

NORWAY 2013 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Norway is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. The government consists of a prime minister, a cabinet, and a 169-seat parliament (Storting), which is elected every four years and cannot be dissolved. Observers considered the multiparty parliamentary elections on September 9 to be free and fair. Authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. Security forces did not commit human rights abuses.

In a country where there were few abuses, the most serious human rights problems during the year included violence against women and children, a continuing societal problem. The government sometimes returned rejected asylum seekers involuntarily to unfamiliar parts of their homelands. Hate speech on the internet targeted ethnic minorities and lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender (LGBT) persons.

Other problems reported during the year included use of police holding cells to detain arrestees for longer periods than permitted by law, alleged ethnic bias in stops and searches by police, allegations that authorities held asylum seekers in remote areas and supported them inadequately to avoid hardship, ethnic discrimination in employment, and incidences of forced labor.

During the year there was a report that officials in the security services or elsewhere in the government committed abuses. The police launched an internal investigation.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings. Any cases that warrant investigation are investigated by the Special Unit for Police Issues within the broader Police Directorate in the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances, abductions, or kidnappings.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution and law prohibit such practices. In May two Oslo police officers were filmed examining a suspected drug dealer's mouth and throat with a thin telescoping metal baton. In response to media reports and inquiries from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the Oslo Police stated that such actions were legal. An earlier assessment by the Police University found the actions to be questionable since health personnel must conduct all bodily searches. The police launched an internal investigation and banned the use of the baton for mouth searches.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions mostly met international standards. The government permitted visits by independent human rights observers, but none took place during the year.

Physical Conditions: As of August 31, there were 3,649 prisoners in the country, 5.1 percent of whom were women and 0.1 percent of whom were minors. The combined total prison capacity in the country was 3,803, of which 191 places were for women. The country had 42 prisons, of which three were separate prisons for women. In addition, eight other prisons had women's departments with a total of 71 allocated places. A number of other prisons in the country could accommodate women as needed.

Most prisons in the country contained separate cells for pretrial detainees.

Research from the Correctional Services Academy indicated there were eight suicides in the first half of the year, twice the number of suicides in all of 2011. Prisoners had access to potable water.

Administration: Prison recordkeeping was adequate, and authorities used alternatives to sentencing for nonviolent offenders.

An ombudsman, who can visit at a prisoner's request or on the ombudsman's own initiative, represented prisoners. The ombudsman does not act on behalf of prisoners and detainees on matters such as alternatives to incarceration for

nonviolent offenders; only the courts handle sentencing. The ombudsman may conduct investigations and express a legal, nonbinding opinion on whether public authorities erred or committed an injustice. The ombudsman also may serve on behalf of prisoners and detainees concerning the status and circumstances of confinement of juvenile offenders but received few complaints on this problem. Authorities permitted prisoners and detainees to submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship and to request investigation of credible allegations of inhumane conditions; there were no such complaints or allegations during the year. Officials granted prisoners and detainees access to visitors and permitted religious observance for those incarcerated.

Improvements: In May the government opened a larger, refurbished Trandum detention center for foreign nationals awaiting deportation. The center included a new building with separate rooms specifically for families, children, and persons with disabilities.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The national police have primary responsibility for internal security. The police may call on the armed forces for assistance in crises. In such circumstances the armed forces are under police authority. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security oversees the police force.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the national police, and the government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires warrants authorized by a prosecutor for arrests. Police are required to file a justification to hold detained persons in custody within four hours of their arrest and must inform detainees of the charges against them within three days. Authorities must arraign an arrested suspect within 24 hours (not including Saturday and Sunday), at which time the arraigning judge determines whether the

accused should be held in custody or released pending trial. There is no bail system. Officials routinely released all defendants pending trial, including nonresident foreigners accused of minor crimes. Defendants accused of serious or violent crimes usually remained in custody until trial. Authorities allowed arrested persons access to a lawyer of their choice before interrogation or, if they could not afford one, to an attorney appointed by the government. Authorities usually allowed arrested persons access to family members.

The law mandates that detainees be transferred from a temporary police holding cell to a regular prison cell within 48 hours. Authorities did not always observe this time limit. In a December 2012 letter to the ministry of justice, the Norwegian Bar Association criticized the government's pretrial detention policies, including conditions in holding cells. It stated that the government failed to reduce the use of holding cells for longer than the 48 hours permitted by the law.

The law provides that a court must supervise whether and how long a detainee may be held in solitary confinement, but a regulation provides an exemption where necessary because of building or staff conditions. The ministry of justice and public security does not keep statistics on the use of this exemption. In 2012 the courts subjected 483 prisoners to supervised isolation.

Arbitrary Arrest: There were no reported cases of arbitrary arrest. In 2012 the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) noted unofficial, anecdotal reports that police employed racial profiling to stop and search members of vulnerable groups. Authorities informed the commission that such practice was not the police's "modus operandi." The ECRI noted that the lack of public police records of stop-and-search activities made it difficult to confirm the existence or monitor the extent of such practices.

Detention of Rejected Asylum Seekers or Stateless Persons: The law permits detention of aliens to establish identity or to effect their removal from the country if it is deemed likely they would evade an order to leave.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence.

Trial Procedures

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and the right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them. They have access to free interpretation, if necessary. Trials are fair and public. In criminal cases involving a maximum prison sentence of at least six years, a court of appeal sits with a jury of 10 civilian members; there is no right to a jury trial in other instances.

Defendants have the right to have counsel, at public expense if necessary, to have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense, to have access to government-held evidence, to be present at their trial, to confront and question adverse witnesses, to present their own evidence and witnesses, and to appeal. Defendants cannot be compelled to testify or to confess guilt.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

An independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters can adjudicate cases involving human rights violations; individuals and organizations can appeal decisions to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

Regional Human Rights Court Decisions

The country is a party to the European Convention on Human Rights and subject to the jurisdiction of the ECHR. The government complied promptly with the court's orders.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and the government respected these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and press, and the government generally respected these rights. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of speech and press.

Freedom of Speech: The law prohibits “threatening or insulting anyone, or inciting hatred or repression of or contempt for anyone because of his or her: a) skin color or national or ethnic origin; b) religion or life stance; or c) sexual orientation, lifestyle, or orientation.” Violators are subject to a fine or imprisonment not to exceed three years. As of October there were no reports of persons being charged or convicted for violating the hate speech law. Hate speech on the internet that continued to focus on ethnic minorities, women, gays, and lesbians was a problem, according to the ombudsman for antidiscrimination and equality.

Press Freedoms: The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the internet or credible reports that the government monitored e-mail or internet chat rooms without appropriate legal authority. The internet was available in 93 percent of the country’s households, and 95 percent of the population used it.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State’s *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt/.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights. The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. The government announced that it would accept 1,000 additional Syrian refugees through the UNHCR.

NGOs criticized the government's policy, which often allowed minors seeking asylum to stay in the country until they were 18 years old and after that age to be returned to their countries of origin. They noted there was no consistent policy on handling children's cases and that the appeals board did not permit children to be present during their appeal hearings. By the end of August, 1,051 children were in reception centers for longer than three years. A government action plan in 2012 outlined new measures, including shorter processing times for child-asylum cases, improved services in asylum camps, and support to children upon return to the country of origin. NGOs stated, however, that they did not see any significant changes during the year.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: The country is party to the EU's Dublin III regulation, which allows the government to return refugees and asylum seekers to the first country they entered that is also a party to the regulation. Authorities did not return asylum seekers to Greece.

Refoulement: The government provided protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. By the end of August the government involuntarily returned 3,626 persons, according to the Police Immigration Unit. Authorities did not return Iranian asylum seekers without passports to Iran. Authorities involuntarily returned asylum seekers to Russia, Nigeria, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, and many other countries. A number of NGOs criticized the government for returning some asylum seekers to different areas in their home country. The government frequently did this for returnees to Afghanistan. Amnesty International also criticized the government for returning refugees to south and central Somalia, where, the organization believed, the risk of human rights violations and abuses remained real.

Refugee Abuse: The government housed asylum seekers and stateless persons in asylum reception centers throughout the country until they received a decision on their refugee status from the government. The asylum seekers are free to leave and return to these centers with some limitations. They may not be away for more than three days without potentially losing their place at the center and all concomitant financial support from the government. Centers were predominantly located in remote areas of the country; time of travel and lack of money to pay for public transport limited asylum seekers' ability to move freely. The Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS) reported some cases of malnutrition among refugees because they did not receive enough money from the government. Asylum seekers may not work while their cases are under evaluation.

Following the killing of two passengers and the driver of a bus from Ardal to Oslo by an asylum seeker in early November, the Ardal asylum reception center banned all their residents from traveling to Oslo by bus for a week. NOAS and the Ombudsman for Equality and Antidiscrimination (LDO) strongly criticized the move as discriminatory.

Amnesty International alleged that by December 2012, 85 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children had disappeared from asylum reception centers. It expressed concern that the children were victims of trafficking. NOAS also noted that it was aware of at least five cases of minors or young adults (ages 16-20) who had left asylum camps to go into prostitution.

Durable Solutions: The government's Directorate of Integration and Diversity in the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) had several programs to settle refugees permanently in the country. According to the UDI, by August the country accepted 754 refugees for resettlement from other countries. The government had several programs for voluntary return of refugees through the International Organization for Migration, such as the Voluntary Assisted Return program; the Information, Return, and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan Program; and the Information, Return, and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq program. These voluntary programs offered financial and logistical support for repatriation, including assistance with travel arrangements and funding.

Temporary Protection: According to the UDI, as of September the government provided protection to 203 persons who might not qualify as refugees.

Stateless Persons

According to UNHCR statistics, there were 2,313 stateless persons in the country as of January; they were not counted as refugees. According to the UDI, at the end of August, 579 stateless persons lived in receiving centers. Of these, 151 persons had permission to stay and 233 would have to leave. The remainder continued in the application process.

Citizenship is derived from one's parents; children born in the country do not automatically become citizens. The law authorizes revocation of citizenship granted based on false identity information. Because the law requires applicants for Norwegian citizenship to renounce their original citizenship, revoking Norwegian citizenship can result in statelessness if the person's original citizenship is not reinstated. The government effectively implemented laws and policies to provide stateless persons the opportunity to gain nationality on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The constitution and law provide citizens the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right through periodic, free, and fair elections based on universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Observers considered the parliamentary elections held on September 9 to be free and fair.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Most major political parties in the country voluntarily apply a gender quota system for purposes of nominations and the composition of party-governing bodies at all levels. There were 67 women in the 169-seat parliament (nearly 40 percent) and three minority representatives. The prime minister was a woman, there were seven women among the 19 Supreme Court justices, and women headed nine of the 18 government ministries. Women led four of the eight political parties represented in parliament.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. There were no reports of government or police corruption during the year.

Corruption: The Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Ministry of Finance are responsible for combating corruption.

Whistleblower Protection: The law provides protection to public and private whistleblowers and the government implemented it effectively.

Financial Disclosure: By law income and asset information from all tax forms of all citizens, including public officials, must be made public each year. Declarations are public, and failure to declare properly can result in up to two years in prison. Officials must declare income, assets, liabilities, and holdings in public companies. All officials declare their holdings yearly. During the year the government did not sanction any officials for failing to disclose their financial information properly.

Public Access to Information: The law provides for public access to nearly all government information except for classified national security information, and the government provided access to both citizens and noncitizens, including foreign media. There were no major obstacles to obtaining government information, and the government generally provided information in a timely manner. The law requires a reasonably short timeline for the relevant authority to disclose or respond, release of information at no charge, and an appeal mechanism for review of disclosure denials.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials often were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The country has parliamentary ombudsmen for public administration, for children, and for equality and antidiscrimination. All ombudsmen enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government interference. The ombudsmen hear complaints against actions by government officials. Although the ombudsmen's recommendations are not

legally binding, government authorities usually complied with those from the ombudsmen for children and public administration. During the year the ombudsmen's office issued one report criticizing officials from Oslo municipality for referring to Roma as "gypsies" and including them in the same category as dangerous trees and tall grass in information distributed to residents about safely removing garbage from properties. When notified, the municipality changed the text and informed all relevant parties about the change.

Parliament's Standing Committee on Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs reviews the reports of the parliamentary ombudsmen. Its Standing Committee on Justice is responsible for matters relating to the judicial system, police, the penal code, and the civil and criminal code.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation, or social status, and the government mostly enforced this prohibition, although there were reports of violence against women and children, some anti-Semitism, and stigmatizing statements against immigrants and Muslims.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, and the government generally enforced the law. The penalty for rape is two to 21 years in prison, depending on the severity of the assault, the age of the victim, and the circumstances under which the crime occurred. Very few cases, however, resulted in a sentence longer than three years and four months. According to police, 361 rapes and 28 attempted rapes were reported nationwide during the first four months of the year.

The media reported that in 2011, 892 of 1,186 reported rape cases (approximately 75 percent) were not prosecuted. Amnesty International claimed that the law inadequately protected women against violence and that statistics about rape and sexual assault were not regularly updated. In March 2012 the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed concern at the prevalence of violence against women, the high level of acquittals, and the lenient sentences imposed on perpetrators. The committee also expressed concern about the legal definition of rape, which maintains the requirement of the use of threat or force. In November 2012 the UN's Committee against Torture reiterated many of the same concerns.

During the year the government presented an action plan against rape so that the police and court system could better handle these cases.

Violence against women, including spousal abuse, was a problem. The law provides higher penalties for domestic violence than for simple assault, one to three years in prison, with an increased term of up to six years in more severe cases and up to 21 years for aggravated rape. The government generally enforced the law, although the Oslo Crisis Center criticized the conviction rate (approximately 14 percent in 2011) as too low. During the first four months of the year, police received 1,044 reports of domestic violence, 13 percent more than during the same period in 2012.

The government had programs to prevent rape and domestic violence and to counsel victims. Respective action plans require each of the country's 27 police districts to have a domestic violence coordinator to assist victims. According to NGOs, however, only 12 police districts had a full-time domestic violence coordinator. Public and private organizations operated 46 government-funded shelters, down from 51 in 2012, and managed five 24-hour crisis hotlines. NGOs criticized the government for shifting funding responsibility from the central government to the municipalities, which resulted in less funding and the closing and consolidation of shelters. The Oslo Crisis Center noted that consolidating shelters meant that many women were less likely or unable to seek help, since they would have to travel long distances.

The shelters provided support and counseling for victims and helped them gain access to social services, doctors, lawyers, and housing authorities. Victims of domestic violence have a right to consult a lawyer free of charge before deciding whether to make a formal complaint. If the government initiates criminal proceedings, the victim is entitled to free assistance from a victim's advocate.

Sexual Harassment: The law provides that "employees shall not be subjected to harassment or other unseemly behavior," and the government effectively enforced this provision. Employers who violate this law are subject to fines or prison sentences of up to two years, depending on the seriousness of the offense.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so free from discrimination, coercion, and violence.

Discrimination: Women have the same legal status as men and enjoy identical rights under family, labor, inheritance, and property laws. For the most part, the LDO effectively processed and investigated complaints of gender discrimination. In its 2011 report, however, the ECRI regretted that the LDO did not have the necessary tools to enforce the duty of public authorities and employers to promote equality. During the first six months of the year, the LDO received 25 complaints about discrimination against women.

The law provides that women and men engaged in the same activity shall receive equal wages for work of equal value. According to Statistics Norway, women received largely the same pay and benefits as men for equal work but in 2012 earned on average 13.5 percent less than men on a monthly basis. The government attributed this to differences in the professions chosen by women and men and the predominance of women in part-time or public-sector work. The LDO expressed concern that many women were in part-time positions involuntarily because of a tendency in certain industries, such as health and service, to divide work into a large number of part-time slices with no meaningful full-time alternative. In 2012, 39 percent of women and 1 percent of men worked part time.

The law mandates that 40 percent of the boards of directors of publicly listed companies be women, and virtually all public companies complied with the law.

Children

Birth registration: Citizenship is derived from one's parents; children born in the country do not automatically become citizens. All birth clinics in the country reported childbirths to a central birth register, which included names, birth certificates, and social security numbers, including those of the parents.

Child Abuse: In 2012 the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs initiated 34,591 investigations of alleged abuse. It completed 36,652 investigations in 2012 and took action in 14,032 while providing counseling in 21,000 cases. An independent children's ombudsman office within the Ministry of Children, Equality, and Social Inclusion is responsible for the protection of children under the law. The directorate provided assistance and support services. With five regional offices and 26 professional teams, the directorate is the government's principal agency for the welfare and protection of children and families. If criminal proceedings are initiated, the victim is entitled to free assistance from a victim's advocate.

Forced and Early Marriage: The minimum legal age for marriage in the country is 18 for both women and men, although a 16-year-old child may marry with consent of parents/guardians and permission from the county governor. The county governor may give permission only when there are “special reasons for contracting a marriage.”

The Red Cross, which runs a government-funded forced marriage helpline, received 2,500 inquiries between 2008 and 2012. Of these, 891 directly dealt with forced marriage, either in actuality (290 cases) or threatened (601 cases). Of these cases, 53 involved minors. The Red Cross also expressed concern about the rising rates of “informal marriages” in which parents promised children for marriage while they were underage but the formal, legal process took place once all parties turned 18.

Harmful Traditional Practices: Female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) is illegal. During the first six months of the year, there was one documented case of FGM/C and 17 reports by girls or women whose families or ethnic communities threatened to subject them to FGM/C. There was concern the excessive focus on the topic stigmatized women and girls from particular minority groups.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: Commercial sexual exploitation of children under the age of 18 is illegal both in the country and when committed abroad by a citizen of the country. In both cases the punishment is either a fine or a prison sentence of up to two years. The age of consent is 16. Child pornography is also illegal and punishable by fine or a prison sentence of up to three years. The government generally enforced the laws. There were four reports of prostitution involving children under 18 during the first four months of the year.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information see the Department of State’s country-specific information at http://www.travel.state.gov/abduction/country/country_5904.html.

Anti-Semitism

Membership in Jewish congregations was 880. There were approximately 1,500-2,000 Jewish persons in the country, including those who have not registered in a congregation.

Anti-Semitism is bundled with other hate crimes in the country's statistics. The police stated the number of anti-Semitism cases was too low to warrant a separate reporting mechanism.

On May 28, the newspaper *Dagbladet* published a political cartoon against circumcision that depicted bearded men chopping off the toes of a baby in the name of religion, while uniformed law enforcement officers looked on. Many believed that the images were offensive to Jews and Muslims. The cartoonist stated that he was not targeting a specific belief group but was criticizing all religious groups.

The government continued to support organizations working to combat racism, discrimination, and anti-Semitism, including the White Buses Foundation, which took students from the country to the Auschwitz extermination camp in Poland and other Nazi concentration camps to educate them about the Holocaust. The ministry of justice provided funding for security infrastructure at Jewish buildings and the ministry of government administration and church affairs provided the Jewish community in Oslo and Trondheim with funding for guards.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip.

Persons with Disabilities

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, and the provision of other governmental services, and the government effectively enforced these provisions. The law applies to all persons with disabilities without enumerating specific types of disabilities. It mandates access to public buildings, information, and communications for persons with disabilities. All educational institutions, from primary schools through universities, are required to have an appointed contact person for students with disabilities as well as a plan of action to include this group of students.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Discrimination towards immigrants and ethnic minorities remained a problem during the year.

Immigrants and their children sometimes had more difficulty finding employment than equally qualified ethnic Norwegians. As of August the unemployment rate among immigrants was 6.4 percent, compared with 1.8 percent among nonimmigrants, according to government statistics. African immigrants had the highest unemployment rate at 12.4 percent, followed by Asians at 7.8 percent, immigrants from eastern EU countries at 7 percent, and Central Americans at 6.3 percent. According to a study by the Institute for Social Research in 2012, applicants with Pakistani names were 25 percent less likely to be called for an interview than a similarly qualified applicant with a Norwegian name.

A large number of Roma traveled to the country for the summer, although fewer than in 2012. Many established camps in Oslo and Trondheim. Some Roma reported feeling harassed by police and civilians.

Uniformed members of the military are permitted religious head coverings such as hijabs, turbans, and skullcaps as part of the service uniform.

Indigenous People

Approximately 37,900 Sami live in the country. In addition to participating freely in the national political process, the country's Sami elect their own parliament, the Samediggi. The law establishing the Sami parliament stipulates that this 39-seat consultative group meet regularly to deal with "all matters, which in [its] opinion are of special importance to the Sami people."

Sami officials reported that outright discrimination is not common today in the country, but institutional discrimination persists due to a lack of officials who speak Sami. For instance, law enforcement officials are infrequently able to speak Sami, which inhibits their ability to interview Sami crime victims. This can disproportionately affect the elderly and children, who often speak only Sami.

Societal Abuses, Discrimination, and Acts of Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law covers crimes and discrimination against LGBT individuals. The National Criminal Investigation Service maintained an online tip service for hate crimes, including those motivated by sexual orientation. In 2012 it received 34 reports of hate crime motivated by sexual orientation. The Norwegian LGBT Organization estimated that as many as 90 percent of cases against LGBT individuals were not

reported to police. It continued to run an online reporting mechanism funded by the government and received approximately 25 reports during the year.

The government announced a study on hate crime underreporting. The government also funded a training program for police on engaging with the LGBT community. Until he left office in October, Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide participated in pride events, opening “Pride Park” in downtown Oslo in June.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

There were no media reports of societal violence against persons with HIV/AIDS.

During just one week in September, the Islamic Council of Norway reported three threats against mosques: an Oslo mosque received an e-mail from a group threatening to burn mosques in the country; someone hung up an anti-Muslim poster outside a mosque in Frederikstad; and a pig’s head was left at another mosque in Oslo.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right of workers to form and join independent unions and to bargain collectively. The law provides for the right to strike, except for military forces and senior civil servants. With the approval of parliament, however, the government may compel arbitration in all industrial sectors under certain circumstances such as when a strike threatens the quality of healthcare or endangers public safety. The law allows unions to conduct their activities without government interference, and workers cannot be fired for union activity. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination.

The government effectively enforced applicable laws, with no lengthy delays, and workers exercised their rights. When an enterprise violates labor statutes or regulations, the Norwegian Labor Inspection Authority (NLIA), which is part of the Ministry of Labor, may order the enterprise to correct the situation within a given time limit. The order is in writing, and the recipient can lodge an appeal. If the recipient fails to comply, the NLIA may impose fines or shut down the recipient. The NLIA can also shut down an enterprise immediately if the life and health of its employees are in imminent danger. The NLIA may also report

enterprises to the police for serious breaches of the law. A serious violation can result in fines or, in the worst case, imprisonment.

There were no reports of antiunion discrimination during the year or employer interference in union functions.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor and the government effectively enforced applicable laws. Police received a total of 19 cases of forced labor as of August. This was likely due to increased reporting and enforcement of forced labor violations. The government prosecuted several cases of labor trafficking and worked with its Nordic and Baltic neighbors to combat trafficking, including evaluating forced labor problems in the fishing industry.

There were reports that employers subjected persons, mostly migrants, to forced labor in the domestic service and construction sectors and that unscrupulous individuals subjected foreign children to forced begging and forced criminal activity, such as shoplifting and selling drugs.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

Children who are 13 to 15 years of age may be employed up to 12 hours per week in light work that does not adversely affect their health, development, or schooling. Between the ages of 15 and 18, persons not in school may work up to 40 hours per week, while persons who remain in school may work only a number of hours that does not adversely affect their schooling, which in fact should be substantially less than 40 hours.

The law protects children from exploitation in the workplace, and the government effectively enforced these laws. The NLIA is the enforcement agency, and has the same powers to enforce labor laws and regulations with respect to children as it has for other workers, described above in subsection b. The police and child welfare authorities provided support for children who are victims of forced labor. While minimum age rules generally were observed, there were reports that children were trafficked for forced labor. Children were most often forced to work as criminals, particularly in drug smuggling, theft, and prostitution. There were also reports of

children forced to work as unpaid domestic help. The Supreme Court convicted two Lithuanian men of human trafficking for forcing four migrant children ages 15 to 17 to steal from shops. The court sentenced one man to five years and the other to four-and-a-half years in prison.

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip.

d. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no legislated or administratively set minimum wage, although there was a minimum wage in certain sectors. Wages are set in collective bargaining agreements negotiated by labor unions, employers, and the government. The usually biennial agreements may include minimum wage levels for specific sectors. The government signed the last agreement during the year. The law requires equal pay for equal work.

The law limits the normal workweek to 37.5 hours and provides for 25 working days of paid leave per year (31 days for workers over age 60). The law mandates a 28-hour rest period on weekends and holidays. The law provides for premium pay of 40 percent of salary for overtime and prohibits compulsory overtime in excess of 10 hours per week. The law provides the same benefits for citizens and foreign or migrant workers with residency permits. The law forbids employment of foreign or migrant workers who do not have residency permits.

The law provides for safe and physically acceptable working conditions for all employed persons. The NLIA, in consultation with nongovernment experts, set specific standards. Under the law enterprises with 50 or more workers must establish environment committees composed of management, workers, and health personnel. All enterprises with 10 or more workers must have safety delegates, elected by the employees.

The NLIA effectively monitored compliance with labor legislation and standards. There were reports, especially in the cleaning, hotels, service, construction, and transport industries, of foreign workers being underpaid or overworked beyond legally permissible limits. The NLIA took action when unacceptable conditions were reported. For example, in June the NLIA, the police, and customs officials arrested and levied fines against foreign pavers working illegally in the country. In 2012 there were 41 workplace fatalities.