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Libya

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2005](#)

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
March 8, 2006

The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is an authoritarian regime with a population of approximately six million, ruled by Colonel Mu'ammar Al-Qadhafi since 1969. The country's governing principles are derived predominantly from Colonel Qadhafi's *Green Book* ideology. In theory the citizenry rules the country through a series of popular congresses, as laid out in the 1969 Constitutional Proclamation and the 1977 Declaration on the Establishment of the Authority of the People. However, in practice Qadhafi and his inner circle monopolized political power. The legislative branch is composed of the unicameral General People's Congress (GPC) with 760 members elected indirectly for a 3-year term. The most recent "renewal" of the GPC by internal elections was in March 2004. Revolutionary Committees are nominally extragovernmental organizations that regulate many aspects of citizens' lives; however, in practice the government controlled the committees. The civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces.

The government's performance remained poor, although it took some steps to improve its human rights record. The following human rights problems were reported:

- inability of citizens to change the government
- torture
- poor prison conditions
- impunity
- arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention
- lengthy political detention
- denial of fair public trial
- infringement of privacy rights
- severe restriction of civil liberties-freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association
- restriction of freedom of religion
- corruption and lack of government transparency
- societal discrimination against women, ethnic minorities, and foreign workers
- trafficking in persons
- restriction of labor rights

Some improvement occurred during the year. On January 12, the government abolished the People's Court. On October 9, the Supreme Court ordered the retrial of 86 political prisoners who were convicted by the People's Court in 2002. Authorities established a committee to investigate the 1996 Abu Selim prison riot, in which a large number of prisoners died. On December 25, the Supreme Court accepted the appeal of the Bulgarian and Palestinian medics and returned their case, in which they were accused of deliberately infecting 426 children with HIV-tainted blood in 1999, to the criminal court for a retrial.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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. However, on May 12, unknown actors abducted and later killed Daif Al Ghazal, a prominent journalist and anticorruption activist. The government stated that it had detained suspects, and an investigation was ongoing at year's end.

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, but security personnel routinely tortured prisoners during interrogations or as punishment. Government

agents reportedly detained and tortured foreign workers, particularly those from sub-Saharan Africa. Reports of torture were difficult to corroborate since many prisoners were held incommunicado.

The reported methods of torture included chaining prisoners to a wall for hours, clubbing, applying electric shock, applying corkscrews to the back, pouring lemon juice in open wounds, breaking fingers and allowing the joints to heal without medical care, suffocating with plastic bags, deprivation of food and water, hanging by the wrists, suspension from a pole inserted between the knees and elbows, cigarette burns, threats of dog attacks, and beatings on the soles of the feet.

According to Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights Watch (HRW), the foreign medical personnel charged with deliberately infecting children in a hospital in Benghazi reported that they had been tortured through electric shock and beatings to extract their confessions. On June 7, a court found not guilty 10 security officials accused of inflicting the torture.

On March 24, representatives of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and the International Federation of Health and Human Rights Organizations visited political detainee Fathi Al-Jahmi and reported that his isolated confinement and sporadic and inadequate medical treatment constituted cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment (see section 1.d.).

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

According to foreign diplomats and international organizations, prison conditions ranged from poor to adequate. Pretrial detainees and convicts were held together in the same facilities. Reportedly more than half of the prisoners in the country were pretrial detainees. Prison officials frequently held pretrial detainees for long periods (see section 1.d.).

In February 2004 the government permitted AI to visit some prisons and speak with inmates that AI considered "prisoners of conscience." During its visit AI raised concerns with the government about the health of 86 Muslim Brotherhood prisoners in Abu Salim prison who undertook a 7-day hunger strike to protest lengthy delays in their appeal process. On March 24, the government also allowed PHR representatives to examine a limited number of detention facilities. For 3 weeks in May HRW visited the country after a 15-year absence and received access to police stations, prisons, and approximately 24 prisoners.

Security forces reportedly subjected detainees to cruel, inhumane, or degrading conditions and denied adequate medical care, which led to several deaths in custody.

The authorities established a committee to investigate the 1996 Abu Selim prison riot, in which a large but unknown number of prisoners died. No committee reports were released by year's end.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, the government did not observe these prohibitions. There were reports that security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained citizens during the year.

Role of Police and Security Apparatus

The country maintains an extensive security apparatus that includes police and military units, multiple intelligence services, local revolutionary committees, people's committees, and "purification" committees. The result is a multilayered, pervasive surveillance system that monitors and controls the activities of individuals. Security forces can impose sentences without trial, and the various security forces committed numerous, serious human rights abuses with impunity.

Arrest and Detention

The law provides that detainees can be held after arrest for up to 48 hours at a police station. They must then be brought before a prosecutor, who can hold them for six days for investigation. Detainees must then be brought before a judicial authority at regular intervals of 30 days to renew their detention order.

By law, bail must be set for pretrial detainees, detainees must have access to counsel, and public defenders represent those who cannot afford a private attorney. Detainees reportedly did not receive information on their rights to legal representation during interrogation. According to authorities, detainees have access to family members.

The government held many political detainees incommunicado for unlimited periods in unofficial detention centers controlled by members of the revolutionary committees. The government reportedly held hundreds of political detainees, many associated with banned Islamic groups, in prisons throughout the country, but mainly in the Abu Salim prison. Some human rights organizations estimated there were approximately two thousand political detainees, many held for years without trial. Hundreds of other detainees may have been held for periods too brief (three to four months) to permit confirmation by outside observers.

On January 12, the government arrested journalist Abd Al-Razia Al-Mansuri and held him incommunicado for several months. According to HRW, Al-Mansuri had written approximately 50 Internet articles critical of the government and society (see section 1.e.).

On July 19, according to the Libya Watch for Human Rights, Kamel Mas'ud Al-Kilani returned to the country after receiving assurance of his

safety, but he was arrested and taken to an unknown destination. No further information was available at year's end.

Since March 2004 the government has held political activist Fathi Al-Jahmi incommunicado, asserting that his detention was for his own protection. In 2002 Al-Jahmi was imprisoned after calling for democratic reforms but was released in March 2004. The government re-detained him two weeks later after he called again for reforms in several international media interviews. HRW visited Al-Jahmi in May, and he stated that he faced three charges: trying to overthrow the government, slandering Qadhafi, and contacting foreign authorities. No charges or trial had occurred by year's end.

In December 2004 human rights activist Ashur Al-Warfalli was arrested and held incommunicado for an extended period after issuing a statement against the government's human rights policy. Al-Warfalli's statement called for the release of political detainees, amnesty for exiles and dissidents, and freedom of expression for all citizens. He was reportedly released during the year without being charged.

Women and girls suspected of violating moral codes reportedly were detained indefinitely in "social rehabilitation" homes (see section 5).

Amnesty

On September 3, the government pardoned 1,675 national and foreign prisoners in celebration of the 36th anniversary of Qadhafi's rule. In addition the government released eight political prisoners who had been serving prison terms up to life for participation in a banned political group.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary; however, it was not independent in practice. The law stipulates that every person has the right to resort to the courts; however, security forces had the authority to pass sentences without trial, particularly in cases involving political opposition. The government used summary judicial proceedings to suppress domestic dissent. Qadhafi can interfere in the administration of justice by altering court judgments or replacing judges. The judiciary failed to incorporate international standards for fair trials, detention, and imprisonment.

The judicial system is composed of four tiers. The summary courts hear cases involving misdemeanors of lesser value. The decisions of this court may be appealed to the courts of first instance. These courts are composed of chambers of three judges and have the authority to adjudicate in all civil, criminal, and commercial cases. In addition the jurors apply the Shari'a principles in cases involving personal status. Cases from the courts of first instance may be appealed to the three courts of appeal, which are composed of panels of three judges. The Shari'a court of appeals hears cases from the lower Shari'a court.

The final court of appeal is the Supreme Court, composed of five separate chambers, one each for civil and commercial, criminal, administrative, constitutional, and Shari'a. The Supreme Court sits in chambers of five judges and rules by majority decision. The GPC elects the presiding president and other members of the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Council for Judicial Authority is the administrative authority of the judiciary, handling appointments, transfers, and disciplinary matters.

The law provides for the presumption of innocence, informing defendants of the charges against them, and the right to legal counsel. Defense lawyers automatically are appointed, even if the defendant declines to have one. There is usually very little contact, if any, between the lawyer and client.

On January 12, the GPC abolished the People's Court, a special tribunal outside of the judicial system, which violated fair trial standards during the prosecution of political cases. However, the revolutionary committees can convene national security courts to try political offenses. Such trials often were held in secret or in the absence of the accused. The government must review all cases of prisoners found guilty by the People's Court in the past. Reviews were ongoing at year's end.

On October 19, journalist Abd Al-Raziq Al-Mansuri was sentenced to 18 months in prison for illegal possession of a handgun. He had criticized the government on a foreign web site (see section 2.a.).

In May 2004 a court sentenced to death 6 foreign health workers accused of deliberately infecting 426 children with HIV-tainted blood in 1999. The sentences reportedly were based on confessions that the accused made under torture (see section 1.c.). International observers had serious concerns about the lack of investigation into allegations of torture and delays in bringing the case to a conclusion. On December 25, the Supreme Court accepted the appeal of the medics and ordered a retrial by the criminal court.

Political Prisoners

A large but unknown number of individuals were convicted and imprisoned for engaging in peaceful political activity over a number of years for belonging to an illegal political organization. The law bans any group activity based on a political ideology contrary to the principles of the 1969 revolution.

On October 9, the Supreme Court ordered a retrial of the 86 Muslim Brotherhood activists, who were originally sentenced in 2002 for membership in an illegal political organization; their sentences had been confirmed by the People's Court. A new trial had not begun by

year's end.

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

The law prohibits such actions; however, the government did not respect these prohibitions. The security agencies often disregarded the legal requirement to obtain warrants before entering a private home. They routinely monitored telephone calls and reportedly monitored the Internet.

The security agencies and the revolutionary committees oversaw an extensive network of informants. Foreign observers estimated 10 to 20 percent of the population was engaged in surveillance for the government. The government threatened to seize and destroy property belonging to "enemies of the people" or those who "cooperate" with foreign powers. Exiles reported that family members of suspected government opponents were harassed and threatened with detention.

There was no collective punishment of families or communities that aided, abetted, or did not inform the government of criminals and oppositionists. The law provides for punishments including the denial of access to utilities (water, electricity, telephone), fuels, food supplies, official documents, participation in local assemblies, and the termination of new economic projects and state subsidies. Collective punishment was inflicted on the relatives of individuals, particularly oppositionists, who are convicted of having committed certain crimes. In such cases, the punishment sometimes included expulsion and demolition of the family home.

Likewise there were no reports of the application of the purge law that provides for the confiscation of private assets above a nominal amount, describing wealth in excess of such undetermined amounts as "the fruits of exploitation or corruption."

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech "within the limits of public interest and principles of the Revolution"; however, the government severely limited the freedoms of speech and press, particularly any criticism of Qadhafi or government policy. According to the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Reporters Without Borders, press freedom worsened since 2004. The government tolerated some difference of opinion in people's committee meetings and at the GPC.

In March 2004 the government re-detained political activist Fathi Al-Jahmi after he denounced the regime to foreign media (see section 1.d.).

On May 21, unidentified men abducted writer Daif Al-Ghazal, who wrote web site articles critical of the government. On June 2, authorities found his body and later arrested two men. No further information was available at year's end.

On January 12, Abd Al-Raziq Al-Mansuri was arrested after writing some 50 articles and commentaries critical of the society and government for a foreign web site. The government claimed it arrested and sentenced Al-Mansuri in October for illegal possession of a handgun.

During the year the government released without charge journalist Ashur Al-Warfalli, who was arrested in December 2004 for releasing a statement calling for human rights reforms.

The government prohibited all unofficial political activities. By law many forms of speech or expression may be interpreted as illegal. The government operated an extensive system of informants resulting in self-censorship throughout society (see section 1.f.).

The government owned and controlled the print and broadcast media. There were no privately owned radio or television stations. Local revolutionary committees published several small newspapers. The official news agency, JANA, was the designated conduit for official views. The government did not permit the publication of opinions contrary to its policy.

Very few foreign publications were available; the government routinely censored them and at times prohibited their distribution. The publications law governs the operation of the press, reserving all publishing rights to two public entities: the Ad-dar Al-Jamahiriya, and the General Corporation of Press, Professional Unions, and Syndicates.

Satellite television was widely available, although foreign programming was censored at times. Internet access was limited to a single service provider; however, the number of Internet users increased during the year. The government occasionally blocked some Internet sites.

The government severely restricted academic freedom. Professors and teachers who discussed politically sensitive topics faced the risk of government reprisal.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Law on Public Assemblies and Demonstration stipulates that "individuals may meet peacefully, and no police personnel are entitled to attend their meetings, moreover, they are not obliged to notify the police of such gatherings." The law also provides for the right to hold public meetings in accordance with the regulations set by the law. However, the government severely restricted these rights in practice. Public assembly was permitted only with the government's approval and in support of the government's positions.

The government restricted the right of association to institutions affiliated with the government. The formation of groups based on a political ideology was banned (see section 3). Political activity deemed treasonous by the government was punishable by death. An offense may include any activity that is "opposed to the principles of the Revolution."

c. Freedom of Religion

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally tolerated the discreet practice of other religions but imposed some restrictions. Islam is the state religion, but militant forms of Islam are viewed as a threat to the regime. Since the wearing of a beard was associated with fundamentalist Islam, some Muslims reportedly shaved their beards to avoid security forces harassment. The government also controlled mosques and Islamic institutions and heavily censored clerics.

The World Islamic Call Society (WICS) was the outlet for the state-approved form of Islam. The government prohibited Islamic groups whose views were contrary to the authorized teachings. The WICS was responsible for relations with other religions in the country, including Christian churches.

Christian churches operated openly and were accepted by the authorities; however, the government imposed a limit of one church per denomination per city and prohibited proselytization of Muslims. There were no official places of worship for the practitioners of minority religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Baha'i Faith.

A noncitizen female who marries a Muslim citizen is not required to convert to Islam; however, a noncitizen male must convert to marry a Muslim woman. The government supports the position that all citizens are Muslim; marriages to non-Muslims were unacceptable.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal violence, harassment, or discrimination against members of religious groups. There was no reported Jewish community.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2005 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

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

The Freedom Reinforcement Law stipulates that "each citizen, during the time of peace, may move freely, choose the place where he or she wishes to live, and may return to the country and leave whenever he or she chooses." The law on travel documents guarantees these rights, and the government generally did not restrict the freedom of movement within the country. Authorities routinely seized the passports of foreigners married to citizens upon their entry into the country.

The law does not provide for or prohibit forced exile, but the government did not impose forced exile as punishment. The government continued to encourage the return of citizen dissidents abroad, promising to ensure their safety. Students studying abroad reportedly have been interrogated upon their return.

The law prohibits the extradition of political refugees; however, it does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol. There was no established system to provide protection to refugees, and there was no national legislation to determine refugee and asylum status. In practice the government did not provide protection against *refoulement*, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the government considers refugees and asylum seekers as "foreigners residing in the country without any specific distinction."

The country is not a party to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol; however, it is a party to the former Organization of African Unity's Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. The government does not recognize the UNHCR representative for the country and has not signed a formal cooperation agreement with the UNHCR. During the year approximately 12 thousand refugees were registered with the UNHCR, although UNHCR estimated the total number of refugees in country was near 30 thousand. The majority of refugees were Palestinians, followed by smaller numbers of Somalis and Sudanese.

The government stipulates that any foreigner who enters the country illegally shall be deported. The government maintained detention camps to hold noncitizens waiting deportation and did not inform diplomatic representatives when their nationals were detained. There were reports of authorities leaving noncitizens in the desert without any aid.

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

The law makes no provisions for elections, and citizens do not have the right to change their government. The country's governing principles stem from Qadhafi's *Green Book*, which combines Islamic ideals with elements of socialism and pan-Arabism. The *Green Book* states that direct popular rule is the basis of the political system and that citizens play a role in popular congresses; however, Qadhafi, his close associates, and committees acting in his name controlled major government decisions.

During the year the semiofficial Qaddafi International Foundation for Charity Associations launched an initiative calling for political reform, including more press freedom, the release of political prisoners, and compensation for those who had been unfairly harmed by state actions.

The government prohibits the creation of and subsequent membership in political parties. The 1977 Declaration on the Establishment of the Authority of the People dictates how citizens exercise their political rights. The government is structured in a pyramid of committees and congresses, each layer of which is involved in the selection of the next highest level. Citizens participate through numerous organizations, which include vocational, production, professional, and crafts congresses. Voting for the leaders of the local congresses is mandatory for all citizens over the age of 18.

The elected secretaries of these various congresses and committees select the members of the highest legislative organization, the GPC, which is composed of 760 members serving 3-year terms.

Revolutionary Committees, composed primarily of youths, continued to guard against political dissent and ensured that citizens followed sanctioned ideology within society. These committees approved all candidates in elections for the GPC.

Elections occur every three years, when the people's congresses, the local bodies comprised of all citizens, choose their leadership committees. The last renewal of people's congresses took place in March 2004. The election process continues through the hierarchy of people's congresses, until the GPC chooses the general people's committee, which manages the daily affairs of the government.

There was 1 woman in the 760-seat GPC, and no women in the cabinet. There was no reliable information on the representation of minorities in the government.

Government Corruption and Transparency

Government corruption was perceived to be a severe problem and favoritism, based on tribal origin, adversely affected government efficiency.

The law does not provide for public access to government information, and the government did not provide access in practice to citizens or foreign media.

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

Numerous charitable associations approved by the government operated in the country; however, the government prohibited the establishment of independent human rights organizations. Individuals wishing to carry out human rights work were forced to operate abroad due to restrictive laws that imposed imprisonment for forming or joining international organizations without government authorization (see section 2.b.). By law associations engaging in political activity are illegal. The government body known as the Libyan Arab Human Rights Committee did not release any public reports. The Libyan Society for Human Rights, operating under the sponsorship of the semiofficial Qadhafi International Foundation for Charity Associations, followed government policy priorities.

The government permitted a three-week visit by a HRW delegation in May and a PHR delegation in March. In February 2004 AI visited the country after a 15-year absence.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, or social status; however, the government did not enforce these prohibitions effectively, particularly with regard to women and tribal minorities.

Women

The law prohibits domestic violence, but there was no reliable information on the penalties for punishment. There was little detailed information regarding the extent of violence against women; however, it reportedly remained a problem. Abuse within the family rarely was discussed publicly.

The law prohibits rape. The convicted rapist of a girl must marry the girl, with her agreement, or serve a prison term of up to 25 years.

The law does not prohibit female genital mutilation (FGM), which is foreign to the culture and society. There were reports that FGM may have been performed on girls in remote areas of the country due to a large expatriate community of women from countries where FGM was practiced.

The law prohibits prostitution; however, the authorities tolerated it.

The 1969 Constitutional Proclamation granted women total equality; however, traditional attitudes and practices continued to discriminate against women. Shari'a governs inheritance, divorce, and the right to own property.

Women and girls suspected of violating moral codes reportedly were detained indefinitely in "social rehabilitation" homes. Many detained in these facilities had been raped and ostracized by their families. A woman or girl may be released if a male relative takes custody of her or if she consents to marriage.

The Department of Women's Affairs, under the GPC secretariat, collects data and oversees the integration of women into all spheres of public life. The General Union of Women's Associations, established by the government as a network of nongovernmental organizations, addresses women's employment needs. Traditional restrictions discouraged women from playing an active role in the workplace and inhibited employment gains by women.

On September 19-20 the People's Committee for Manpower held a conference on women's empowerment that focused on employment opportunities in travel, fashion, and human resources.

In general the emancipation of women was a generational phenomenon. Educational differences between men and women have narrowed; however, a significant proportion of rural women did not attend school and were inclined to instill in their children such traditional beliefs as women's subservient role in society.

Children

The government subsidized primary, secondary, and university education, and primary education was compulsory until age 15. According to a 2003 United Nation's Development Plan report, 96 percent of school-age children attended primary school, and most reached at least a 6th-grade level. Only 53 percent of girls and 71 percent of boys attended secondary school. The government subsidized medical care, and improved the welfare of children; however, general economic mismanagement led to a low standard in medical services.

Trafficking in Persons

The penal code prohibits prostitution and related offenses, including sexual trafficking. The law prescribes punishments for trafficking in persons.

Women were trafficked through the country from Africa to Central Europe. It was also considered a destination country for victims from Africa and Asia trafficked for sexual and labor exploitation. Moroccan women reportedly were trafficked to the capital to work as prostitutes. The government engaged in joint collaborations with other affected countries to combat human trafficking.

Persons with Disabilities

The law safeguards the rights of persons with disabilities and provides for monetary and other types of social care; however, the government had limited effectiveness implementing provisions. There are a number of government-approved societies that care for persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Arabic-speaking Muslims of mixed Arab-Amazigh ancestry constituted 97 percent of the population. The principal minorities were Amazighs and sub-Saharan Africans.

There were frequent allegations of discrimination based on tribal status, particularly against Amazighs in the interior and Tuaregs in the south.

The law as well as the Names Correction Committee discriminate against the use of non-Arabic languages and do not recognize the right of individuals to use their tribal names. The ban on the registration of non-Arabic names prevented the Amazighs from naming children in their own language.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law allows workers to form and join unions without previous authorization or excessive requirements, and the government respected this right in practice. Members of each profession may form their own unions and syndicates to defend their professional rights. Workers may join the National Trade Unions' Federation, which is administered by the people's committee system; however, the government prohibited foreign workers from joining this organization. The federation played an active role in the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions, the Organization of African Trade Union Unity, and the World Federation of Trade Unions.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The government must approve all collective agreements made between unions and employers to ensure that they were in line with the nation's economic rights. The law does not provide workers with the right to strike, and there were no reports of strikes during the year.

There were no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits any form of forced or compulsory labor, including by children; there were no reports of forced labor.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law provides that children under the age of 18 may not be employed in any form of work, unless it is done as a form of apprenticeship. There was no information available on the prevalence of child labor.

There was no information regarding whether the law limits working hours or sets occupational health and safety restrictions for children. The Ministry of Manpower is responsible for preventing child labor.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The labor law defines the rights and duties of workers, including matters of compensation, pension rights, minimum rest periods, and working hours. The legal maximum workweek was 48 hours.

Wages are forbidden by the *Green Book* and paid in the form of "entitlements," which frequently were in arrears. A public sector wage freeze imposed more than a decade ago continued, particularly in the face of consistently high inflation. The highest salary under the wage freeze was \$227 (300 dinars) per month; many families lived on significantly lower income. Although there was no information available regarding whether the average wage was sufficient to provide a worker and family with a decent standard of living, the government heavily subsidized rent, utilities, and food staples.

Labor inspectors were assigned to inspect places of work for compliance, and the law grants workers the right to court hearings regarding health and safety standards. Certain industries, such as the petroleum sector, attempted to maintain standards set by foreign companies. There was no information regarding whether workers may remove themselves from an unhealthy or unsafe work situation without risking employment.

Foreign workers constituted 1.6 million of the 3.2 million workforce; however, the labor law does not accord them equality of treatment. Foreign workers were permitted to reside in the country only for the duration of their work contracts, and they could not send more than half of their earnings to home countries. They were subjected to arbitrary pressures, such as changes in work rules and contracts, and had little option other than to accept such changes or depart the country. Many foreign workers were deported arbitrarily for not having newly required work permits for unskilled jobs they already held.

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