



Niger

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

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Niger is a multiparty republic that returned to democracy in 1999 following coups in 1996 and 1999; it has a population estimated at 14 million. In 2004 Mamadou Tandja was elected to his second five-year presidential term in an election that international observers deemed generally free and fair. Four parties joined the ruling coalition of the National Movement for the Development of Society (MNSD) and the Democratic and Social Convention (CDS) to win a majority of national assembly seats. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

Human rights abuses included: alleged extrajudicial killings; use of excessive force by police and security forces; poor jail and prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged pretrial detention; executive interference in the judiciary; forcible dispersal of demonstrators; interference with press freedoms; official corruption; societal discrimination and violence against women and children; female genital mutilation (FGM); trafficking in persons; the practice of slavery by some groups; and forced 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

During the year the government or its agents did not commit any politically motivated killings; however, security forces were allegedly responsible for detainee deaths during the year.

On May 28, the gendarmerie reported the death of Alpha Harouna Hinsu, a used car parts dealer, who was under their custody and died at the Niamey general hospital, after suffering what the gendarmes described as "a health problem." After conducting their own investigations, human rights associations, including the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Nigerien Association for the Defense of Human Rights, and Hinsu's family charged that Hinsu had died before his hospital admission, after being tortured by gendarmes, and requested an independent investigation. An autopsy was commissioned by the victim's family, but no results were released by year's end. The Niamey prosecutor reportedly was investigating the case (see section 1.c.).

On July 30, Moussa Douka died while in police custody in Agadez, after being arrested on charges of stealing a cell phone and gold jewelry from his employer, a local businessman. At year's end the Procurator General (prosecutor) of the Appeals Court of Zinder reportedly was investigating the case (see section 1.c.).

On March 16, the court of appeals of Niamey reviewed the case of a customs officer killed by police in 2003. The court ordered the government to pay \$48,000 (26 million CFA francs) in damages to the victim's family. The customs union considered the judgment insufficient and appealed the case to the Supreme Court, where it was pending at year's end.

During the year bandits set up roadblocks along highways and attacked and robbed persons (see section 2.d.). On August 11, bandits attacked a convoy of cigarette trucks in the northern region, killing one of the soldiers escorting the convoy and injuring several others. Another soldier was reported missing.

At year's end the two bandits arrested for killing a French tourist in December 2005 were still in prison awaiting trial.

Unlike in the previous year, there were no disputes between herders and farmers that resulted in deaths. A court case against the alleged instigator, who remains incarcerated, of a May 2005 incident in which 11 persons were killed and 12 injured, was still pending at year's end.

There were no further developments regarding a 2005 riot over subsidized food distribution that resulted in one death; at year's end one of three suspects detained in the case remained in detention.

There were no further developments in the case of the 2004 killing of local political leader Adam Amenge. Of the 23 persons arrested in connection with the killing, four--Amadou Ibrahim, aka "Bambino," Attaher Rhissa, Boubacar Ando, and Alhassane Adam Ibrahim--remained in pretrial detention at year's end.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances. Unlike in 2005, there were no reports of kidnappings and violence between Malian and Nigerien herders along the border between the two countries.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices; however, there were reports that security forces beat and abused persons in Niamey and Agadez.

Security force use of excessive force resulted in deaths and injuries (see section 1.a.).

Police forcibly dispersed demonstrations, which resulted in injuries (see section 2.b.).

No action was taken against members of security forces who arrested and beat a health worker for having refused medical treatment to the child of a Republican Guard in 2005.

The investigation into the 2004 abuse by security forces of civilians in Tesker remained open at year's end, although the investigation was no longer being actively pursued; during the year a reconciliation forum had brought affected families together with government officials.

On August 21, armed persons claiming to represent the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Sahara, a former rebel group, abducted and robbed a group of 22 Italian tourists in the country's northeastern desert. The following day the assailants released all but two of the tourists. The remaining two were released on October 14, after reported Libyan mediation.

Unlike in the previous year, disputes between farmers and herders in western Dosso region did not result in reported deaths or injuries.

During the year authorities held a series of meetings with their Malian counterparts to address cross-border kidnappings, banditry, and cattle rustling that had occurred in 2005. From March 7 to 9, elected officials from both countries held a forum in Meneka, Mali, to exchange views on cross-border security and decentralized cooperation and prepare for another meeting in Niger to develop strategies to address the frontier security situation.

On May 28, the gendarmerie reported the death of Alpha Harouna Hinsa, who was under their custody. According to the gendarmerie, Hinsa passed away at the Niamey general hospital, where he was taken after suffering what the gendarmerie described as "a health problem." After conducting their own investigations, human rights associations dismissed the gendarmerie's claim that Hinsa died in the hospital, contending that he died before his admission, after being tortured by gendarmes. Hinsa's family and human rights groups condemned the alleged torture and requested an independent investigation. A forensic report was commissioned, but results had not been released. The case was under investigation at year's end (see section 1.a.).

On July 30, Moussa Douka died while in police custody in Agadez, after being arrested on charges of stealing a cell phone and gold jewelry from his employer, a local businessman. His death was under investigation at year's end.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Conditions in all 35 of the country's prisons were poor and life threatening. Prisons were underfunded, understaffed, and overcrowded. For example, in Niamey's civil prison, there were approximately 720 prisoners in a facility built for 350; at year's end an estimated 550 of them were awaiting trial. Family visits were allowed, and prisoners could receive supplemental food, medicine, and other necessities from their families; however, nutrition, sanitation, and health conditions were poor, and deaths occurred from AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.

Corruption among prison staff was rampant. Prisoners could bribe officials to leave prison for the day and serve their sentences in the evenings. Some prisoners bribed officials to serve their sentences in the national hospital in Niamey.

Pretrial detainees were held with convicted prisoners.

Human rights observers, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the National Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties Commission, and various NGOs, were granted unrestricted access to prisons and detention centers and conducted visits during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, and the law prohibits detention without charge in excess of 48 hours; however, police at times violated these provisions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The armed forces, under the Defense Ministry, were responsible for internal and external security. The gendarmerie, also under the Defense

Ministry, had primary responsibility for rural security. The national forces for intervention and security, under the Interior Ministry, were responsible for domestic security and the protection of high-level officials and government buildings, and the national police, also under the Interior Ministry, were charged with urban law enforcement.

The police were ineffective, primarily because of inadequate resources. Basic supplies such as vehicle fuel, radios, uniforms, handcuffs, batons, and badges were scarce. Patrols were sporadic, and emergency response time in Niamey could take 45 minutes. Police training was minimal, and only specialized police units had basic weapons-handling skills. Corruption remained pervasive. Citizens complained that security forces did not adequately police border regions. The gendarmerie is responsible for investigation of police abuse; however, impunity was often a problem.

Arrest and Detention

The constitution and law require a warrant for an arrest and provide for a 48 hour investigative detention period. If police fail to gather sufficient evidence within that period, the prosecutor can give the case to another officer, and a new 48 hour investigative detention period begins. Poor communication hindered accurate identification of detainees and could result in prolonging the 48 hour detention period. A defendant has the right to a lawyer immediately upon detention, and bail is available for crimes carrying a penalty of less than 10 years' imprisonment. Widespread ignorance of the law and lack of financial means prevented many of the accused from taking full advantage of these rights. Detainees are brought before an independent judiciary. They have a right to prompt judicial determination. They were promptly informed of charges against them. Indigents are provided a lawyer by the government.

There were no further developments in the arbitrary arrests in March 2005 of five civil society leaders. The men were released in April 2005; however, charges were still technically pending, although no further move to prosecute the five had been taken by year's end.

Security forces arrested journalists and numerous demonstrators during the year (see sections 2.a. and 2.b.).

Police occasionally conducted sweeps to detain suspected criminals.

There were serious backlogs in the judicial system. Despite legal limits on the pretrial confinement period of indicted persons, pretrial detention frequently lasted months or years; some persons had been waiting as long as six years to be tried. Approximately 76 percent of those incarcerated were pretrial detainees.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

Although the constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, the executive branch sometimes interfered with the judicial process. Judges sometimes feared reassignment or having their financial benefits reduced if they rendered a decision unfavorable to the government. In civil matters there were credible reports that family and business ties influenced lower court decisions. In some instances judges granted provisional release pending trial to high-profile defendants. Persons in such status had complete freedom of movement and could leave the country, but the charges against them remained pending, and the courts could recall them at any point. However, such persons were seldom called back for trial, and some observers charged that provisional release amounted to a denial of fair public trial.

The Court of Appeals reviews questions of fact and law, while the Supreme Court reviews only application of the law and constitutional questions. The High Court of Justice deals with cases involving senior government officials. There also were customary courts and a military court. The military court provides the same rights as civil criminal courts; however, customary courts do not. The military court cannot try civilians.

Trial Procedures

Trials were public, and juries were used. Defendants have the right to counsel; the right to counsel at public expense for minors and indigent defendants charged with crimes carrying a sentence of 10 years or more; to be present at trial; to confront witnesses; and to present witnesses on their own behalf. Defendants have access to government-held evidence, and the government has a legal obligation to inform defendants of all evidence against them. Defendants may appeal verdicts, first to the court of appeals, then to the Supreme Court. The law affirms the presumption of innocence. The above rights extended to all citizens, but widespread ignorance of the law prevented many accused from taking full advantage of these rights.

Although lawyers complied with government requests to provide counsel, the government generally did not remunerate them. There were no defense attorneys outside of the capital, although lawyers traveled to other locations to provide legal assistance as requested.

On March 9, the military court sentenced six of 70 soldiers from Niamey charged with high treason in 2002 to jail terms of three to seven years for "illegally breaking into an armory, failure to observe hierarchy, and mutiny." A total of 63 soldiers were released without charge, and six others originally charged in the case were sentenced in absentia to prison terms of three to seven years.

On September 30, the military court sentenced 47 of 113 soldiers charged with high treason in 2002 to prison terms. The 66 others were convicted on the same charges, but were released because their time already spent in preventive detention (2002-06) exceeded their sentences.

On October 16, the tribunal heard the cases of one active duty soldier, one retired officer, and one civilian accused of coup plotting in 2002. The men had been imprisoned awaiting trial for approximately four years. The court discharged the case against the active duty soldier, but

sentenced the officer to two years imprisonment and the civilian to four years. The officer was released, since he had been under preventive detention for more than three years.

Traditional chiefs could act as mediators and counselors and had authority in customary law cases as well as status under national law, where they were designated as auxiliaries to local officials. Chiefs received government stipends but had no police or judicial powers and could only mediate, not arbitrate, customary law disputes. Customary courts, located only in large towns and cities, try cases involving divorce or inheritance. They are headed by a legal practitioner with basic legal training who is advised by an assessor knowledgeable in the society's traditions. The judicial actions of chiefs and customary courts are not regulated by law, and defendants could appeal a verdict in the formal court system. Women did not have equal legal status with men in the traditional and customary courts and did not enjoy the same access to legal redress (see section 5).

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Courts of civil procedure (tribunaux civils) exist in each major city. These courts hear lawsuits related to civil matters and can apply judicial remedies, while a single appellate entity--the Conseil d'Etat--is responsible for administrative remedies.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions. Under the state security law, police may conduct searches without warrants when they have strong suspicion that a house shelters criminals or stolen property.

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; however, the government restricted these rights in sentencing several journalists to jail terms and intimidating others into practicing self censorship.

The government published a French language daily newspaper, *Le Sahel*, and its weekend edition. There were approximately 15 private French language weekly or monthly newspapers, some of which were affiliated loosely with political parties. The private press criticized government actions.

Since literacy and personal incomes were both very low, radio was the most important medium of public communication. The government owned radio station *La Voix du Sahel* provided news and other programs in French and several local languages. There were several private radio stations; eight were owned locally and featured popular news programs in local languages. The private radio stations generally were less critical of the government than were the private newspapers. The government operated multilingual national radio service generally provided equitable broadcasting time for all political parties; however, opposition parties complained of unequal coverage of their activities by government-owned media.

Television was a far less important medium than radio. The government owned *Tele Sahel* and *TAL TV* broadcast programming in French and other major national languages. A private television station, *TV Tenere*, also broadcast local and foreign programming. The director of a private radio station operated a wireless cable television service in the capital, offering access to international channels.

International media were usually allowed to operate freely. *Radio France International* operated FM relays in Niamey and in Maradi and Zinder provinces. *BBC World Service* was available on FM in Niamey and Zinder. Local private radio stations also carried *Voice of America* and *Deutsche Welle*.

During the year the government closed a private newspaper, imposed a three-month ban on a radio talk show, and brought criminal libel charges against journalists who alleged corruption in its management of a donor-funded public education initiative.

On February 2, Ibrahim Manzo, editor of *L'Autre Observateur*, was imprisoned following a lawsuit for defamation by a politically well-connected businessman, Moussa Dan Foulani. The newspaper had alleged that Dan Foulani had sold a weapon to a carjacker in a criminal case. Manzo was incarcerated for 10 days. He was released following the February 13 signature of a code of conduct by politicians and journalists.

On February 13, political parties and journalists signed a code of conduct that called for general forgiveness of defamation charges. As a result, all defamation suits, including government-initiated ones, filed prior to that date were withdrawn.

On April 3, authorities expelled a three-person BBC crew that was investigating hunger and malnutrition in the country, although the crew had all required accreditations and authorizations. It was apparently expelled by the governor of Maradi because he opposed reporting on the food crisis. The governor almost certainly acted with the consent of superiors at the national level. The government banned media organizations from reporting on the humanitarian crisis in the country. Other officials also said international and local media would not be

allowed to do stories about the food situation, as they did not want the subject touched.

On June 28, the High Council of Communication (CSC), the government organ charged with regulation of the media, closed the private weekly L'Opinion for "insults and defamatory language toward the president of Niger and his family; inciting revolt; and immoral offense." On June 21, the newspaper had published an article entitled L'Imposture (deception) in which it called the president a "wretched lieutenant" and a "dormouse." The same article also called for regime change in the form of a transition government--supposedly a vague allusion to a coup d'etat. On April 25 in another article, the newspaper had published a list of houses that the president allegedly purchased for his seven children for an amount that exceeded his declared legal earnings.

On July 18, the CSC issued a "last warning" to the Tenere FM private radio station for hosting talk shows in which insults had allegedly been made. The show had a reputation as a forum for harsh critics of the government.

On July 21, the CSC banned Fati, a talk show on the Horizon FM private radio station, for three months because the host of the show allegedly broadcast "insults, propaganda, incitement to violence and insurgency, and violation of ethics." The show reportedly featured inflammatory political commentary with ethnic overtones. Its criticism tended to be directed toward civil society, the political opposition, and other presumed opponents of the prime minister and his political party.

On August 4, Mamane Abou and Oumarou Keita, respectively director and editor of Le Republicain newspaper, were arrested and placed in police custody on charges of disseminating false news and defamation of the government. This stemmed from a July 27 article alleging that Prime Minister Hama Amadou was attempting to shift the country's foreign policy emphasis toward non-Western countries. The case was also linked to public concerns over corruption. Many civil society critics and opposition politicians stated that the two men were targeted for earlier articles relating to corruption in the government's management of a donor funded public education program. On August 8, Abou and Keita appeared before the Regional Court of Niamey and were then transferred to separate prisons outside the capital. The trial began on August 14. On September 1, the two men were convicted. Abou and Keita were sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, a \$573 (300,000 CFA francs) fine, and \$9,560 (five million CFA francs) in damages. Their lawyers appealed the case; however, on September 25, the court of appeals confirmed the lower court's verdict. On November 27, the Niamey court of appeals reviewed the judgment. The court granted provisional release to the journalists, adjourned the judgment for further consultation, and announced that its verdict would be delivered on December 11. At the court's request, the delivery of the verdict was again postponed until 2007. The journalists remained on provisional release at year's end.

On August 28, Salif Dago, editor of L'Enqueteur newspaper, was placed in police custody on charges of disseminating false news following an article alleging the ritual killing of a baby in a Niamey cemetery by a high profile person. On September 25, Dago was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a \$600 (300,000 CFA francs) fine. However, on November 27, the Niamey court of appeals ruled that Dago was not guilty of the charges against him.

In December Amadou Issoufou, a journalist for the national television network, was suspended for one month after he included in the evening news an international television brief on Abou and Keita's release.

On April 4, the government submitted a bill to amend the prerogatives, composition, and functioning of the CSC. Under the bill, the government would select seven of the 11 CSC members to be appointed. The bill would extend the powers of the CSC president to include the authority to close press agencies without notice and without consulting other CSC members, and to nominate directors for public media organs. It would subject all CSC members to a religious oath when taking office, subject all CSC decisions to the approval of the council of ministers, and provide that journalist members of the CSC should have a minimum of 15 years of experience. Media associations and civil society groups charged that the proposed law did not comply with the spirit of the constitution. They argued that the proposed bill infringed on the independence of the CSC and would give the government full control over the press.

Civil society organizations convinced the National Assembly to make substantial amendments to the bill before passing it unanimously on May 22. Of the controversial measures, only the religious oath was maintained, despite strong opposition from a number of deputies. Under the new law, the CSC is to be composed of 11 members--four appointed by the government and seven by media, communication, and civil society groups.

On January 27, Abdoukarim Salifou, an independent journalist, was released from prison after serving a two-month sentence for criminal libel. In 2005 Salifou had accused the national treasurer of embezzling funds.

On May 5, the court of appeals of Zinder dismissed as groundless defamation cases filed against two journalists--Raliou Hamed Assalek and Abdoulaye Harouna--by the governor of Agadez in 2005.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chatrooms. Individuals and groups could engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by electronic mail. Internet availability was limited by a lack of infrastructure, a single Internet service provider, and limited personal computer ownership, although all cities offered Internet cafes that were heavily utilized. Niamey boasted a steadily expanding wi-fi network, and some public libraries offered patrons Internet access. While the Internet was not part of most citizens' daily lives (1.8 users per 1,000 people in 2004, according to the World Bank) it was available in Internet cafes at moderate rates.

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 while the government generally respected this right, during the year police forcibly dispersed demonstrators. The government retained the authority to prohibit gatherings either under tense social conditions or if 48-hour advance notice was not provided.

On February 3, police used force to disperse violent student demonstrators. Police arrested 17 students; they were all released on March 3. On July 28, police used force to disperse an unauthorized protest march relating to events in Lebanon. Several persons sustained minor injuries in these incidents.

No action was taken against security forces responsible for injuries that resulted from the violent dispersal of demonstrators in 2005 and 2004.

Freedom of Association

The law provides for freedom of association; however, citizens may not form political parties based on ethnicity, religion, or region.

c. Freedom of Religion

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

Islam was the dominant religion and the Islamic Association, which acted as an official advisory committee to the government on religious matters, broadcast biweekly on the government controlled television station. On government controlled media, Christian programs generally were broadcast only on special occasions, such as Christmas and Easter, although the independent media regularly broadcast such programs.

Religious organizations must register with the Interior Ministry. Registration was a formality, and there were no reports that the government refused to register a religious organization.

On February 10, the government established an Islamic Council composed of 10 leaders drawn from Islamic associations including the Islamic Association of Niger and other NGOs, and 10 members from various government agencies. The Islamic Council advised the government on Islamic issues including preaching, mosque construction, payment of zakat, etc. The council's avowed goals were to "work toward promoting a culture of tolerance and social peace and encourage Nigeriens to participate in the country's economic, social, and cultural development." During the installation of the council, the prime minister said that the purpose of the council was in part "to address behaviors and practices inspired by foreign countries," a remark widely interpreted to mean Nigerian and middle-eastern-inspired theological change and mosque construction projects.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There was no significant Jewish community in the country, 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 freedom of movement, and the government generally respected this right. Security forces at checkpoints monitored the travel of persons and the circulation of goods, particularly near major population centers, and sometimes demanded bribes. During the year transportation unions and civil society groups criticized such practices, and the Anticorruption Commission called for an investigation into checkpoint corruption; however, no investigation had been conducted by year's end. There were reports during the year that bandits set up roadblocks along highways and robbed persons, although, unlike in 2005, no deaths occurred. The December 2005 case of three armed bandits who attacked persons returning from a regional market near the border with Mali, stole their camels, cash, and other valuables, and fled, remained under investigation at year's end.

The law prohibits forced exile, and there were no reports that the government used it.

On October 23, the government announced it would expel a group of nomadic Arabs of Chadian origin who had settled in the eastern Diffa region in the 1970s and 1980s. Known as Mahamid Arabs, the community (which numbered between 17,000 and 50,000 persons) had neither refugee status nor, in most cases, Nigerien citizenship. On October 27, after protests from leaders of the Mahamid community, the government rescinded the order, and stated that it would establish a commission to study land use and conflict issues between the Mahamids and Diffa's indigenous population. At year's end no Mahamid Arabs had been forced to move, and the government reportedly was contemplating moving at least some community members to adjoining regions of Niger. The Mahamid Arabs had moved into the country

from Chad in the 1970s and 1980s to escape drought (1968-73) and then armed conflict (early 1980s). The vast majority had settled in the arid eastern region of Diffa, where disputes over land use, access to wells, and animal grazing rights had reportedly been simmering for several years.

Protection of Refugees

The law does not provide for granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, although the country is a signatory to the convention. The government has not established a system for providing protection to refugees, but in practice provided protection against refoulement, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution. The government did not routinely grant refugee or asylum status, although it cooperated with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers. The UNHCR's regional office in Benin was responsible for refugee assistance and protection in the country; the government's interministerial National Refugee Eligibility Committee performed refugee prescreening duties. The government also provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 convention and its 1967 protocol and has offered asylum to several thousand persons, primarily from Mali and Chad. Approximately 500 refugees from Chad and other neighboring countries remained in the 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 through periodic and generally free and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

In December 2004 Mamadou Tandja was elected to his second five year presidential term with 65 percent of the vote in an election that international observers described as generally free and fair, despite some irregularities on election day. A coalition composed of the MNSD, CDS, the Rally for Social Democracy, the Rally for Democracy and Progress, the Nigerien Alliance for Democracy and Progress, and the Social-Democratic Party of Niger backed Tandja and, in legislative elections held at the same time, won 88 of the 113 seats in the National Assembly. The opposition Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism won 25 seats. Tandja reappointed MNSD party president Hama Amadou as prime minister.

Individuals and political parties can freely declare candidacies and stand for election.

Women traditionally have played a subordinate role in politics. The societal practice of husbands voting their wives' proxy ballots effectively disenfranchised many women in the 1999 elections; however, female voter turnout substantially increased during the local, legislative, and presidential elections held in 2004. There were 14 women in the National Assembly and six female ministers in the cabinet; six of the country's 20 ambassadors were women. The law mandates that women receive 25 percent of senior government positions and fill 10 percent of elected seats; women held at least 10 percent of the 3,747 local council positions.

All major ethnic groups were represented at all levels of government. There were eight seats in the National Assembly designated for representatives of "special constituencies," specifically ethnic minorities and nomadic populations. President Tandja, who reportedly is half Peul (Fulani) and half Kanouri, is the country's first president who is not from either the Hausa or the Djerma ethnic groups, which make up approximately 56 percent and 22 percent, respectively, of the country's population.

Government Corruption and Transparency

The government publicly acknowledged that corruption was a problem and prosecuted numerous officials for corruption during the year. There was a widespread public perception that corruption was a problem in the executive and legislative branches.

Corruption was prevalent within government and the informal sector of the economy. The political turbulence of the 1990s--a period of weak democratic governments and military coups--rendered the government increasingly dysfunctional. Civil service salaries went unpaid for months at a time, and the morale and resources of the public service declined rapidly. Since the return of stable, democratic government in 1999, public administration has improved, and salaries have been paid on time, but corrupt practices and expectations that took root during the period of turmoil remained prevalent. Citizens sometimes paid bribes to civil servants to circumvent bureaucratic obstacles and obtain advantageous treatment. The problem of corruption is compounded by a poorly financed and trained law enforcement system and weak administrative controls. Other major underlying causes of corruption were rampant poverty, low salaries, the politicization of the public service, the influence of traditional kinship, ethnic, and family ties on decision-making, a culture of impunity, and a lack of civic education. Nevertheless, during the year mounting pressure from foreign donors and many citizens led to some progress in the fight against corruption.

On June 27, the president replaced Minister of Basic Education Hamani Harouna and his predecessor in that position, Minister of Public Health Ary Ibrahim. The two were dismissed to prepare their defense in a case stemming from allegations of corruption in their management of a World Bank-led, multi-donor, 10-year educational development program. On October 1 and 2, the National Assembly voted to waive both former ministers' immunity from prosecution. They were charged with infringing on bidders' equal opportunity to seek government contracts; embezzlement of public funds; and aiding and abetting forgery. The two former ministers and several civil servants from the Ministry of Basic Education were jailed, and at year's end remained in prison awaiting trial. The ministers were likely to stand trial before the High Court of Justice, established to deal with cases involving senior government officials. Their case would be the first to be tried before the High Court since its creation. At year's end, no action had been taken against three National Assembly deputies--Bonkano Maifada, Intarou Hassane, and Raja Chaibou--who were also allegedly involved in the scandal. Donors suspended payments to the fund in June, after an audit revealed a pattern of overbilling and unjustifiable expenses.

On July 14, the Council of Ministers terminated 19 teachers who had initially been suspended without pay on January 18 for fraud, forgery, and influence peddling in connection with public school exams.

On August 5, three school principals and two teachers were arrested in Agadez and charged with committing fraud during the middle school leaving exams in June. The principals were granted provisional release. No trial date had been announced by year's end.

The 15 civil servants sentenced to five months' imprisonment for corruption in 2005 were all released during the year. Some served their full sentences, while others benefited from a presidential pardon on the country's Independence Day.

The corruption case against Almoustapha Soumaila, the country's former Francophone Games director general, continued during the year. On July 27, the Supreme Court annulled a court of appeals judgment from April, citing faulty procedure. The Supreme Court ordered another trial before the court of appeals. On October 5, the court of appeals reclassified the charges against Almoustapha from abusing public property to embezzlement of \$271,510 (142 million CFA francs), a criminal offense. Almoustapha remained in prison, and his case was pending at year's end.

The Ministry of Finance deputy director, who was arrested for fraud in July 2005, was still in prison awaiting trial at year's end.

The National Commission on Corruption selected priority sectors for investigating corruption: justice, health care, education, and transportation. While the commission obtained office space and a modest budget of \$76,000 (40 million CFA francs), its ability to investigate corruption remained limited.

There were no laws that provided for public access to government information; however, many documents could be obtained from individual ministries and the National Archives. The government granted access to government information to both citizens and noncitizens, including foreign media.

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 somewhat cooperative and responsive to their views.

The government-established National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties, a majority of whose commissioners were drawn from the private sector and NGOs, operated without government or party interference; however, it often lacked the resources necessary to conduct its work, was generally considered ineffective, and issued little in the way of reports or recommendations.

In 2005 a coalition of human rights NGOs sued the government to reverse a presidential decree that had named new members to the commission. The Supreme Court annulled the presidential decree late in 2005. During the year new elections were held but controversy over the selection process continued, with representatives of two human rights associations contesting each other's participation. The controversy continued at year's end, with the government attempting to mediate between the two groups.

There were no further developments in the case of Nouhou Arzika, a civil society activist who in 2005 was attacked and severely beaten by bodyguards of politically well-connected businessman Moussa Dan Foulani.

The government cooperated with international organizations and permitted visits by UN representatives and other organizations such as the ICRC. The ICRC visited during the year. Also during the year the International Labor Organization (ILO) issued a report on forced labor practices in the country. The government officially accepted the report in November, which led to the establishment of a joint ILO-government-civil society working group on forced labor (see section 6.c.).

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Although the law prohibits discrimination based on sex, social origin, race, ethnicity, or religion, societal discrimination against women, children, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities was widespread.

Women

Domestic violence against women was widespread, although reliable statistics were not available. Wife beating reportedly was common. The law does not explicitly prohibit domestic violence; however, a woman can sue her husband or lodge criminal charges for battery, penalties for which ranged from two months in prison and a \$19 (10,000 CFA francs) fine to 30 years' imprisonment. The government tried with limited success to enforce these laws. There was no data available on how many abusers were prosecuted or convicted during the year. Charges stemming from family disputes were often dropped in favor of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. Families often intervened to prevent the worst abuses, and women may (and did) divorce because of physical abuse. While women have the right to seek redress for violence in the customary or modern courts, few did so due to ignorance of the legal system, fear of social stigma, or fear of repudiation. Some women's rights organizations reported that prostitution often was the only economic alternative for a woman who left her husband. Several women's rights organizations provided counseling and training to women in this situation and undertook sensitization efforts.

Rape is a crime punishable by 10 to 30 years' imprisonment, depending upon the circumstances and age of the victim; authorities sought to enforce the law. However, in many cases, spousal rape did not lead to prosecution, as victims often sought to resolve the issue within the

family, or were pressured to do so. Reliable statistics on its prevalence were not available. The law does not explicitly recognize spousal rape, but appears to cover it in practice. Women's rights NGOs provided counseling and training services to rape victims.

Certain ethnic groups practiced FGM, predominantly the Peul (Fulani) and Zarma in the western region of the country. Approximately 20 percent of women had undergone FGM, usually when they were girls between seven and 10 years of age, according to a 1999 World Health Organization global study. Clitoridectomy was the most common form. FGM is against the law, and those convicted of practicing it and their accomplices face prison sentences ranging from six months to three years. If a victim of FGM dies, the practitioner can be sentenced to 10 to 20 years' imprisonment. There were no statistics available on the number of cases of FGM prosecuted during the year. The government took an active role in combating FGM and worked closely with local NGOs, community leaders, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other donors to develop and distribute educational materials at government clinics and maternal health centers and participated in information seminars and dissemination of publicity (see section 5, Children).

Prostitution is illegal, but remained prevalent in big cities and near major mining and military sites.

Women and girls were trafficked both internally and from the country to North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe for sexual exploitation (see section 5, Trafficking).

Sexual harassment is a crime punishable by prison sentences from three to six months and fines from \$20 to \$200 (10,000 to 100,000 CFA francs). If the violator is in a position of authority, the prison sentence is from three months to one year, and the fine is increased to \$40 to \$400 (20,000 to 200,000 CFA francs). No statistics were available on the number of arrests or prosecutions.

Despite the constitution's provisions for women's rights, deep seated traditional and religious beliefs resulted in discrimination in education, employment, and property rights. Discrimination was worse in rural areas, where women helped with subsistence farming and did most of the childrearing, water and wood gathering, and other work. Despite constituting 47 percent of the formal sector work force, only 26 percent of civil service workers and 22 percent of professionals were female. Women do not have the same rights as men under family law. The country still lacks a modern family code. Family law and laws governing inheritance still derive largely from Islamic traditional practice. In matters of inheritance, this dictated that, in the absence of a formal will stating otherwise, women received only one-third of a deceased parent's property, while male siblings received two-thirds. However, women enjoyed the same rights as men with respect to property ownership.

Legal rights as heads of household applied only to men; divorced or widowed women, even with children, were not considered to be heads of households. In the east there were reports that some women were cloistered and could leave their homes only if escorted by a male relative and usually only after dark.

National service, which lasted from 18 months to two years, was mandatory for all young men and women who completed university studies or professional training. Men were allowed to serve in the military as part of their national service obligation; however, although women were allowed to serve in the military, they could meet their national service obligation only by serving as teachers, health service workers, or technical specialists.

Children

The constitution and law require that the government promote children's welfare; however, financial resources for this purpose were extremely limited. In principle education was compulsory, free, and universal for a minimum period of six years, although for a variety of reasons only a fraction of children attended school. The government's draft poverty reduction strategy paper, released in December, estimated that the gross national primary school enrollment rate was 52 percent during the year, while the net primary school enrollment rate was 41 percent; 60 percent of those who finished primary school were boys. Most young girls were kept at home to work and were married at a young age, rarely attending school for more than a few years. This resulted in estimated literacy rates of 15 percent for girls and 42.9 percent for boys, according to a 2006 UN Development Program report. Literacy rates, particularly for girls, were even lower in rural areas.

FGM was performed on young girls in certain ethnic groups (see section 5, Women).

Underage marriage was a problem, especially in rural areas and in traditional communities. Some families entered into marriage agreements under which young girls from rural areas were sent by the age of 10 or 12 and sometimes younger to join their husband's family under the tutelage of their mother in law. Since 2005 the Ministry of Women's Promotion and Child Protection cooperated with women's associations to sensitize rural communities and their traditional chiefs and religious leaders to the problem of underage marriage. In November the ministry and women's NGOs organized a three-week program of country-wide town hall meetings and educational caravans to address issues including child marriage, FGM, HIV/AIDS, and domestic violence.

On June 3, the National Assembly rejected a bill (42-31 with heavy absenteeism and four abstentions) for the ratification of the Additional Protocol to the African Human and People's Rights Charter relating to Women's Rights in Africa. The measure's principal effect on family law would have been to raise the legal marriage age to 18. Under existing law, a girl deemed to be "sufficiently mature" can marry as young as 15.

Trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children were problems (see section 5, Trafficking). Child labor also was a problem (see section 6.d.).

Infanticide occurred, and 80 percent of the female prison population had been charged with the crime. According to the Ministry of Justice, infanticide resulted from severe economic conditions.

There were many displaced children, mostly boys, begging on the streets of the larger cities. Most of these boys came from rural areas and were indentured to Koranic schools by their parents due to economic hardship (see section 5, Trafficking).

Trafficking in Persons

The law does not specifically prohibit trafficking in persons (TIP), and persons were trafficked to, from, and within the country. Traffickers could be prosecuted under a 2004 revision of the penal code that criminalizes slavery and other forms of coerced labor; sentences for conviction ranged from 10 to 30 years' imprisonment. No reliable statistics were available on the extent of trafficking.

The ministries of justice, interior, and the promotion of women and protection of children shared responsibility for combating trafficking in persons. The National Commission for the Coordination of the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons existed on paper but had no budget. During the year 38 child victims of TIP were rescued and rehabilitated as part of a cooperative effort between UNICEF, a local NGO partner, and the police and court systems in the city of Agadez. Nine traffickers were arrested in connection with these cases. Of these, three were released without charge, while six were arrested and charged with the abduction of minors. Of the six traffickers charged, four were released when the Agadez Regional Court found no grounds for prosecution. Two remained in custody awaiting trial at year's end.

There were no international investigations and no requests for extradition of persons made to the government during the year.

In 2005 the government and eight neighboring countries signed a multilateral cooperation agreement to combat child trafficking. Signatories agreed to prosecute and punish traffickers, develop antitrafficking legislation, share information on victims and traffickers with international authorities, and develop partnerships with civil society groups and NGOs to combat child trafficking.

The country was a transit point for persons trafficked between Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Mali; final destinations also included North African and European countries. The country was a destination for a small number of trafficked persons, and a source of persons trafficked to North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Internal trafficking also occurred, and there was credible anecdotal evidence that clandestine networks victimized young girls who worked as household helpers.

A 2005 NGO survey found that 5.8 percent of households interviewed claimed that at least one member of their household had been a victim of trafficking. Internal trafficking of young boys for labor and young girls for work as maids and in some cases for prostitution from rural to urban areas occurred. There were credible reports of underage girls being forced or falsely enticed into prostitution, sometimes with the complicity of the family. There also were reports that child prostitution was especially prevalent along the main East West highway, particularly between the cities of Birni n'Konni and Zinder. Child prostitution is not criminalized specifically, and there was no precise age of consent; however, the law prohibits "indecent" acts toward minors. It is left to a judge to determine what constitutes an indecent act. Such activity and a corollary statute against "the incitement of minors to wrongdoing" were punishable by three to five years in prison.

There also was internal trafficking that included the indenturing of boys to Koranic teachers. As a result of economic hardship, some rural parents sent their sons to learn the Koran in the cities where, in return for their education, the boys supported their teachers by begging on the streets or doing manual labor.

Trafficking in persons generally was conducted by small operators who falsely promised well paid employment in the country. Victims from neighboring countries were escorted through immigration formalities and found that their employment options were restricted to poorly paid domestic work or prostitution. Victims had to use a substantial portion of their small income to reimburse the persons who brought them to the country for the cost of the trip and to provide the traffickers' profit. Compliance was enforced by "contracts" that were signed by illiterate victims before they departed their countries of origin; traffickers also seized victims' travel documents.

The government provided some services for trafficking victims, including basic health care and assistance in returning to their home villages. The regional government of Agadez established a "welcome committee" to assist illegal immigrants expelled from Libya to return to their countries or regions of origin. During the year the committee, which consisted of police and local administrative officials, provided approximately 450 such persons with basic accommodations, food, and assistance in finding transportation home. While no reliable statistics on these persons were available, many may well have been victims of human trafficking. The government also supported the efforts of NGOs and international organizations in providing food, temporary shelter, and primary health care to victims of trafficking.

During the year the government undertook several initiatives to prevent trafficking. The government continued to sponsor public outreach sessions on trafficking and child abuse, while local authorities assisted UNICEF and a local NGO partner to identify and rehabilitate child victims of TIP in the Agadez region. Local police and prosecutors arrested and prosecuted traffickers identified by the project, and ensured that rescued victims were handed over to a local NGO for rehabilitation. The government also worked with the Nigerian embassy to ensure that consular access was provided to Nigerian TIP victims present in Niger. During the year media coverage of trafficking increased, largely because of the activities undertaken by the Agadez project. Coverage of trafficker arrests and victim rehabilitation efforts stemming from this activity appeared in private and government-affiliated newspapers and on the radio.

Persons with Disabilities

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination against persons with physical and mental disabilities in employment, education, and access to health care and other state services, and the government generally enforced these provisions. The law mandates that the state provide for persons with disabilities, but implementing regulations to mandate accessibility to buildings, transportation, and education for those with special needs had not been promulgated or legislated. Limited government health care benefits were available to persons with disabilities, and NGOs provided many services and programs. Societal discrimination existed against persons with disabilities, particularly mental disabilities and leprosy. The Ministry of Population and Social Welfare was responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The Hausa and Djerma ethnic groups made up approximately 56 percent and 22 percent, respectively, of the population. These two groups also dominated government and business, and many believed that nepotism existed along ethnic lines.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of violence against homosexuals; however, social discrimination was routinely practiced. Most homosexuals hid their sexual preference to avoid this. The government took no action on discrimination against homosexuals.

There were strong government efforts to discourage discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS. Prime time radio and television skits were aired several times daily beginning in October to sensitize families of persons with HIV/AIDS and the population at large to care for such persons. The announcements emphasized that persons with HIV/AIDS constituted no threat and that they needed support and understanding. They also stressed the availability of free drugs. However, societal discrimination against such persons continued.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The constitution and law recognize workers' right to establish and join trade unions without previous authorization or excessive requirements, and workers exercised this right. However, more than 85 percent of the workforce was employed in the nonunionized subsistence agricultural and small trading sectors.

On February 2, the regional court of Niamey ordered the national power company to reinstate labor union activist Diamyo Elhadji Yacouba, who had been dismissed in 2004 for attempting to organize an alternative union within the company; Diamyo resumed his employment.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference, and unions exercised their right to bargain collectively for wages above the legal minimum and for more favorable work conditions. Collective bargaining also existed in the public sector.

There are no export processing zones.

The law provides for the right to strike, except by police and other security forces, and workers exercised this right.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The labor code prohibits forced or compulsory labor, except for legally convicted prisoners, and prohibits slavery; however, it does not specifically prohibit forced or compulsory labor by children, and slavery occurred. A traditional form of caste-based servitude was still practiced by the Tuareg, Djerma, and Arab ethnic minorities, particularly in remote northern and western regions and along the border with Nigeria.

Persons born into a traditionally subordinate caste worked without pay for those above them in the traditional social structure. At least 43,000 persons worked under such conditions, according to a study conducted in 2003 by the NGO Anti-Slavery International (ASI) and the local NGO Timidria, which surveyed 11,000 persons, mostly born into servitude. According to the report, people were born into slavery, and were forced to work without pay for their masters throughout their lives, primarily herding cattle, working on farmland, or as domestic servants. Children become the property of their masters and can be passed from one slave owner to another as gifts or as part of a dowry. Girls are forced to start work as domestic servants at a very young age. Girls may be sexually abused by men in the household or forced to marry at a young age.

Since the government publicly banned keeping slaves in 2003, some former slaves have been liberated and given certificates to show that they are now free. Individuals had the legal right to change their situations, and it was illegal for their masters to retain them; however, in practice, most victims of slavery did not act on their rights. Fear and physical or social coercion likely played roles, although a lack of viable economic alternatives for freed slaves was also a factor.

During the year Timidria used the 2003 law to initiate a case against a slave master, who was convicted and sentenced to prison. The slave was freed, and the slave owner also was obliged to pay \$2,800 (1.5 million CFA francs) to the NGO and the victim.

On July 27, in the case of Timidria and Haoulata Ibrahim (plaintiffs/victim) vs. Seidimou Hiyar (defendant), the tribunal of Abalak convicted Seidimou Hiyar of enslavement and sentenced him to five years in prison and a fine of approximately \$1,000 (500,000 CFA francs). Hiyar appealed the judgment and his appeal was pending at year's end.

Three other cases were also under investigation at year's end: Timidria, Assibit Wanagoda, and Ilguimate Anakoye (plaintiffs) vs. Tafane Abouzeidi (defendant) was pending before the Abalak tribunal; Timidria and Maimouna Miko (plaintiffs) vs. Djamila Attawel, Attahirou Attawel, and Ali Mamoudou (defendants) was pending before the Konni tribunal; and Boudal Bologi (plaintiff) vs. Azarori chief (defendant)

was pending before the Madaoua tribunal.

In January the minister of culture acknowledged on television the existence of slavery, although on many prior occasions the government had denied the problem.

On November 15, the government announced the creation of a joint working group on traditional slavery. The working group consisted of officials from the Ministry of Labor, the ILO, local antislavery activists and NGOs, labor unions, and traditional chiefs. The minister of labor announced the government's support for this initiative. The group planned to focus its initial efforts on sensitizing former slaves and masters.

The labor code does not specifically prohibit forced or compulsory labor by children, and there were credible reports of forced child labor by underage girls and boys; girls were forced into prostitution and domestic service, and boys worked in mines, quarries, and rice fields (see sections 5 and 6.d.).

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

Although the law permits child labor in nonindustrial enterprises under certain conditions, the law prohibits child labor in industrial work. The government effectively enforced the law in the industrial sector. However, child labor was a problem.

Children under the age of 14 must obtain special authorization to work in the nonindustrial sector, and those 14 to 18 years of age are limited to a maximum of four and one-half hours per day and certain types of employment so schooling may continue, although most children by that age were no longer in school. Children under 12 are prohibited from working. The law requires employers to ensure minimum sanitary working conditions for children. Inspectors of the Ministry of Labor are responsible for enforcing child labor laws; however, resource constraints limited their ability to do so.

Children worked in the unregulated agricultural, commercial, and artisanal sectors, and youths, some of them foreign, were hired in homes as general helpers for very low pay. The majority of rural children regularly worked with their families from a very early age helping in the fields, pounding grain, tending animals, gathering firewood and water, and doing similar tasks. Some children were kept out of school to guide a blind relative on begging rounds. Others were indentured to Koranic teachers to beg in the streets and for manual labor (see section 5). Child labor also occurred in the largely unregulated gold mining sector, and also in trona (a mineral used as a source of sodium compounds), salt, and gypsum mines. In 2000 the ILO estimated that 57 percent of workers in the country's small quarries were children, some 250,000 in total. Children working in gold mines were particularly vulnerable to poor ventilation, collapse hazards, and insufficient lighting; they also were susceptible to alcohol and substance abuse.

Trafficking in children, prostitution of children as young as 10, child drug trafficking, forced child labor, and involvement of children in traditional caste-based servitude or slavery occurred (see sections 5 and 6.c.).

The Ministry of Labor, which is responsible for implementing ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, and for enforcing other child labor laws and policies, continued working with UNICEF and the ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor to determine the extent of child labor. A survey conducted in 2001 by UNICEF and the government indicated that approximately 70 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 were economically active; 61 percent of children between the ages of five and nine and 83 percent of children aged 10 to 14 worked; 40 percent of child workers were not paid; 70 percent of children did household work for four or fewer hours per day, while 17 percent worked for more than four hours per day.

The Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy collaborated with international NGOs to remove children from exploitative work situations, encourage school attendance, and continue to provide vocational training for 702 at-risk children and former child laborers. During the year one such joint program directly affected 2,143 children, and created indirect benefits for 24,000 others in the form of investments in local schools. During the year the project also succeeded in withdrawing 160 children from mining sites. The government also worked with international partners to provide economically relevant education as an inducement to parents to keep their children in school. The Ministry of Basic Education conducted training sessions to help educators meet the special needs of child laborers. In 2005 the government also created a special child labor division within the Ministry of Labor to coordinate government initiatives in the area.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The labor code establishes a minimum wage only for salaried workers in the formal sector with fixed (contractual) terms of employment. Minimum wages are set for each class and category within the formal sector; however, minimum wages did not provide a decent standard of living for workers and their families. The lowest minimum wage was \$40 (20,000 CFA francs) per month, with an additional \$2 (1,000 CFA francs) added per month per child. Most households had multiple earners (largely in informal commerce and in subsistence agriculture) and relied on the extended family for support.

The formal sector legal workweek was 40 hours with a minimum of one 24 hour rest period; however, for certain occupations, such as private security guards, the Ministry of Labor authorized longer workweeks of up to 72 hours. There were no reports of violations during the year. Premium pay must be paid for overtime, although the rate is not set by law; employees of each enterprise or government agency negotiate with their employer to set the rate. These formal sector standards were effectively enforced.

The labor code establishes occupational safety and health standards. The Ministry of Labor is charged with enforcing these standards, although due to staff shortages inspectors focused on safety violations only in the most dangerous industries: mining, building, and manufacturing. The standards were effectively enforced within those three industries, except that gold mining was largely unregulated. Although generally satisfied with the safety equipment provided by employers, citing in particular adequate protection from radiation in the

uranium mines, union workers in many cases were not well informed of the risks posed by their jobs. Workers have the right to remove themselves from hazardous conditions without fear of losing their jobs. It is not known whether authorities effectively enforced this right; no known instances of this occurred.