



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Mali

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2006](#)

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

March 6, 2007

Mali, with a population of approximately 12 million, is a constitutional democracy that continued to implement a decentralized form of government. International and domestic observers characterized the 2002 presidential and legislative elections as generally free and fair; however, there were some administrative irregularities. On May 23, Tuareg rebels attacked government military bases in the town of Kidal and Menaka. On July 4, the government signed a peace agreement with rebel forces. While civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces, there were isolated instances in which elements of the security forces acted independently of government authority.

The government generally respected its citizens' human rights; however, poor prison conditions, lengthy pretrial detention, prolonged trial delays, domestic violence and discrimination against women, female genital mutilation (FGM), trafficking in children, hereditary servitude relationships between different ethnic groups, child labor, and forced labor, including by children, were problems.

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.

On September 1, November 23, and November 28, mob killings occurred in Bamako. In each case local citizens beat and killed suspected thieves.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

Unlike in the previous year, there were no reported kidnappings.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices; however, there were occasional reports that police abused civilians.

There were reports that police arrested and abused student demonstrators (see section 2.b.).

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Overall prison conditions remained poor. Prisons continued to be overcrowded, medical facilities and access were inadequate, and food supplies were insufficient.

Men and women were separated in Bamako prisons; however, outside the capital, men and women were held in the same building but in separate cells. In Bamako juvenile offenders usually were held in the same prison as adult offenders, but they were kept in separate cells. Pretrial detainees were held with convicted prisoners.

The government permitted prison visits by human rights monitors; however, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other monitors were required to submit a request to the prison director, who then forwarded it to the Ministry of Justice. Approvals, which took up to one week, were routinely granted, but the week delay hindered the ability of monitors to ascertain if there were human rights violations, according to one NGO. Several NGOs, including the Malian Association of Human Rights and the Malian Association of Women Lawyers, visited prisoners and worked with female and juvenile prisoners to improve their conditions.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions; however, on occasion, police arrested and detained persons arbitrarily.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Security forces include the army, air force, gendarmerie, national guard, and police. The army and air force are under the control of the civilian minister of defense. The national guard is administratively under the minister of defense; however, it is effectively under the command and control of the minister of internal security and civil protection. The police and gendarmerie are under the Ministry of Internal Security and Civil Protection. The police have responsibility for law enforcement and maintaining order in urban areas, while gendarmes have that responsibility in rural areas.

The national police force is organized into various districts. Each district has a commissioner who reports to the regional director at national headquarters. The police force was moderately effective but lacked resources and training. Corruption was a problem, and some police and gendarmes extorted bribes (see section 2.d.). Impunity was not a problem, and individual police were charged and convicted of abuses. The gendarmerie conducted investigations of police officers.

During the year police officer Daba Djire was suspended for involvement in a case involving three Lebanese nationals accused of tapping into a local telephone network; the officer was awaiting trial at year's end.

Arrest and Detention

Judicial warrants are required for arrest. Normally complainants deliver warrants, which stipulate when a person is scheduled to appear at a police station. However, police sometimes served warrants, generally in response to an influential relative of the complainant or if they received a bribe. In cases involving a monetary debt, the arrested person frequently resolved the case at the police precinct, and the police received a portion of the recovered money. The law provides that suspects must be charged or released within 48 hours and that they are entitled to counsel; however, in practice, detainees were not always charged within the 48 hour period. Limited rights of bail or the granting of conditional liberty exist, particularly for minor crimes and civil matters. On occasion the authorities released defendants on their own recognizance. Detainees have the right to a lawyer of their choice or a state-provided lawyer, but administrative backlogs and an insufficient number of lawyers often prevented prompt access. Detainees were allowed prompt access to family members.

Police arrested demonstrators during the year, and the presidential palace's security force briefly detained a journalist (see sections 2.a. and 2.b.).

Pretrial detention was a problem. In extreme cases, individuals remained in prison for several years before coming to trial. Approximately 77 percent of imprisoned persons were awaiting trial.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary; however, the executive branch continued to exert influence over the judicial system, and corruption and limited resources affected the fairness of some trials. Domestic human rights groups alleged that there were instances of bribery and influence peddling in the courts. The minister of justice appoints and may suspend judges, and the Justice Ministry supervises both law enforcement and judicial functions. The president heads the Council of Magistrates, which oversees judicial activity.

During the year the Council of Magistrates temporarily suspended Judge Sidi Keita for the attempted murder of a court clerk in the town of Mopti. No charges were filed against the judge, who was transferred to another district. The council charged and suspended a second judge in Bamako for accepting a bribe in connection with a case involving three Lebanese nationals accused of tapping into a local telephone network; the judge subsequently died.

The deputy public prosecutor, senior magistrate, and judge investigated in 2005 on charges of corruption were suspended and awaiting trial at year's end.

The country has a lower Circuit Court and a Supreme Court with both judicial and administrative powers and a Constitutional Court that oversees constitutional issues and acts as an election arbiter. The constitution also provides for the convening of a high court of justice to try senior government officials in cases of treason.

Trial Procedures

Except in the case of minors, trials are public, and defendants have the right to be present and have an attorney of their choice. Court-appointed attorneys are provided for the indigent without charge. Defendants have the right to consult with their attorney, but administrative backlogs and an insufficient number of lawyers often prevented prompt access. Defendants and attorneys have access to government evidence relevant to their cases. Defendants are presumed innocent and have the right to confront witnesses and to appeal decisions to the Supreme Court. These rights extend to all citizens and all groups.

Village chiefs, in consultation with the elders, decided the majority of disputes in rural areas. If these decisions were challenged in court, only

those found to have legal merit were upheld.

Political Prisoners

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters.

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

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

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respected these rights in practice.

Individuals criticized the government publicly and privately, generally without reprisal, and the government did not attempt to impede this criticism.

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

On June 8, the presidential palace's security force beat and jailed a journalist, who had argued with security officials over the placement of a security cordon. A few hours later the government apologized, and the journalist was released.

No charges were filed in connection with the July 2005 kidnapping and beating of a private radio talk show host; the investigation was ongoing at year's end.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chat rooms. Individuals and groups could engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by electronic mail. There were numerous Internet cafes in Bamako, although home access in the capital was limited to those able to pay the high installation and monthly fees. Outside of Bamako, there were a few sites where the Internet was available for public use, but many towns in the country had no Internet access.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

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

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly, and the government generally respected this right in practice.

On November 13, police fired tear gas into a demonstration of medical students seeking higher stipends from the government. The students blocked access to one of Bamako's main hospitals during the protest and injected police with an unknown red liquid, later identified as juice. Police and protesters were injured by rocks and other projectiles. Five students were arrested, charged with damaging property, and held for six days before being released. The students' union claimed that the five, including one woman, were physically and sexually abused while in police custody. Their trials were pending at year's end.

Freedom of Association

The constitution and law provide for freedom of association, and the government generally respected this right in practice; however, the law prohibits association deemed immoral. In June 2005 the governor of the District of Bamako cited this law to refuse official recognition of a gay rights association.

c. Freedom of Religion

The constitution and law provide for freedom of religion, and the government generally respected this right in practice.

The government required that all public associations, including religious associations, register; the process was routine and not burdensome. Traditional indigenous religious groups were not required to register.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The Jewish population was estimated at less than 50, and there were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2006 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

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

The constitution and law provide for these rights, and the government generally respected them in practice. Police routinely stopped and checked both citizens and foreigners to restrict the movement of contraband and to verify vehicle registrations. Some police and gendarmes extorted bribes.

The constitution and law specifically prohibit forced exile; the government did not use it.

Protection of Refugees

The laws provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice, the government provided protection against refoulement, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution, and granted refugee status or asylum. A national committee in charge of refugees operated with institutional assistance from the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The government also provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 convention and the 1967 protocol and provided it to approximately 390 persons during the year.

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

The constitution and law provide citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Presidential and legislative elections were last held in 2002; domestic and international observers characterized both elections as generally free, fair, and without evident fraud, but there were administrative irregularities.

There were 15 women in the 147-member National Assembly, five women in the 28-seat cabinet, five women on the 33-member Supreme Court, and three women on the nine-member Constitutional Court; a woman chaired the Supreme Court.

The National Assembly had 14 members of historically marginalized pastoralist and nomadic ethnic minorities representing the northern and eastern regions of Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal. The cabinet also had two representatives of the northern regions: the minister of health and the minister of state reforms and institutional relations.

Government Corruption and Transparency

The government continued its campaign to curb corruption; however, corruption hindered development and governmental efforts to improve human rights. On May 30, the auditor general's office released its first annual report, which charged widespread tax evasion and customs duty fraud by private telecommunications companies, the mayor of Bamako's office, and fuel importation officials. No action had been taken against responsible officials by year's end.

On August 15, the auditor general announced that approximately one million dollars (500 million CFA) had disappeared during the last three years from the Office du Niger, which manages the country's rice-growing region. The director of the Office du Niger was subsequently removed, and three mid-level employees were arrested. In November the three mid-level employees were released.

No verdict was reached during the year in the February 2005 case in which employees of the textile parastatal Compagnie Malienne pour le Développement des Textiles were charged with illegally importing cotton.

The law provides for public access to government information, and the government granted such access. If an information request is refused, the person inquiring can appeal to an administrative court, which must handle the appeal within three months.

Section 4 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 were generally cooperative and responsive to their views. These groups included the Malian Association for Human Rights, a smaller Malian League of Human Rights, and a local chapter of Amnesty International. The International Committee for the Red Cross had offices in Bamako, Timbuktu, and Gao.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on social origin, color, language, sex, or race, and the government generally enforced these provisions effectively; however, violence and discrimination against women, FGM, and trafficking in children were problems.

Women

Domestic violence against women, including spousal abuse, was tolerated and common. Spousal abuse is a crime, but police were reluctant to enforce laws against or intervene in cases of domestic violence. Assault is punishable by prison terms of one to five years and fines of up to \$1,000 (500,000 CFA francs) or if premeditated, up to 10 years' imprisonment. Many women were reluctant to file complaints against their husbands because they were unable to support themselves financially. The Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family produced a guide on violence against women for use by health care providers, police, lawyers, and judges. The guide provides definitions of the types of violence and guidelines on how each should be handled. The ministry has also begun surveys to assess the frequency of violence, but no results were available at year's end. Action for the Defense and Promotion of Women Rights and Action for the Promotion of Household Maids operated shelters.

The law criminalizes rape, but spousal rape is not illegal. Reports of rape were rare, and most cases went unreported.

FGM was common, particularly in rural areas, and was performed on girls between the ages of six months to six years. According to domestic NGOs, approximately 95 percent of adult women had undergone FGM. The practice was widespread in most regions and among most ethnic groups, was not subject to class boundaries, and was not religiously based. There were no laws against FGM, but a government decree prohibits FGM in government-funded health centers.

The government continued its two-phased plan aimed at eliminating all forms of FGM by 2008. According to the local human rights organizations fighting FGM, the educational phase (workshops, videos, and theater) continued in cities, and FGM reportedly decreased substantially among children of educated parents. In many instances FGM practitioners agreed to stop the practice in exchange for other income-generating activity. The National Committee Against Violence Towards Women linked all the NGOs active in FGM.

Prostitution is legal and common in cities. Sex tourism was not known to be a problem. There were no confirmed reports of prostitutes targeted for abuse by local authorities.

The law does not specifically address sexual harassment.

Family law favored men, and women were particularly vulnerable in cases of divorce, child custody, and inheritance rights, as well as in the general protection of civil rights. Women had very limited access to legal services due to their lack of education and information, as well as the prohibitive cost. For example, if a woman wanted a divorce, she had to pay approximately \$60 (30,000 CFA francs) to start the process, a prohibitive amount for most women.

While the law gives women equal property rights, traditional practice and ignorance of the law prevented women, even educated women, from taking full advantage of their rights. A community property marriage had to be specified in the marriage contract. In addition if the type of marriage was not specified on the marriage certificate, judges presumed the marriage was polygynous. Traditional practice discriminated against women in inheritance matters, and men inherited most of the family wealth.

Women's access to employment and to economic and educational opportunities was limited. Women constituted approximately 15 percent of the labor force, and the government, the country's major employer, paid women the same as men for similar work. Women often lived under harsh conditions, particularly in rural areas, where they performed difficult farm work and did most of the childrearing. The Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family was charged with ensuring the legal rights of women.

Under a four-year (2004-2008) national plan of action to promote the status of women, the government continued efforts to reduce inequalities between men and women and to create links between women within the Economic Community of West African States and throughout Africa.

Several women's rights groups, such as the Association of Malian Women Lawyers, the Association of Women in Law and Development, the Collective of Women's Associations, and the Association for the Defense of Women's Rights, worked to highlight legal inequities, primarily in the family code, through debates, conferences, and women's rights training. These groups also provided legal assistance to women and targeted magistrates, police officers, and religious and traditional leaders in educational outreach to promote women's rights.

Children

The government was committed to providing for children's welfare and rights. Several laws protect children and provide for their welfare, including an ordinance that provides for regional positions as "child delegates" to safeguard the rights and interests of children.

Education was tuition free and, in principle, open to all; however, students were required to provide their own uniforms and supplies. Primary school was compulsory up to the age of 12, but only 56.6 percent of children from seven to 12 years old (49.3 percent of girls and 64.1 percent of boys) received a primary education during the 2005-06 school year. Girls' enrollment in school was lower than boys' at all levels due to poverty, cultural tendencies to emphasize boys' education, and early marriages. Other factors affecting school enrollment in general included distance to the nearest school, lack of transportation, and shortages of teachers and instructional materials.

Members of the black Tamachek community reported that Tamachek children were denied educational opportunities because their masters would not allow their children to attend school (see section 5, National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities).

Approximately 11 percent of students attended private Arabic-language schools, or Medersas. Medersas were encouraged to follow the government curriculum, and most taught core subjects including math, science, and foreign languages; however, few Medersas fully adhered to the government's curriculum due to a lack of teacher training and instructional materials.

An unknown number of primary school aged children throughout the country attended part-time Koranic schools; most students were under the age of 10. Koranic schools taught only the Koran and were partially funded by students, known as garibouts, who were required by schoolmasters to beg for money on the streets as part of their religious instruction. A 2005 UNICEF study of Koranic schools in Mopti found that children who attended these schools spent the majority of their time begging on the streets or working in fields.

The government provided subsidized medical care to children as well as adults, but the care was limited in quality and availability. Boys and girls had equal access to medical care.

Statistics on child abuse were unreliable, and reported cases of abuse were rare, according to local human rights organizations. The social services department investigated and intervened in cases of child abuse or neglect.

FGM was commonly performed on young girls (see section 5, Women).

Women may legally marry at age 18 and men at age 21. The marriage code allows girls under age 15 to marry with parental consent or special permission from a judge. Women's rights organizations opposed this provision as contradicting international conventions that protect children through the age of 18. Underage marriage was known to be a problem in the regions of Kayes, Sikasso, Timbuktu, and Mopti. Parents contracted marriage for girls as young as age 11 in the Fulani, Minianka, and Soninke ethnic groups, even though the practice is illegal.

Local women's rights NGOs, such as Action for the Promotion and Development of Women, the Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights, and the Women's and Children's Rights Watch, educated local populations about the negative consequences of underage marriage. The government also helped to enable girls married at an early age to continue in school.

Trafficking in children (see section 5, Trafficking) and child labor (see section 6.d.) were problems.

Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons in adults but does prohibit trafficking in children; however, there were reports that persons were trafficked to, from, and within the country.

Most trafficking occurred within the country during the year. Children were trafficked to rice fields in the central regions; boys were trafficked to mines in the south; and girls were trafficked for involuntary domestic servitude in Bamako. Victims were generally trafficked for agricultural work, domestic servitude, and to a lesser extent into begging, gold mining, and prostitution. The victims were usually from the central regions of the country and not a specific ethnic group. Women and girls were trafficked from Nigeria for sexual exploitation, mainly by Nigerian traffickers.

Child trafficking is punishable by five to 20 years' imprisonment. The law also prohibits the contractual use of persons without their consent. Penalties increase if a minor is involved and range from five to 20 years' imprisonment. Although legal protections and measures are in place, parents of child victims were reluctant to file charges, and cases often languished within the justice system.

During the year there also were reports of trafficking in persons between the country and its neighbors, primarily Guinea and Burkina Faso.

During the year a local court convicted Moussa Traore, a citizen of the country, for trafficking two children, ages 13 and 14, to work on his cotton farm in Cote d'Ivoire. Traore was sentenced to one year's imprisonment, but released because he had already served the length of the sentence awaiting trial.

On October 12, gendarmes in the town of Niono discovered 24 citizens of Burkina Faso, including 20 minors, in a minibus driven by Zakaria Ouedrago. According to the police, Ouedrago and Dramane Konta, a citizen of the country, had trafficked the 24 for work in Konta's fields. The children were turned over to a local NGO that cares for victims of child trafficking, and were subsequently repatriated to Burkina Faso. Ouedrago was arrested and awaiting trial at year's end. Konta remained at large.

The Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family and the Ministry of Labor and Civil Service shared responsibility for combating trafficking. The two ministries, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Territorial Administration, developed a program to identify and rehabilitate victims, educate the population, and strengthen the legal system with regard to the movement and trafficking of minors.

In July the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family released the results of a 2004 study on the sexual exploitation of minors in the regions of Sikasso, Kayes, and Bamako. The study, which involved 450 interviews, found that the children most at risk for sexual exploitation were girls between the ages of 12 and 18 who worked as street vendors or domestic servants, or who were homeless children or the victims of child trafficking. Such exploitation was most prevalent in areas in which the population and economy were in flux, such as border zones or towns on transportation routes or in mining areas. The study noted that most cases of sexual exploitation went unreported and recommended that the country strengthen its laws to protect children.

The government assists with international trafficking investigations and the extradition of citizens accused of trafficking in other countries, but there were no such cases during the year.

The government worked closely with international organizations and NGOs to coordinate the repatriation and reintegration of trafficking victims. Three children were repatriated during the year from Cote d'Ivoire.

Welcome centers in Mopti, Segou, Sikasso, and Bamako assisted in returning trafficked children to their families. The government provided temporary shelter and protection for victims at these centers.

Parents were required to carry travel passes for children, a measure intended to curb child trafficking.

Persons with Disabilities

There was no specific law protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or in the provision of other state services; however, the government did not discriminate against persons with disabilities.

There is no law mandating accessibility to public buildings. There were no reports of societal discrimination against persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs is charged with the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Societal discrimination against "black" Tamacheks and hereditary servitude relationships between Tamacheks and other groups continued during the year (see section 6.c.). Members of the Tamachek community reported that they did not benefit from equal education opportunities because their masters would not allow their children to attend school. Tamacheks reported they were deprived of civil liberties by other ethnic groups. On November 15, a Tamachek group, known by the acronym TEMEDT, called for an end to all slavery-related practices in the country (see section 6.c.).

The 2004 case concerning the killing of a customs officer during a confrontation between two Tuareg communities in Kidal was still pending at year's end.

Other Social Abuses and Discrimination

In June 2005 the governor of Bamako refused to grant official recognition to a gay rights association (see section 2.b.).

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law provides for workers to form or join unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements, and workers exercised these rights in practice. Only the military, the gendarmerie, and the national guard were excluded from forming unions. An estimated 95 percent of salaried employees were organized, including teachers, magistrates, health workers, and senior civil servants.

The law does not prohibit antiunion discrimination, but there were no reports of antiunion behavior or activities during the year.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference, and the government respected these rights in practice. The law provides for the right to collective bargaining, and workers exercised this right freely. Unions have the right to strike, and workers exercised this right. There are no export processing zones.

The growth of independent unions led to more direct bargaining between unions and their employers. Wages and salaries for workers belonging to the National Union of Malian Workers Federation (UNTM) and the Syndicated Confederation of Malian Workers were set by tripartite negotiations between the Ministry of Labor, labor unions, and representatives of the National Council of Employers of the sector to

which the wages applied. These negotiations usually set the pattern for unions outside the UNTM. Civil service salary levels were pegged nationally to an index established by the government.

The law provides for the right to strike; however, there were restrictions in some areas. For example, civil servants and workers in state-owned enterprises were required to give two weeks' notice of a planned strike and to enter into mediation and negotiations with the employer and a third party, usually the Ministry of Labor and State Reforms. The labor code prohibits retribution against strikers, and the government generally effectively enforced these laws.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that such practices occurred (see sections 5 and 6.d.).

The law prohibits the contractual use of persons without their consent, and penalties include a fine and hard labor. Penalties increase significantly if a minor, defined as someone less than 15 years of age, is involved.

Hereditary servitude relationships continued to informally link different ethnic groups, particularly in the north.

There was evidence that members of the Tamachek community continued to live in forced servitude and were deprived of civil liberties by members of other ethnic groups. During the year members of the black Tamachek community, often referred to by the pejorative label bellah, reported on the continued existence of feudal slave-related practices in the country.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The labor code has specific policies that pertain to child labor; however, these regulations often were ignored in practice, and child labor was a problem. The labor code permits children between the ages of 12 and 14 to work up to two hours per day during school vacations with parental approval. Children 14 to 16 may work up to 4½ hours per day with the permission of a labor inspector, but not during nights, on Sundays, or on holidays. Children 16 to 18 could work in jobs that were not physically demanding; boys could work up to eight hours per day, and girls up to six hours per day.

Child labor predominated in the agricultural, mining, and domestic help sectors and, to a lesser degree, in craft and trade apprenticeships and cottage industries.

Laws against unjust compensation, excessive hours, or capricious discharge did not apply to the vast number of children who worked in rural areas helping with family farms, household chores and herds, apprenticing in trades, or working in the informal sector, such as street vendors.

Trafficking in children was a problem (see section 5).

The authorities enforced labor code provisions through inspectors from the Ministry of Labor and State Reforms, which conducted surprise inspections and complaint-based inspections; however, resource limitations restricted the frequency and effectiveness of oversight by the Labor Inspection Service, which operated only in the formal sector.

The National Campaign Against Child Labor, led by the International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC)-Mali, was responsible for investigating abusive forms of child labor. IPEC relied on labor inspectors appointed by the government in Bamako and in regional labor offices throughout the country. IPEC investigated cases when NGOs or the media provided information that there was abusive child labor. There were no such reports during the year.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The national minimum wage rate, set during the year, was approximately \$53 (28,000 CFA francs) per month, which did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The minimum wage was supplemented by a required package of benefits, including social security and health care. While this total package could provide a minimum standard of living for one person, most wage earners supported large extended families and supplemented their income by subsistence farming or employment in the informal sector. The labor code specifies conditions of employment, including hours, wages, and social security; however, many employers either ignored or did not comply completely with the regulations.

The legal workweek was 40 hours (45 hours for agricultural employees), with a requirement for a 24-hour rest period. Workers had to be paid overtime for additional hours.

The law provides a broad range of legal protections against hazards in the workplace, and workers' groups brought pressure on employers to respect parts of the regulations, particularly those affecting personal hygiene. With high unemployment, however, workers often were reluctant to report violations of occupational safety regulations. The Labor Inspection Service oversees these standards but limited enforcement to the modern, formal sector. It was not effective in investigating and enforcing workers' safety and was insufficiently funded for its responsibilities. Workers had the right to remove themselves from dangerous work situations and to request an investigation by the Social Security Department, which is responsible for recommending remedial action where deemed necessary; it was not known if any worker had

done so.