



Liechtenstein

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2000](#)

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
February 23, 2001

The Principality of Liechtenstein is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. The reigning Prince is the head of state; all legislation enacted by the popularly elected Parliament (Landtag) must have his concurrence. The Parliament elects and the Prince appoints the members of the Government and of the independent judiciary. In July the Prince decided to postpone the ongoing debate on a new Constitution until after parliamentary elections in 2001. Consultations between the Prince and Parliament's constitutional commission collapsed in April over diverging views on the executive powers of the monarch.

The Interior Ministry effectively oversees the regular and auxiliary police forces. There is no standing military force.

Liechtenstein has a prosperous, highly industrialized, free-enterprise economy with a vital service sector. It participates in a customs union with Switzerland and uses the Swiss franc as its national currency. As a member of the European Economic Area (EEA), its 32,000 citizens enjoy a very high standard of living. Unemployment fell to 1.1 percent during the year.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provide effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse. Violence against women is a problem. The Government is working to eliminate societal discrimination against women.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

There were no reports of political or other extrajudicial killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

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

The law prohibits such practices, and there were no reports that officials employed them.

Prison conditions meet minimum international standards, and the Government permits visits by human rights monitors.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The law provides for freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, and the Government observes these provisions. Within 24 hours of arrest, the police must bring suspects before an examining magistrate, who must either file formal charges or order release. The law grants suspects the right to legal counsel of their own

choosing; counsel is provided to indigents. Release on personal recognizance or bail is granted unless the examining magistrate has reason to believe the suspects are a danger to society or will not appear for trial.

The Government does not use forced exile.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the Government respects this provision in practice. The judicial system has three tiers: Lower court; high court; and Supreme Court. In addition an Administrative Court hears appeals against government decisions. The State Court protects the rights accorded by the Constitution, decides conflicts of jurisdiction between the law courts and the administrative authorities, and acts as a disciplinary court for members of the Government.

The Constitution provides for fair public trials and judicial appeal, and an independent judiciary respects these provisions.

The Constitution authorizes the Prince to alter criminal sentences or pardon offenders. However, if the offender is a member of the Government and is sentenced for a crime in connection with official duties, the Prince can take such action only if the Parliament requests it.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

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

The Constitution provides for personal liberty and for the inviolability of the home, postal correspondence, and telephone conversations. No violations were reported. Police need a judicial warrant to search private property.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a democratic political system combine to ensure freedom of speech and of the press. Two daily newspapers are published, each representing the interests of one of the two major political parties, as is one weekly newsmagazine. One state and one private television station broadcast, along with a private radio station, and residents freely receive radio and television broadcasts from neighboring countries. An information bulletin is also issued by the third party (Freie Liste) represented in Parliament. There are no limits on access to the Internet.

In October 1999, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) fined Prince Hans-Adam II for abusing one of his subject's freedom of speech. The ECHR reprimanded the monarch for refusing to reappoint a judge, Herbert Wille, who disagreed with him in an ongoing constitutional debate. In a public lecture held in 1995, Wille said that the State Court should decide on cases of disagreement between citizens (represented in parliament) and the Prince. The Prince wrote Wille shortly afterwards that the opinions that he expressed disqualified him from office, and in 1997 he refused to endorse Parliament's support for Wille's reappointment as head of the administrative court. The ECHR found that Hans-Adam II had curbed Wille's right to free speech and ordered him to pay \$59,000 (100,000 Swiss francs) in costs and damages. In his response on the following day, Prince Hans-Adam II stated that he took note of the judgement of the ECHR; however, the Prince had not reappointed Wille to the court by year's end. The Prince further stated that he and his successors will no longer publish the reasons for such appointment decisions. The 100,000 Swiss francs in costs and damages were paid out to Willie and his two legal counsels in February.

The Government respects academic freedom.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for these rights, and the Government respects them in practice.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government does not hamper the teaching or

practice of any faith. The relationship between the Government and the Catholic Church currently is being redefined, and a new agreement is scheduled for 2002. The Government contributes to the Catholic Church, as well as to other denominations. The finances of the Catholic Church are integrated directly into the budgets of the national and local governments. Catholic or Protestant religious education is compulsory in all schools, but the authorities routinely grant exemptions for children whose parents request them.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

Citizens have unrestricted freedom to travel in the country, to emigrate, and to return.

The Government cooperates with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. On July 3, the Government signed a trilateral agreement with Switzerland and Austria regarding the return of persons entering the country without permission. The treaty was ratified on October 25.

The Government provides first asylum; however, the country's lack of an airport or international train station means that it receives few requests. The 1998 asylum law is in accord with the U.N. 1951 Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Since its passage, the number of asylum requests has increased. Those persons who enter from Austria without permission still are returned to Austrian authorities in accordance with a 1955 bilateral agreement.

The Government granted collective protective status to Kosovar immigrants in the fall of 1998, following rising numbers of asylum applications. In April 1999, the Government decided that children under age 20 and spouses of guest workers from Kosovo could enter the country on request. In total the Government granted temporary protective status to 748 immigrants from Kosovo. In September 1999, the Government stopped granting collective asylum and set a deadline 8 months later (May 31) for repatriations.

By October 1999, 505 Kosovars left the country voluntarily, 481 of whom agreed to their repatriation before the May 31 deadline and thus benefited from government financial and material assistance in coordination with Switzerland's refugee repatriation program. Beginning in June, 19 Kosovars were "forcibly" repatriated, but only 1 was repatriated under police escort. To avoid repatriation, 92 Kosovars disappeared. An additional 115 Kosovars, whose asylum applications are pending, remained in the country awaiting a decision on their applications.

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

The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercise this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage.

The country is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. The monarchy is hereditary in the male line. The 25-member unicameral legislature is elected every 4 years. Suffrage is universal for adults over age 18, and balloting is secret. Political parties operate freely. Citizens regularly vote on initiatives and referendums.

Women are underrepresented in politics and government, although since gaining the right to vote in 1984, a growing number have been active in politics. A woman, the Foreign Minister, is one of the five members of the Cabinet, and another is a Member of Parliament. Women serve on the executive committees of the major parties. In June 1999, women's organizations, political parties, and the Government's Bureau for the Promotion of Equal Rights for Women and Men held a convention to promote greater participation by women in politics.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

International and domestic human rights groups operate without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials are cooperative and responsive to their views.

The sole local human rights organization, Justitia et Pax, is an informal group of about 10 members who monitor prison conditions and assist foreign workers with immigration matters.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language, or social status, and the authorities respect these provisions. The law also prohibits public incitement to violence or public agitation or insult directed against a race, people, ethnic group, or state.

Women

Violence against women is a problem. Nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) estimate that one in five women is a victim of physical or psychological violence. There is 1 women's shelter, which provided refuge for 33 women, only 12 of whom were citizens, and 30 children during the year. Annual government financing for the shelter is approximately \$140,000 (240,000 Swiss francs). The law prohibits all forms of domestic violence, and the Government vigorously enforces the law.

NGO's assume that, as in neighboring countries, trafficking in women occurs, but no specific cases have been documented (see Sections 6.c. and 6.f.).

Societal discrimination still limits opportunities for women in fields traditionally dominated by men. Men earn more than women. In accordance with a 1992 constitutional amendment mandating equality for women, Parliament amended a significant number of laws to provide for equality of treatment. For example, Parliament revised the citizenship law, the employment law, the law on labor conditions, the tax law, and the divorce law. The process of amending laws is almost complete. In March 1999, Parliament passed legislation on equal opportunity for women and men. The law is designed to eliminate discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace and to create conditions that allow both women and men to combine work and family. It entered into force in May 1999. In April 1999, the Government approved a plan to promote equal opportunity and to create conditions that allow both men and women to combine work and family. Measures include: Raising public awareness about the new law; improving programs and infrastructure for traditional and single-parent families, such as affordable housing and childcare; promoting educational and career opportunities for women; and raising recognition for work in the home to the same level as for work outside the home. The Government took steps to end all forms of discrimination against women. In December 1999, the Government signed the optional protocol to the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women.

Three women's rights groups were active. Their chief concerns were public affairs, information, legal counseling, lobbying, and other political activities.

Children

The Government demonstrates its strong commitment to children's rights and welfare through its well-funded systems of public education and medical care. The Government provided compulsory, free, and universal primary school education for children of both sexes for 9 years, normally until the age of 16.

The Government supported programs to protect the rights of children and matches contributions made to the four NGO's that monitor children's rights. A children and youth service belonging to the Office for Social Services oversaw the implementation of government-supported programs for children.

In September the Government signed two optional protocols to the 1989 U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. One protocol strictly regulates the drafting of minors into the armed services, and the other forbids child prostitution and child pornography as well as trafficking in children.

In November the Government established a Commission for the Coordination of Professionals in Cases of Sexual Offences against Children. The group consisted of experts from different backgrounds and focused on assisting professionals (counselors, therapists, and physicians) who deal with sexual offences against children. The Commission takes a comprehensive approach to sexual offences against children.

During the year, two children allegedly were abused sexually by acquaintances, but the prosecutor's office dropped the case after further inquiries undermined the validity of the allegations. The suspect, a Brazilian national, no longer resides in the country.

There is no societal pattern of abuse against children.

People with Disabilities

Although the law expressly does not prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities, complaints of such discrimination may be pursued in the courts. Amendments to the law on insurance for the disabled, which were

intended to improve the economic situation of disabled persons, came into force in 1997.

The Government requires that buildings and government services be made accessible for people with disabilities, but in general they are not, particularly old buildings.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

In its 1998 security report, the Government confirmed the existence of a small number of rightwing extremists, consisting of about 20 skinheads between the ages of 20 and 30, and about as many followers of a slightly younger age. A 1999 government survey of 700 young persons indicated that approximately 20 percent of youths expressed ambivalence toward or sympathy for extremist views, while 4 percent supported extremist views. Incidents of violence increased in 1999, according to the survey. On August 19, an adolescent from former Yugoslavia was injured in a fight with a local youth. The attack appeared to have been motivated racially. The rightwing extremists have not been publicly active. One case of repeated verbal attacks against Kosovar refugees was reported to a local NGO. In November 1999, a local youth was fined \$375 (600 Swiss francs) and sentenced to 2 weeks of social work for putting a racist web site on the Internet. There were no reports of rightwing propaganda on the Internet during the year.

Parliament adopted national antiracism legislation in December 1999. The law entered into force on February 11 and makes it a crime to produce or distribute racist propaganda, deny or trivialize genocide and crimes against humanity, engage in racist or religious discrimination, deny services to a particular group, or support racist organizations. Violations are punishable with a maximum 2-year prison sentence. On March 1, the country acceded to the U.N. Convention against Racial Discrimination. On June 18, voters approved a referendum that changed naturalization requirements to facilitate the naturalization of long-term residents, but it required that applicants relinquish their citizenship in other countries.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

All workers, including foreigners, are free to associate, join unions of their choice, and select their own union representatives. Due to the country's small size and population, only one trade union operates, representing about 13 percent of the work force. However, the sole trade union looks after the interests of nonmembers as well. It is a member of the World Confederation of Labor but is represented on an ad hoc basis by a Swiss union.

Workers have the right to strike except in certain essential services. No strikes were reported during the year. The law does not provide specific protections for strikers. Employers may dismiss employees for refusing to work; such dismissals may be contested. In 1997 the Government incorporated EEA guidelines into its domestic labor law. These guidelines require that, among other things, employers consult in cases of projected mass dismissals and submit employment contracts in written form.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law provides for the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively. However, collective bargaining agreements generally are adapted from ones negotiated by Swiss employers and unions.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, and it is not known to occur. Except by implication, the law does not forbid forced and bonded labor by children specifically, but such practices are not known to occur. NGO's assume that trafficking in women occurs, but there were no reports of specific cases (see Section 6.f.).

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The Government does not prohibit forced and bonded labor by children specifically, but such practices are not known to occur (see Section 6.c.). The law generally prohibits the employment of children under 16 years of age. However, exceptions may be made for the limited employment of youths at least age 14 and for those who leave school after completing their 9 years of compulsory education. Children ages 14 and older may be

employed in light duties for not more than 9 hours a week during the school year and 15 hours a week at other times.

Inspections are adequate. No employers have been fined or imprisoned for violations of the law. The Government devoted adequate resources and oversight to child labor policies. The Department for Worker Safety of the Office of the National Economy effectively supervised compliance with the law.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no national minimum wage. The number of working poor households has not increased in recent years. In 1999 36 households (0.3 percent) depended on public welfare to obtain a yearly minimal income, set at \$10,700 (17,720 Swiss francs) for a one-person household, and were considered working poor. A total of 458 households (2.7 percent) received public assistance. The law sets the maximum workweek at 45 hours for white-collar workers and employees of industrial firms and sales personnel, and 48 hours for all other workers. With few exceptions, Sunday work is not allowed. Workers over age 20 receive at least 4 weeks of vacation; younger workers receive at least 5 weeks.

The law sets occupational health and safety standards, and the Department for Worker Safety of the Office of the National Economy effectively enforces these provisions. The law provides for a hearing in cases in which workers remove themselves from dangerous situations.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons.

NGO's assume that, as in neighboring countries, trafficking in women occurs, but no specific cases have been documented. Although there were no reports of trafficking during the year, six cases of trafficking in persons (assistance with illegal immigration) were reported in 1999. In most cases, the traffickers concerned were relatives of illegal immigrants.

[End.]