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2009 Human Rights Report: Mauritius

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

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Mauritius is a constitutional parliamentary democracy of approximately 1.3 million citizens governed by a prime minister, a council of ministers, and a National Assembly. In 2005 the Social Alliance, a coalition led by Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam, defeated the party alliance of the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM) and the Militant Socialist Movement (MSM) in national elections judged by international and local observers to be generally free and fair. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

The following human rights problems were reported: security force abuse of suspects and detainees; prison overcrowding; harassment and intimidation of journalists; official corruption; violence and discrimination against women; abuse and sexual exploitation of children; discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS; restrictions on labor rights, antiunion discrimination, forced labor, including by children, and 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.

On May 29, the court exonerated for lack of evidence four police officers involved in the 2006 death in custody of Rajesh Ramlugon, a detainee; the officers were initially accused of abuse of authority and of concealing evidence. On June 20, the daily *L'Express* reported that the director of public prosecutions (DPP) had appealed the exoneration to the Supreme Court, which had not heard the case by year's end. The officers remained free on bail.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices; however, there continued to be reports of police abuses.

For example, on September 24, police arrested and beat a man who later claimed he also was sexually assaulted, according to media reports; the man was accused of obstruction, property damage, and assaulting a police officer. Doctors at a private clinic determined he had a skull fracture, bruising, and injuries to his genitalia and groin area. A police investigation was ongoing at year's end.

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Prison and Detention Center Conditions

There were reports of prisoner abuse, overcrowding, and drug abuse in the country's five prisons, although unlike in previous years, there were no reports that prison guards tortured prisoners. The Central Prison, which has a capacity of 946, held 1,281 prisoners at year's end. On November 30, there were 138 female prisoners and 2,216 male prisoners in the country's prisons; 12 boys and 20 girls were held in juvenile prisons.

Unlike in the previous year, the independent National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which accompanied the UN subcommittee during its 2007 prison visits to the main island and Rodrigues Island, received no complaints of abuse from prisoners.

A prisoner in Central Prison died after being stabbed by another prisoner, according to a February 15 report in the newspaper *Week-End*. A police investigation was ongoing at year's end.

The government permitted prison visits by independent observers, including the press, the NHRC, local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the UN. The local NGO Association Kinouete also ran programs to rehabilitate prisoners.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The police force is headed by a police commissioner who has authority over all police and other security forces, including the Coast Guard and Special Mobile Forces, a paramilitary unit that shares responsibility with police for internal security. The police commissioner reports directly to the Prime Minister's Office. Police corruption and abuse of detainees were problems.

The NHRC investigates allegations of police abuse and may report such cases to the Office of the DPP. By November 30, the NHRC had received 66 complaints of physical or verbal abuse by police: 18 complaints were withdrawn or dismissed for lack of evidence, four cases were referred to appropriate authorities for follow-up, and 44 cases remained under investigation.

During the year the governmental Independent Commission Against Corruption registered 88 complaints of corruption against police officers: 23 cases remained under investigation, and 65 were discontinued for lack of substantiation.

On June 8, the court sentenced a police officer who was initially arrested and released in 2007 to 18 months in prison for conspiring to facilitate the entry of Chinese citizens into the United Kingdom with fraudulent documents.

Orientation training for all new police recruits included a segment on human rights; management officers were required to take a refresher course which was offered several times yearly. More than 200 candidates who qualified on the basis of years of experience participated in human rights courses during the year.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention

The constitution and law require that arrest warrants be based on sufficient evidence and issued by a duly authorized official and that the accused be read his or her rights, including the right to remain silent and the right to an attorney. The law requires that suspects be brought before the local district magistrate within 48 hours. Police generally respected these rights, although police sometimes delayed suspects' access to defense counsel. Detainees generally had prompt access to family members, although minors and those who did not know their rights were less likely to be provided such access. Indigent detainees facing serious criminal charges were provided an attorney at state expense. A suspect can be detained for up to a week, after which the person may bring the issue of bail before a magistrate. Alternatively, if police concur with the accused, that person may be released on bail the same day as the arrest. Individuals charged with drug trafficking may be detained for up to 36 hours without access to legal counsel or bail.

Due to a backlogged court system, approximately a third of the prison population was in pretrial detention. Pretrial detainees generally remained in remand for one to two years before being tried. In practice judges applied time served in remand to subsequent sentences.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

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

The judicial system consists of the Supreme Court, which has appellate powers, and a series of lower courts. The Supreme Court has a chief justice and 16 other judges, who also serve on the Court of Criminal Appeal and the Court of Civil Appeal. Magistrates sit on intermediate courts, the Industrial Court, the Family Court, the Criminal Court, and the 10 district courts. Final appeal may be made to the Privy Council in the United Kingdom. Both the family and criminal courts heard cases throughout the year.

The DPP determines which court hears particular cases based on the severity of the crime and anticipated punishment if the defendant is found guilty. The DPP sends cases of crimes carrying a potential penalty of life imprisonment to the Supreme Court, crimes of medium severity to intermediate courts, and lesser crimes to district courts.

Trial Procedures

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence, and trials are public. Juries are only used in murder trials. Defendants have the right to be present and to consult an attorney in a timely manner. An attorney is provided at public expense when indigent defendants face serious criminal charges. Defendants can confront or question witnesses against them and present witnesses and evidence on their own behalf. Defendants and attorneys have access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases, and defendants have a right of appeal. These rights were respected in practice, although an extensive case backlog delayed the process, particularly for obtaining government-held evidence. The law extends the above rights to all citizens.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent and impartial judiciary for civil matters. The law provides access to a court to bring lawsuits seeking damages for human rights violations. The constitution provides for an ombudsman to investigate complaints from the public and members of parliament against government institutions and to seek redress for injustices committed by a

public officer or authority in official duties as an alternative to the court system. The ombudsman has the authority to make recommendations but cannot impose penalties on a government agency.

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

Correspondence

The constitution prohibits 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. However, police intimidated radio journalists, and officials used libel laws to suppress media criticism of political leaders.

Individuals could criticize the government publicly or privately without reprisal.

The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views. There were five daily and 12 weekly newspapers and three private radio stations that offered diverse political viewpoints.

On December 2, police arrested the chief editor of *Samedi Plus* for an article that he wrote and published on June 20. Authorities accused the chief editor of publishing false news regarding potential candidates to replace the commissioner of police. Authorities released him on bail the same day, and an investigation was ongoing at year's end.

The government owned and regulated the sole domestic television network, and opposition parties and media experts regularly criticized the station for progovernment bias and unfair coverage of National Assembly debates. International television networks were available by subscription or via a cable box.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on 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 e-mail. According to International Telecommunication Union statistics for 2008, approximately 30 percent of the country's inhabitants used the Internet.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events. Unlike in the previous year, police did not fine bookstore owners for carrying copies of *The Satanic Verses*, which has been banned since 1989.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

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

c. Freedom of Religion

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

Foreign missionary groups were allowed to operate on a case-by-case basis. Although there were no regulations restricting their presence or proselytizing, each missionary was required to obtain both a resident permit and a work

permit. The Prime Minister's Office must approve issuance of these documents, and in practice there were limits on the number of missionaries issued the requisite permits.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Approximately 120 Jews resided in the country. Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports of graffiti on the walls of the local Jewish community organization's headquarters.

For a more detailed discussion, see the *2009 International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The constitution and law provide for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights in practice.

The law prohibits forced exile, and the government did not use it.

Protection of Refugees

The country is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol, or the 1969 African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa, nor do its laws provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status. The government has not established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice, the government has not expelled or returned refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

In November 2008 the Passport and Immigration Office arrested six Iraqi citizens who entered the country with fraudulent documents and were en route to Australia to seek refugee status. The six were charged with entering the country on fraudulent documents and detained at the Central Prison. On March 25, the UN High Commission for Refugees granted them refugee status and the next day the six were released on bail. At year's end Amnesty International and the UN Development Program were assisting the refugees in their search for asylum in a third country.

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 based on universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

International and local observers characterized the 2005 national elections, in which the opposition Social Alliance defeated the ruling MMM-MSM alliance, as generally free and fair. Political parties operated without restriction or outside interference.

There were 12 women in the 71-seat National Assembly. Following the September 2008 cabinet reshuffle, there were two female ministers in the 22-member cabinet. Of the 17 Supreme Court judges, seven were women.

Although historically the Hindu majority dominated politics, no groups were excluded from the political system. Authorities required National Assembly candidates to identify themselves as Hindu, Muslim, Sino-Mauritian, or "general population," the latter term referring to the Creole and Franco-Mauritian communities. Based on these categories, in the National Assembly there were 41 Hindus, 19 members of the general population, 10 Muslims, and one Sino-Mauritian. In the cabinet there were 15 Hindus, three Muslims, three members of the general population, and one Sino-Mauritian.

Section 4 Official Corruption and Government Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government did not implement these laws effectively. There was a widespread public perception of corruption in the legislative and executive branches. The World Bank's most recent Worldwide Governance Indicators reflected that corruption was a problem.

On May 9, the local daily *L'Express* reported that the District Council of Pamplemousses-Riviere du Rempart paid 13.8 million rupees (\$460,000) above the agreed contract price to two cleaning companies; the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) was investigating the case at year's end.

On September 26, *L'Express* reported that the ICAC arrested the director of the National Art Gallery for bribing the board chairman to reappoint him as director; he was later released on bail.

On September 30, *L'Express* reported that the council of ministers cancelled a call for tenders to import flour after bidders protested tender criteria that favored a particular company.

The investigation of the former chairman of the Mauritius Ports Authority for allegedly accepting a bribe in 2006 from a Dutch dredging company was ongoing at year's end.

Ministers of Mauritius and commissioners of the Rodrigues Island Regional Assembly are required to make a disclosure of family assets, including the assets of spouses and children, upon taking office and at the dissolution of the National Assembly or of the Regional Assembly.

The law provides for access to government information, and the government generally complied with requests from noncitizens and foreign media as well as from citizens.

Section 5 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were often cooperative and responsive to their views.

Local human rights NGOs worked to assist persons with HIV/AIDS; rehabilitate former prisoners; promote women's rights; and support the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. The government regularly consulted NGOs in formulating policy and worked in partnership with UN bodies and the local branch of Amnesty International.

Police harassed an NGO worker during the year (see section 6).

The president appoints an ombudsman to investigate complaints against public servants, police officers, and prison guards. Individual citizens, council ministers, or members of the National Assembly may request that the ombudsman initiate an investigation. The ombudsman also seeks redress for injustices committed by a public officer or authority in official duties as an alternative to the court system.

The government cooperated with international governmental organizations and permitted visits by UN representatives and other international organizations.

Section 6 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law specifically prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, caste, place of origin, political opinion, color, gender, disability, or language. While the government generally enforced these provisions, some societal discrimination occurred.

Women

The law prohibits rape, including spousal rape, and police and the judicial system enforced the law. The penalty for rape is 20 years' imprisonment, with a fine not exceeding 200,000 rupees (\$833). From January 1 through November 30, police received 50 reported rape cases, of which 47 were prosecuted; some prosecutions led to convictions and punishment. Rape was widespread, and many victims chose not to report or file charges against their attackers due to cultural pressures and fear of retaliation.

The law criminalizes domestic violence; however, it was a major problem. Domestic violence activists complained police did not effectively enforce the law. During the year more than 1,700 domestic violence cases were reported; 415 abusers were prosecuted during the year. Anyone found guilty of violating a protection order may be fined up to 25,000 rupees (\$833) or imprisoned for up to two years. The local NGO SOS Femmes reported that women remained in abusive situations for fear of losing financial support and that few filed complaints against their abusers. The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, and Family Welfare maintained an abuse hotline and a Web site on legal protections for victims.

Prostitution is illegal; however, it was prevalent.

The law prohibits sexual harassment, which is punishable by up to two years' imprisonment. During the year the Sex Discrimination Division of the NHRC received 37 complaints; six involved sex discrimination, 15 involved sexual harassment, and 16 involved moral harassment. At year's end six cases remained under investigation, authorities dismissed nine for lack of evidence, the parties resolved 15 cases, plaintiffs withdrew two cases, and authorities completed five investigations.

The law provides for the basic right of couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. Couples and individuals were provided access to contraception and skilled attendance during childbirth, including essential obstetric and postpartum care. Women were equally treated for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Women played subordinate roles in society, and societal discrimination continued; however, women had equal access to education, employment, and government services. Women had equal access to credit and could own or manage businesses; however, women were paid less than men for substantially similar work in the private sector. The law criminalizes the abandonment of one's family or pregnant spouse for more than two months and the nonpayment of court-ordered food support. The law affords women broadly defined wage protections, and authorities generally respected the law in practice. The law protects women from being forced to carry loads above certain weight limits.

Children

Citizenship is derived by birth within the country's territory. All births were registered, and the law provides for late registration. Failure to register births resulted in denial of some public services.

Primary education was compulsory, free, and universal.

Child abuse was more widespread than was acknowledged publicly, according to NGOs. The law criminalizes certain acts compromising the health, security, or morality of a child, although the government was unable to enforce complete

compliance. The state-funded National Children's Council and the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, and Family Welfare provided counseling, investigated reports of child abuse, and took remedial action to protect affected children. The Police Unit for the Protection of Minors conducted public education programs on the sexual abuse of minors.

On January 7, a 15-year-old boy from Rodrigues Island filed a complaint for indecent act against a foreign citizen with permanent resident status. A police investigation was ongoing at year's end.

Police investigations were ongoing in the following cases of child abuse from 2008: the January arrest of a foreign resident for sexually exploiting a 12-year-old girl with the consent of her aunt and uncle; the June arrest of a woman for sexually exploiting a 13-year-old girl; and the July arrest of three men for sexually exploiting a 12-year-old girl.

Child prostitution was a problem, and the government targeted the practice as a law enforcement and prevention priority. The law prohibits child prostitution and child pornography and provides for a maximum penalty of 15 years' imprisonment for child trafficking. The minimum age for consensual sex is 16 years.

The government assisted victims of child abuse by offering counseling at a drop-in center and referring victims to government-supported NGO shelters. Both medical treatment and psychological support were available at public clinics and NGO centers. For example, the national Children's Council operated a daycare center in Baie du Tombeau to help single mothers and abused children find employment.

Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits trafficking in persons, and there were few reports that persons were trafficked to or from the country; however, there were reports of child prostitution within the country. The law provides for up to 15 years' imprisonment for trafficking in persons. There were reports that some schoolgirls voluntarily worked in conjunction with prostitution rings, while others were forced into prostitution by family members.

Police prosecuted four trafficking cases during the year.

The Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, and Family Welfare maintained a hotline for reporting cases of child prostitution. The ministry also conducted information campaigns on child trafficking for NGOs, high school students, women, and community leaders. The Minors Brigade and the Family Protection Unit conducted information campaigns on child prostitution and child sexual abuse for high school students and the general population. The government drop-in center provided shelter, counseling, and education for victims of child prostitution.

The Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* can be found at www.state.gov/g/tip.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical and mental disabilities, and the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board effectively enforced it. The government partially implemented a law mandating access to buildings for persons with disabilities; however, many older buildings remained inaccessible to persons with disabilities, making it difficult for them to fill many jobs. The law requires organizations employing more than 35 persons to set aside at least 3 percent of their positions for persons with disabilities, and the government enforced this law.

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

Local NGOs working on LGBT issues included Collectif Arc en Ciel, Vivre+, and PILS. LGBT victims of verbal abuse or violence within the family reported such incidents to Collectif Arc en Ciel; however, victims refused to file complaints with police for fear of reprisal.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

The law protects the rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS from stigmatization and discrimination; however, there were reports of discrimination against such persons and their relatives.

On June 6, the local newspaper *Le Mauricien* reported that for 48 hours prison officials denied anti-retroviral treatment to a new detainee living with HIV. In the same article a Vivre+ social worker reported that HIV positive detainees at the Central Prison were forced to wear yellow badges so that they could be easily identified during routine medical checkups.

During the year PILS recorded seven cases of discrimination against HIV/AIDS patients and their relatives. Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports of denial of access to public health care services; however, PILS reported that breach of confidentiality regarding HIV/AIDS patients' medical records in public hospitals remained a problem.

On August 29, *Le Mauricien* reported that four police officers verbally and physically abused a Vivre+ social worker collecting for charity on the streets. During the incident the officers also revealed the NGO worker's HIV status to onlookers. The NGO worker filed a complaint with the Police Complaints Investigation Bureau, and a police investigation was ongoing at year's end.

Section 7 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The constitution and law provide for the right of workers to form and join unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements, and workers exercised this right in practice. With the exception of police, the Special Mobile Force, and persons in government services who were not executive officials, workers were free to form and join unions and to organize in all sectors, including in the Export Oriented Enterprises (EOE), formerly known as Export Processing Zone; however, the law grants authorities the right to cancel a union's registration if it fails to comply with certain legal obligations. There were 337 unions representing approximately 107,000 workers; 18 major labor federations served as umbrella organizations for smaller unions. The unionized workforce represented approximately 20 percent of the labor force.

In February the government promulgated the Employment Relations Act and the Employment Rights Act, which provide for a commission to investigate and mediate labor disputes and a program to provide unemployment benefits and job training.

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without government interference and provides for the right to strike; however, passage of the Employment Relations Act and Employment Rights Act during the year lengthened the process to declare a legal strike. According to the new legislation, a labor dispute must be reported to the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation (CCM) only after meaningful negotiations have occurred and a deadlock has been reached between the parties involved, a process that is not to exceed 90 days unless the parties involved agree. Once deadlock has been reported to the CCM, the commission has 30 days to resolve the dispute, or longer if both parties agree. If the dispute is not resolved at the commission level, parties can take the dispute to the Tribunal for Voluntary Arbitration (TVA) for settlement or go on strike within 45 days, provided the union has given the labor minister 10 days notice of the upcoming strike. The prime minister may petition the Supreme Court to prohibit the continuation of a strike deemed a danger to the life, health, or personal safety of the population. The prime minister may also apply to the TVA for the establishment of a minimum service if such service does not exist.

Worker participation in an unlawful strike is sufficient grounds for dismissal, but workers may seek remedy in court if they believe that their dismissals were unjustified. Foreign workers who participated in strikes can be deported.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law protects collective bargaining, and workers exercised this right. The National Remuneration Board (NRB), whose chairman is appointed by the minister of labor, set minimum wages for nonmanagerial workers, although most unions collectively negotiated wages higher than those set by the NRB.

The law prohibits antiunion discrimination, and the government generally respected this right. The law does not provide for the reinstatement of dismissed employees; however, employees can resort to the Industrial Relations Court to seek redress.

Unlike in the previous year, no trade union leaders were suspended or dismissed for union activities. All six trade union leaders who had been previously suspended for union activities were reinstated during the year.

National labor laws cover workers in the EOE; however, there are some EOE-specific labor laws that authorize longer working hours, including 10 hours per week of mandatory paid overtime at a higher wage than for ordinary working hours. Some employers reportedly established employer-controlled work councils for EOE workers, effectively blocking union efforts to organize at the enterprise level. Approximately 59,000 persons worked in the EOE; only 10 percent belonged to unions.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, child labor occurred.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits the employment of children below 16 years of age and prohibits the employment of children between 16 and 18 years old in work that is dangerous, unhealthy, or otherwise unsuitable for young persons. While the government generally respected this law, child labor occurred. According to the law, the penalties for employing a child are a fine of no more than 10,000 rupees (\$333) and imprisonment not to exceed one year.

Children worked in the informal sector as street traders, in small businesses, in restaurants, in agriculture, and in small apparel workshops.

The Ministry of Labor (MOL) is responsible for the enforcement of child labor laws and conducted frequent inspections; however, it employed only 45 inspectors to investigate all reports of labor abuses, including those of child labor.

The MOL developed vocational training programs to prevent employment of underage children.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The government established minimum wages, which varied by sector, and mandated that the minimum wage rise each year based on the inflation rate. The minimum wage for an unskilled worker in the EOE was approximately 607 rupees (\$20) per week, while the minimum wage for an unskilled factory worker outside the EOE was approximately 794 rupees (\$26) per week. Although these wages did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family, the actual market wage for most workers was much higher due to a labor shortage and collective bargaining. The MOL effectively enforced the minimum wage law.

The standard legal workweek in the industrial sector was 45 hours. According to the Mauritius Labor Congress, 10 hours of overtime a week is mandatory at certain textile factories in the EOE. By law no worker can be forced to work more than eight hours a day, six days a week. Those who work more than their stipulated hours must be remunerated at one and a

half times the normal salary. Those who work during their stipulated hours on public holidays are remunerated at double their normal salary. For industrial positions, workers are not permitted to work more than 10 hours a day. If the worker has worked until or past 10 p.m., the employer cannot require work to resume until at least 11 hours have elapsed. These standards were generally enforced. Unions have reported cases of underpayment for overtime in the textile and apparel industries due to differences in existing legislation and remuneration orders for the calculation of overtime hours.

The government set health and safety standards, and MOL officials inspected working conditions; however, the inadequate number of inspectors limited the government's enforcement ability. Voluntary employer compliance with safety regulations helped reduce the number of occupational accidents. From January through November, the MOL registered 160 industrial accidents. Workers had the right to remove themselves from dangerous situations without jeopardizing their continued employment, and they did so in practice.