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Mali

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

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Mali, with a population of approximately 12 million, is a constitutional democracy that continued to implement a decentralized form of government. The 2002 presidential and legislative elections were judged generally free and fair by international and domestic observers; however, there were some administrative irregularities. 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, there were problems in some areas. The following human rights problems were reported:

- poor prison conditions
- occasional arbitrary arrest and detention
- lengthy pretrial detention and 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

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.

In June a criminal court found two students, involved in a November 2004 confrontation between different student groups which led to three deaths, guilty of inciting violence, and a police officer guilty of using excessive force. Each received a one-year suspended sentence.

There were reports of mob killings during the year. On July 17 and July 26 a mob attacked and killed two thieves for stealing a TV antenna and a motorbike.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances

On July 5, unidentified assailants kidnapped a private radio presenter and released him a few hours later (see section 2.a.).

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

The law prohibits such practices; however there were occasional reports that police abused civilians. On April 5, a court sentenced a police officer to one month in jail for physically abusing a civilian during questioning.

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. During the year prison conditions somewhat improved and efforts to conform to UN norms were observable. For example, the country's largest prison, located in Bamako, the capital, now has a clinic, a library, an adult literacy center, and an artisan

workshop.

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, provided that administrative procedures were followed. 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 were routinely granted and took up to one week. Several NGOs, including the Malian Association of Human Rights, the Malian Association of Women Lawyers, visited prisoners and worked with women and juvenile prisoners to improve their conditions. According to an NGO, the administrative process hindered the ability of monitors to ascertain if there were human rights violations.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits 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 are composed of 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 and gendarmes shared responsibility for law enforcement and maintenance of order; the police were in charge of urban areas only. The national police force is organized into various divisions. Each district has a commissioner who reported to the regional director at national headquarters.

The police force was moderately effective but had problems caused by lack of resources and training. Corruption existed within the police force. 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 government provided regular training to police forces. Police, within the limits of their resources, prevented and responded to societal violence.

Arrest and Detention

Judicial warrants are required for arrest. Normally the complainant delivered the warrant, which stipulated when the person was to appear at the police station. In some cases the police served the warrant, based on a request from an influential relative of the complainant or if they received a bribe. Frequently, in cases where a monetary debt was owed, the arrested person 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 existed, particularly for minor crimes and civil matters. On occasion, the authorities released defendants on their own recognizance. Detainees had the right to a lawyer of their choice, or a lawyer provided by the state, but administrative backlogs and an insufficient number of lawyers often prevented prompt access. Detainees were allowed prompt access to family members.

There were no political detainees.

Pretrial detention was a problem. Administrative backlogs and an insufficient number of lawyers, judges, and courts often caused lengthy delays in bringing persons to trial. In extreme cases, individuals remained in prison for several years before coming to trial. The Ministry of Justice reported that in 2004, 3,907 out of 4,407 imprisoned persons were awaiting trial.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary; however, the executive branch continued to exert influence over the judicial system. The minister of justice appointed and had the power to suspend judges. This ministry also supervised both law enforcement and judicial functions. The president headed the council of magistrates, which oversaw judicial activity. Domestic human rights groups alleged that there were instances of bribery and influence peddling in the courts. On March 18, the minister of justice admonished the Justice Administration, public prosecutors' offices, and judges for ethics violations.

During the year the Council of Magistrates, an institution chaired by the president and including the minister of justice, called before it a deputy public prosecutor, a senior magistrate, and a judge on charges of abuses and mismanagement. All have been temporarily suspended from their duties. These disciplinary actions were part of the government's continuing campaign against corruption (see section 3).

The Supreme Court has both judicial and administrative powers. The constitution provides for a separate constitutional court that oversees issues of constitutionality and acts as an election arbiter. The constitution also provides for the convening of a High Court of Justice with the power to try senior government officials in cases of treason.

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair trial, but corruption and resource restraints the fairness of some trials. Except in the case of minors, trials are public, and defendants have the right to be present and have an attorney of their choice. 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. Court-appointed attorneys were provided for the indigent without charge. These rights extended 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.

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

The law prohibits such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions in practice. Police searches were infrequent and required judicial warrants.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides 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.

In July unidentified persons kidnapped a private radio talk show host as he left the radio station. He was released a few hours later, after being severely beaten. The government was still investigating, and no charges had been filed in the case at year's end.

There were no government restrictions on the Internet or academic freedom.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

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

Freedom of Association

The law provides for freedom of association, and the government generally respected this right in practice; however, the law prohibits association deemed immoral. Citing this law, on June 17, the governor of the District of Bamako refused to officially recognize a homosexual association.

c. Freedom of Religion

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

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

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

In August 2003 a dispute between Tidiani and Wahabbi, two Sunni Muslim communities, over the building of a mosque in the village of Yerere, located in western Mali, resulted in the deaths of ten Wahabbi. There were 96 persons, including 30 women, arrested and charged with assassination, torture, assault and battery, incitement and illegal possession of arms, illegal entry and desecration of bodies. On April 11, the Criminal Court sentenced 5 of the defendants to death, including 1 woman; 10 persons received life sentences; 10 others received sentences of between 2 and 10 years' imprisonment; and 18 women received sentences of between 18 months' and 2 years' imprisonment for complicity. Of the remaining defendants, 41 were given suspended sentences and 12 were released without charge.

There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts. The Jewish population in Mali is unknown but is likely fewer than 50.

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

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

The law provides 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 law specifically prohibits forced exile; the government did not use it.

Protection of Refugees

The law provides 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 500 persons during the year.

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

The law provides 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

In 2002, General Amadou Toumani Toure won the presidential election with more than 60 percent of the vote even without the support of a political party. Independent international and domestic observers judged the elections to be generally free and fair and without evident fraud; however, there were administrative irregularities.

Observers also considered the 2002 legislative elections to be generally free and without evident fraud but noted administrative irregularities. Shifting alliances impacted the composition of the National Assembly.

By year's end no charges had been filed against 20 persons under investigation for possession of stolen voter cards during the 2004 communal elections at year's end.

A total of 15 women held seats in the 147-member National Assembly. There were 5 female cabinet members in the 28-seat cabinet. A total of 5 women served on the 33-member Supreme Court, and 3 women served on the 9-member Constitutional 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

Corruption continued to hamper the government's development efforts and efforts to improve human rights protection.

On February 21, the criminal court sentenced the former minister of sports to a one-year suspended sentence for forgery and the use of forgery on official government documents. This was the first time the judicial system convicted a former minister.

In February senior officials of the textile company, Compagnie Malienne pour le Development des Textiles, including its former president, were charged with illegally importing cotton from Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, displacing local cotton, and causing financial losses to the Malian parastatal. No verdict had been reached by year's end.

The Auditor General's Office, an independent agency of the government, monitors the management of public resources and has the power to investigate mismanagement.

The law provides for public access to government information and administrative documents for the press and any citizen, and it was granted in practice. 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. Some of 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 law prohibits discrimination based on social origin, color, language, sex, or race, and the government generally enforced these provisions effectively. Violence and discrimination against women, FGM, and trafficking in children were problems.

Women

Domestic violence against women, including spousal abuse, was tolerated and common. Assault in marriage was a crime, but police were reluctant to enforce laws against or intervene in cases of domestic violence. Assault was punishable by prison terms of 1 to 5 years and fines of up to \$1 thousand (500 thousand francs CFA), 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. 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 operate shelters.

The law criminalizes rape, but spousal rape is not illegal. Reports of rape are rare, but most cases go unreported. The law is not effectively enforced due to the rarity of the crime being reported.

FGM was common, especially 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 aiming at eliminating all forms of FGM by 2008. According to the local human rights organizations fighting FGM, the educational phase (through workshops, videos, and theater) made some impact in cities. The practice of FGM reportedly decreased substantially among children of educated parents. In many instances FGM practitioners agreed to stop the practice in exchange for an 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 thousand CFA francs) to start the process, a prohibitive amount for most.

Despite legislation giving women equal property rights, traditional practice and ignorance of the law prevented women, even educated women, from taking full advantage of the law. 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. For example, 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. The government, the country's major employer, paid women the same as men for similar work. Women often lived under harsh conditions, especially in rural areas, where they performed difficult farm work and did most of the childrearing. The Ministry of the Promotion of Women, Children and Families was charged with ensuring the legal rights of women.

A second four-year (2004-2008) national plan of action for the promotion of women continued to try to reduce inequalities between men and women and create links between women within the Economic Community of West African States and throughout Africa. Although the government launched the second four-year plan, no analysis or evaluation of the results of the first four-year plan was conducted.

Several women's rights groups, such as the Association of Malian Women Lawyers and the Association of Women in Law and Development, worked during the year to highlight problem areas in the law, mainly the family code, through activities such as debates, conferences, and women's rights training. Training was targeted to reach magistrates, police officers, and religious and traditional leaders, while providing legal assistance to women.

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 government positions of "child delegates," in each region whose role is to safeguard the rights and interests of children

Education was tuition free and, in principle, is open to all, although the majority of students left school by age 12. Students had to provide their own uniforms and supplies to attend public schools. While primary school was compulsory up to the age of 12, only 53.4 percent of children in the 7-12 age group (45.7 percent of girls and 61.4 percent of boys) received a basic education owing to a lack of primary schools, especially in rural areas where 80 percent of the population lived. According to the Ministry of Education, net enrollment of children in junior high school was 18.6 percent, of which 13.8 percent were girls. Girls' enrollment in school is lower than boys' at all levels, partially due to early marriage. Shortages of teachers and materials, poverty, and cultural tendencies to place less emphasis on education of girls also affected the rate of girl's enrollment. Literacy rates among girls remained significantly lower than for boys. A 1998 government estimated report a 12 percent literacy rate for women.

The country had Koranic schools, which taught the Koran, reading, writing, and mathematics. There were 852 registered *Medersas* teaching at the primary school level with 140,194 students, 10 percent of all students attending primary school during the year. While *Medersas* were by statute private, the government supported them by providing textbooks and some teacher training and teaching materials. The Ministry of Education was charged with monitoring and supporting *Medersas*.

The Koranic schools were independent institutions that depended on parents' donations and money the children (known as *garibouts*) received from begging on the streets. They received no government funding and were not part of the government's educational system. There were reports that children who attended Koranic schools spent more time begging on the streets than learning in the classroom. The government believed it was the Islamic leaders' responsibility to modernize and monitor Koranic schools. Koranic schools and teachers have made occasional requests for governmental assistance, but they have not receive such assistance.

Subsidized medical care was provided for children, as well as adults, but was limited in quality and availability. Boys and girls had equal access to medical care.

The Social Services department investigated and intervened in cases of child abuse or neglect. According to local human rights organizations, reported cases were rare; however, statistics were unreliable.

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. As a result of these campaigns, girls' school enrollment increased progressively since 2000. The government promoted girls' education and its efforts helped lower the occurrence of underage marriage.

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

Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons in general but specifically prohibits trafficking in children; however, there were reports of such trafficking during the year. Child trafficking is punishable by 5 to 20 years' imprisonment. There also are laws that prohibit the contractual use of persons without their consent. Penalties increased if a minor was involved; however, these penalties were not imposed during the year.

On June 9, a criminal court dropped the case against three women arrested in 2004 in the Segou region after determining that their suspected victims were adult prostitutes not protected by the child trafficking law. The case of a Guinean national arrested in 2004 at the Guinean border for trafficking young girls was still pending at year's end. The Criminal Court also handed down a two-year suspended sentence against a Congolese national and a Malian accomplice involved in the trafficking of six Congolese children.

Though legal protections and measures were in place, parents were reluctant to follow through with charges and cases often languished unresolved within the justice system.

Both the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family and the Ministry of Labor and Civil Service handled the problem of trafficking. Both 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 2004 the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family launched a survey on the sexual exploitation of minors and participated in the creation of community surveillance in the most vulnerable areas of the country. There were no results by year's end.

The country was a source, transit, and destination for trafficking. Most of the trafficking occurred within the country's borders 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 are generally trafficked into 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 from a specific ethnic group. Women and girls were trafficked from Nigeria for sexual exploitation. Traffickers were mainly from the country.

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

The government worked closely with international organizations and NGOs to coordinate the repatriation and reintegration of trafficking victims. Six children were repatriated during the year.

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

Parents were required to carry travel passes for children, a measure intended to curb child trafficking. There were no reports that these documents hindered legitimate travel during the year.

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

Unlike in the previous year, there were no incidents of violence between Arabs and Kountas in the north. Mediation between the two groups was successful and hostilities have decreased. An investigation into the August 2004 clash between Arabs and Kountas in the Gao region was ongoing at year's end.

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

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law provides for the freedom of workers to form or join unions and protects freedom of association, 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 workers to form and join unions of their choice without excessive requirements, and the government respected these rights in practice. Unions other than those representing civil servants and workers in essential services have the right to strike. Workers exercised this right by conducting legal strikes. The law provides for the right to collective bargaining and workers exercised this right freely. Approximately 60 percent of workers were under such agreements. 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 (UNTM) Federation 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 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; penalties include a fine and hard labor. The penalties increase significantly if a minor, defined as someone less than 15 years of age, was involved.

There were some reports that de facto slavery, long reported to have existed in northern salt mining communities, evolved to wage labor in recent years; however, reliable evidence regarding labor conditions in those remote facilities remained unavailable. Hereditary servitude relationships continued to informally link different ethnic groups, particularly in the north.

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 8 hours per day and girls up to 6 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. Apprenticeship, often in a family member's or a parent's vocation, began at an early age, especially for children unable to attend school.

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 and herds, and those who worked 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, who conducted surprise inspections and complaint-based inspections; however, resource limitations restricted the frequency and effectiveness of oversight by the Labor Inspection Service, and the service 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 thousand 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, in practice 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, in practice, 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 social security code 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 of the Ministry of Labor oversaw 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 request an investigation by the Social Security Department, which was responsible for recommending remedial action where deemed necessary; it was not known if any worker had done so.

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