes to making progress on human rights.”

Senator Menendez on Removing Malaysia from the Human Trafficking Blacklist for the Sake of the TPP:

“...[I]t would undermine the credibility of labor and environmental provisions’ enforcement and call into question whether or not they would be manipulated as well in order to meet the standards.”

--[Sen. Bob Menendez, July 8, 2015](#)

If the Obama administration is willing to ignore mass graves in Malaysia’s human trafficking camps, why should members of Congress believe the administration’s promises to include, much less enforce, human rights protections or labor and environmental standards in the TPP? Below is a sample of just some of the widespread abuses for which TPP countries have become even more notorious during the TPP negotiations. Despite the administration’s claims that the TPP would curb such violations, the deal replicates provisions from past trade pacts that have failed to curb on-the-ground offenses. The administration’s “see-no-evil” approach to Malaysia offers more evidence that this failed track record would persist under the TPP.

Administration’s TPP Claim	Reality: Grave Abuses by TPP Members
“ Human trafficking : [We are] requiring signatories to...take specific actions to prevent trafficking”	Malaysia: Despite the documented deterioration of Malaysia’s human trafficking enforcement, the Obama administration removed Malaysia from its blacklist to skirt a U.S. law barring Fast Track for trade deals with human trafficking offenders.
“ LGBT rights : [We are] engaging with certain countries to ensure that they sign on to U.N. conventions that will prohibit and prevent violating the rights of their LGBT citizens”	Brunei: The 2015 State Department report on human rights spotlights Brunei’s enactment of a new sharia-based penal code that punishes homosexuals , who could be stoned to death once the code is fully implemented later this year.
“The TPP puts in place, for the first time, enforceable protections against forced and child labor that our trading partners will have to comply with in order to trade with us.”	Vietnam: Vietnam has at least 1.75 million child laborers , according to the Vietnamese government itself. And the Department of Labor has documented Vietnam’s widespread use of forced labor . The TPP’s labor terms are based on those in past deals that, according to a U.S. government report, have failed to curb less systematic abuses .
“Countries are required to put in place the most progressive environmental standards ever, including a ban on...illegal logging”	Peru: Experts estimate that about 70 percent of all logging in Peru is now illegal , despite that the 2009 Peru Free Trade Agreement already included TPP-like provisions against illegal logging. And last year Peru explicitly rolled back its environmental laws without suffering any consequences under the trade pact.