

NORWAY 2015 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 may not be dissolved. The monarch generally appoints the leader of the majority party or majority coalition as prime minister with the approval of parliament. Observers considered the multiparty parliamentary elections in 2013 to be free and fair. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

The most significant human rights problems included violence against women and children, a continuing societal problem. The government sometimes returned rejected asylum seekers involuntarily to unfamiliar parts of their homelands. Some of these were young persons who lived in the country for many years and were returned to their countries of origin upon reaching the age of majority. Hate speech on the internet targeted ethnic minorities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons.

Other problems included the use in some cases of police holding cells to keep persons in detention longer than the 48 hours permitted by law and alleged ethnic bias in stops and searches by police. There were allegations that authorities placed asylum seekers in remote areas and supported them inadequately. Women were subject to discrimination in employment. There were some reports of social and employment discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Anti-Semitism and incidences of forced and child labor were reported.

The government investigated officials who committed violations, whether in the security forces or elsewhere in the government.

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.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices, and there were no reports government officials employed them.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison and detention center conditions generally met international standards.

Physical Conditions: According to research from the Correctional Services Academy, there were six suicides during the year through October.

Administration: Authorities permitted prisoners and detainees to submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship and to request investigation of credible allegations of inhuman conditions; there were no such complaints or allegations during the year.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted visits by independent human rights observers, including the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture. Visits occurred throughout the year.

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. Police may call on the armed forces for assistance in crises. In such circumstances, the armed forces operate under police authority. The National Police Directorate 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. If police arrest a person without prior authorization, a prosecutor must consider as soon as possible whether the detention should be upheld. Detainees must be informed of the charges against them within three days after the arrest. A prosecutor must arraign an arrested suspect no later than three days after arrest. The arraigning judge determines whether the accused should be held in custody or released pending trial. There is no bail system. Officials routinely released defendants accused of minor crimes pending trial, including nonresident foreigners. Defendants accused of serious or violent crimes usually remained in custody until trial. Before interrogation, authorities allowed arrested persons access to a lawyer of their choice or to an attorney appointed by the government. The government pays the attorney fees in all cases. 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.

The law provides that a court must supervise whether and how long a detainee may be held in solitary confinement, but a regulation provides exemptions in cases of insufficient space due to building conditions, such as construction work, or inadequate staffing. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security did not keep statistics on the use of this exemption. In June 2014 the Oslo district court found the government's use of solitary detention in police cells to be a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

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

Trial Procedures

The constitution and the law provide for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. 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 held without undue delay in public. In criminal cases involving a maximum prison sentence of six or more years, a trial court sits with a jury of 10 civilian members; there is no right to a jury trial in other instances. Defendants have the right to counsel at public expense, 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 may not be compelled to testify or to confess guilt. The law extends these rights to all defendants.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals or organizations may seek civil remedies for human rights violations through domestic courts. They may appeal cases alleging violations of the European Convention on Human Rights by the government to the European Court of Human Rights after they have exhausted all avenues of appeal in domestic courts.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and there were no reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

In 2012 the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance noted unofficial, anecdotal reports that police employed racial profiling to stop and search members of vulnerable groups. Although authorities did not keep records on such activities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Norwegian Center against Racism and the Organization against Public Discrimination, reported an increase in police profiling complaints from members of the immigrant population from Africa and the Middle East, particularly the young. Both organizations claimed to have received more complaints during the year than in the previous four years combined. According to the groups, many incidents went unreported to authorities because victims declined to pursue charges. In the opinion of the Norwegian Center against Racism, this trend reflected a sense of resignation by victims that such occurrences were “the way things are” in the country. Some parties within the Oslo Police District agreed that profiling was

increasing. A unit in the district coordinated with NGOs on sensitivity training for law enforcement officers.

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 and Expression: 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; c) sexual orientation or lifestyle, or d) disability.” Violators are subject to a fine or imprisonment not to exceed three years. In March, in the first conviction under the hate crime law, the Oslo district court convicted a man for hate speech and for spitting on a Muslim woman at an Oslo supermarket. The court sentenced the man to 18 days in prison and imposed a 15,000-kroner (\$1,870) fine. According to the ombudsman for antidiscrimination and equality, hate speech on the internet against ethnic minorities, women, and LGBTI persons was a problem.

Press and Media Freedoms: The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction. The prohibitions against hate speech applied to the press publication of books as well.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports that the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. The internet was available in 97 percent of the country’s households, and 96 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 the freedoms 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/religiousfreedomreport/.

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

During the year many countries in the EU and Southeast Europe experienced an unprecedented wave of migration from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, consisting of a mix of asylum seekers/potential refugees, economic migrants, and trafficking victims, among others. For simplicity, this report will refer to these populations as “migrants and asylum seekers” if more specific information is not available.

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.

By the end of October, 21,946 persons applied for asylum. During the year authorities returned to their country of origin 1,092 individuals whose asylum applications were rejected. An agreement among six of the eight parties in parliament in June provided for the acceptance of 8,000 Syrian refugees screened by UNHCR outside the country from 2015 through 2017.

The law permits detention of aliens to establish their identity or to effect their removal from the country if authorities deem it likely the persons would evade an order to leave.

While the government relaxed its laws regarding long-staying children in December 2014, NGOs, such as the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), criticized it for returning minors to the country of their parents' origin if the parents were not granted asylum. NOAS believed the policy was discriminatory, lacked due process, and did not fully take into account the interests of the child, noting that there was no consistent policy on handling children's deportation cases and that the appeals board did not permit children to be present during their appeal hearings.

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. As of October the government transferred 870 persons to other European countries under the regulation. Authorities did not return asylum seekers to Greece.

Refoulement: According to the Police Immigration Unit, as of September the government deported 5,300 persons who did not qualify for asylum or temporary protection, or 5 percent more than in the same period in 2014. Authorities deported failed asylum seekers to Russia, Nigeria, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, and other countries. A number of NGOs criticized the government for returning some asylum seekers to areas in their home country different from where they originated, as frequently occurred for returnees to Afghanistan. Amnesty International-Norway continued to criticize the government for returning failed asylum seekers to south and central Somalia, where it asserted there was a risk they would be targeted, persecuted, and subjected to human rights violations and abuses.

Employment: Asylum seekers may not work while their cases are under evaluation unless their identity can be documented through a valid travel document or a national identification card.

Access to Basic Services: Asylum seekers residing in an asylum reception center could not be absent from the center 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, and long travel times and a lack of money to pay for public transport effectively limited asylum seekers' ability to move freely.

Durable Solutions: The government's Directorate of Immigration (UDI) had several programs to settle refugees permanently in the country. According to the

UDI, as of September the country had accepted 1,376 refugees for resettlement. Through the International Organization for Migration, the government assisted the return of refugees to their country of origin through voluntary programs that offered financial and logistical support for repatriation.

Temporary Protection: Through the end of October, the government provided temporary protection to 614 individuals who may not qualify as refugees.

Stateless Persons

According to UNHCR statistics, there were 1,997 stateless persons in the country as of January; they were not counted as refugees. According to the UDI, at the end of September, an additional 869 stateless asylum seekers lived in receiving centers, an increase of 21 percent from the same period in 2014. Of these, 376 persons had permission to stay, and 93 were under orders to leave the country. The remainder continued the asylum application process.

Citizenship is derived from one's parents, and children born in the country do not automatically become citizens. The government effectively implemented laws and policies to provide stateless persons the opportunity to gain nationality on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution and law provide citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections based on universal and equal suffrage, and citizens exercised that ability.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Observers considered the parliamentary elections held in 2013 to be free and fair.

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.

Financial Disclosure: By law income and asset information from the tax forms of all citizens, including public officials, must be made public each year. Failure to declare properly may result in up to two years in prison. Each year officials must declare income, assets, liabilities, and holdings in public companies.

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. The government generally provided information in a timely manner.

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 ombudsmen for public administration, children, and equality and antidiscrimination. The ombudsman for public administration is appointed by parliament while the government appoints the others. All ombudsmen enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government interference. The ombudsmen for public administration and for equality and antidiscrimination hear complaints against actions by government officials. Although the ombudsmen's recommendations are not legally binding, authorities usually complied with them.

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

The National Institution for Human Rights reports directly to parliament.

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

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

A review by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination released on August 28 stated that authorities did not fully address problems such as racism and hate speech. The committee specifically identified as problems the law's omission of race as a prohibited basis of discrimination, the government's lack of statistical information about the ethnic composition and well-being of the population, and "the increase in hate speech and xenophobic discourse by politicians and in media and other public platforms, including via internet." NGOs alleged that the government handled these criticisms haphazardly and not seriously. They asserted that no one at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security focused on hate crimes. They also took exception to the lack of a national definition of hate crimes and the absence of a national plan to combat such crimes. They claimed initiatives to combat such crimes were mainly local, when they existed.

On November 27, the government signed a political declaration against intolerance and hateful statements spread via social media, particularly against immigrants and Muslims. The declaration aimed to create broad awareness of the importance of tolerance and was widely publicized.

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 in which the crime occurred. Very few cases resulted in a sentence longer than three years and four months in prison.

Amnesty International-Norway continued to claim that the law inadequately protected women against violence and that statistics on rape and sexual assault were not regularly updated. NGOs remained concerned the country's narrow definition of rape led to underestimating the magnitude of the problem.

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 continued to criticize the conviction rate (approximately 10 percent in 2014) as too low.

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 the NGO Legal Aid for Women, 26 of 27 police districts had a full-time domestic violence coordinator.

Public and private organizations operated 45 government-funded shelters and managed five 24-hour crisis hotlines. The Oslo Crisis Center noted consolidating shelters meant that many women were less likely or unable to seek help, since they would have to travel long distances to do so, especially in the sparsely populated districts in the north of the country. The shelters provided support and counseling for victims and helped them gain access to social services, doctors, lawyers, and housing authorities. Survivors 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 survivor 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. The ombudsman for equality and antidiscrimination assessed that this was not an acute problem in the country.

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

Discrimination: Women have the same legal status as men and enjoy identical rights under family, labor, property, inheritance, and nationality laws. Approximately 25 percent or 52 of the 207 complaints received by the ombudsman for equality and antidiscrimination in 2014 concerned discrimination based on gender. Women experienced discrimination in employment (see section 7.d.).

The law mandates that 40 percent of the members of 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 births to a central birth register and provided the parents with a birth certificate. The birth certificate does not confer Norwegian citizenship.

Child Abuse: In 2014 the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs initiated 41,922 investigations of alleged child abuse and completed 41,016. By the end of that year, 37,124 children received assistance from the Child Welfare Services. Some 22,629 children received in-home assistance while 14,495 were removed from their family home.

An independent children's ombudsman office within the Ministry of Children, Equality, and Social Inclusion is responsible under the law for the protection of children and providing assistance and support services. With five regional offices and 26 professional teams, the office 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.

Early and Forced 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 the consent of parents or guardians and permission from the county governor. The county governor may give permission only when there are "special reasons for contracting a marriage."

Sexual Exploitation of Children: Commercial sexual exploitation of children under age 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. Child pornography is also illegal and punishable by a fine or a prison sentence of up to three years. The government generally enforced the laws. The age for consensual sex is 16.

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 report on compliance at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/legal/compliance.html and country-specific information at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/country/Norway.html.

Anti-Semitism

There were approximately 1,500-2,000 Jews in the country, 788 of whom belonged to Jewish congregations. Jewish community leaders reported the public generally supported the community.

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

The Jewish Community, the country's largest Jewish organization, alleged a cartoon published on September 24 in *Dagbladet*, a major daily newspaper, comparing the Israeli government with Nazi Germany, showed that anti-Semitic views still permeated society. The community stated the illustration demonstrated society was tone deaf to anti-Semitism.

The Jewish Community reported several anti-Semitic incidents in schools. In one instance, it stated that a student at a high school in Oslo was reportedly subjected to taunts that compared showers at the gym with gas chambers at Auschwitz and that Hitler should have finished the job.

The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development provided financing to the Jewish Community to conduct sensitivity training in schools while the Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities advised the government on anti-Semitism. Both organizations believed there was a lack of sensitivity to and awareness of anti-Semitic behavior.

Trafficking in Persons

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

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 implemented and 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.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Discrimination towards immigrants and ethnic minorities remained a problem. Ethnic discrimination occurred in employment (see section 7.d.).

The Romani population has mainly settled in Oslo and Trondheim. In a report published in August, the National Institution for Human Rights concluded that Oslo police discriminated against Roma and migrants from African countries found sleeping on city streets. In addition to being subject to forced relocations, the organizations found that members of these groups were often subjected to racist verbal abuse, violence, and confiscation of identification documents. In May the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner expressed similar serious concerns about the situation of the Romani community in Oslo and urged the human rights of Roma be fully respected without discrimination. On April 8, Prime Minister Erna Solberg apologized for discrimination against the country's Romani population before and after World War II, calling it a dark part of the country's history. She promised the government would pay reparations.

Indigenous People

Approximately 55,652 Sami lived in the country as of January 2014. In addition to participating freely in the national political process, the Sami elect their own parliament, the Samediggi. The law establishing the Sami parliament stipulates that the 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 was not common in the country, but institutional discrimination persisted due to a lack of officials who speak Sami. For example, law enforcement officers were infrequently able to speak Sami, which inhibited their ability to interview Sami crime victims. This disproportionately affected the elderly and children, who often spoke only Sami.

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

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The National Criminal Investigation Service maintained an online tip service for hate crimes, including those motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity. In 2014 the tip service received 38 reports of hate crimes motivated by the victims'

sexual orientation or gender identity. The NGO Norwegian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Organization (LLH) estimated, however, that as many as 90 percent of crimes against LGBTI individuals were not reported to police. In June the LLH relaunched its government-funded online reporting mechanism, which received 10 reports of alleged hate crimes between June and October.

On May 31, a gay person in Oslo was attacked in his home and subjected to homophobic slurs by the attacker. Police investigated the attack as a crime of violence but not as a hate crime. The LLH reported that police reluctance to apply the hate crime law in such investigations was a continuing problem when a hate crime was connected to another crime. The government funded a training program for police on engaging with the LGBTI community.

Transgender persons may administratively change their name easily, but long-standing governmental practice requires that, to change one's gender officially, a multidisciplinary specialized unit on transsexualism of the Oslo University Hospital must first diagnose the person as having "transsexual gender identity disorder." For a "real sex conversion" to take place, the person must undergo a sex-change operation. The entire process could last as long as 10 years.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

The Norwegian Center against Racism reported an increase of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab sentiment. The Muslim community complained that such sentiments and discrimination were usually ignored in public debate and did not generate outrage from politicians and the press.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right of workers, including migrant workers, to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The government generally respected these rights. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and requires reinstatement of workers fired for union activity.

The right to strike excludes members of the military and senior civil servants. With the approval of parliament, the government may compel arbitration in any industrial sector if it is determined that a strike threatens public safety. Trade unions criticized the government for intervening too quickly in labor disputes,

although the law generally allows unions to conduct their activities without government interference.

The government effectively enforced applicable laws. Resources and remediation efforts were adequate. Penalties for violations in the form of fines are set by the labor court and vary according to the magnitude of damage, the injuring party's guilt and financial sustainability, the injured party's circumstances and the conditions in general.

When an employer violates labor statutes or regulations, the Norwegian Labor Inspection Authority (NLIA), which is part of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, may order the employer in writing to correct the situation within a specified time limit. The employer may file an appeal. If the employer fails to comply, the NLIA may impose fines or close the employer's enterprise. The penalties were sufficient to deter violations.

The government and employers respected freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. Employers and unions participated in collective bargaining during the year.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, and the government effectively enforced laws against it. A maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment for violations of the law was sufficiently stringent to deter violations. When the NLIA determines that an employer has violated these laws, it refers the case to the police. As of August police received 21 reports of forced labor from the NLIA.

Traffickers subjected men and women, mostly migrants, to forced labor in the domestic service, nursing, and construction sectors. Children were subjected to forced labor (see section 7.c.).

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

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

Children between the ages of 13 and 15 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, children not in school may work up to 40 hours per week and a maximum eight hours per day. For children who remain in school, the law limits work to only those hours “not affecting schooling,” without specific limits, but fewer than 40 hours per week. No children may work at night between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. Working more than nine hours a week qualifies a child for health benefits.

The government enforced the laws on child labor effectively. Penalties include an unspecified fine, imprisonment of up to two years, or both. The penalties were sufficient to deter violations. NLIA resources were adequate to enforce the law effectively.

While employers generally observed minimum age rules, there were reports that children were trafficked for forced labor. Children were subjected to forced begging and criminal activity, particularly drug smuggling and theft. Commercial sexual exploitation of children also occurred (see section 6, Children). There were also reports of children forced to work as unpaid domestic help.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment or Occupation

Labor laws and regulations prohibit discrimination in employment and occupation on the basis of ethnicity, religion, political opinion, national origins, social origins, race, sex, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation or gender identity, HIV-positive status or having other communicable diseases, or social status. The government effectively enforced these laws and regulations.

Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to gender and ethnicity. Discrimination against Romani and migrant workers also occurred.

The law provides that women and men engaged in the same activity shall receive equal wages for work of equal value. In 2014 women earned on average 13.6 percent less than men on a monthly basis, according to the Statistics Bureau. 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 ombudsman for equality and antidiscrimination expressed concern that many women were in part-time positions involuntarily because of a tendency in certain industries, such as health and services, to divide work into a large number of part-time positions with no meaningful opportunity for full-time employment. According to the Statistics Bureau, in the third quarter of the year, nearly 35 percent of women and 14 percent of men worked part time.

Equally qualified immigrants sometimes had more difficulty finding employment than ethnic Norwegians. As of August, the unemployment rate among immigrants was 7.1 percent, compared with 2 percent among nonimmigrants, according to government statistics. African immigrants had the highest unemployment rate at 11.8 percent, followed by Asians at 7.6 percent, Central Americans at 7.3 percent, and immigrants from eastern EU countries at 6.7 percent.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The law does not mandate an official minimum wage. Instead, minimum wages were set in collective bargaining agreements.

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 the age of 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 workers with residency permits but forbids employment of foreign 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, sets occupational safety and health standards. The law requires enterprises with 50 or more workers to establish environment committees composed of management, workers, and health care personnel. Enterprises with 10 or more workers must have safety delegates elected by their employees. Workers may remove themselves from situations that endanger health or safety without jeopardy to their employment; authorities effectively protected employees in this situation.

The NLIA effectively enforced these laws and standards in the formal sector. The NLIA had 630 employees, 350 of whom were labor inspectors; the number of labor inspectors was sufficient to enforce compliance. The NLIA may close an enterprise immediately if the life or health of employees is in imminent danger and may report enterprises to police for serious breaches of the law. A serious violation may result in fines or, in the worst case, imprisonment. The penalties were sufficient to deter violations.

Some employers in the cleaning, hotel, domestic service, construction, and transport industries underpaid foreign workers and subjected them to working hours beyond legally permissible limits.