



2008 Human Rights Report: Slovenia

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

[2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#)

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Slovenia is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional republic of approximately two million persons. Power is shared between a directly elected president (head of state), a prime minister (head of government), and a bicameral parliament composed of the National Assembly (lower house) and the National Council (upper house). On September 21, the country held free and fair multiparty parliamentary elections. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. There were reports of trial delays, indirect government influence on the media, and cursory procedures for review of asylum applications. Societal violence against women, trafficking in women and girls, discrimination against Roma, violence against homosexuals, and discrimination against former Yugoslav residents without legal status were also problems.

On February 15, legislation took effect which provides victims of domestic violence with specific rights and improves the procedures for government agencies that deal with domestic violence cases.

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.

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 and, in contrast with 2007, there were no reports that government officials employed them.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions generally met international standards, and the government permitted visits by independent human rights observers. In February the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) publicly released its report on its 2006 visits to the country's prisons and detention facilities. The delegation heard a few allegations of physical mistreatment, including slaps, kicks, punches and truncheon blows. Some detained persons

alleged that they received threats (including of a sexual character), excessive psychological pressure, and verbal abuse during interrogations. There were several allegations of detained persons being placed in a cell for several hours in a hyperextended position with hand and ankle cuffs linked together behind the back), apparently to "calm them down." The report concluded that juvenile detainees were not properly informed of their rights during police custody; the CPT also reported that overcrowding continues to be a problem in some prison facilities.

During the year the government initiated quarterly visits to facilities by representatives of the human rights ombudsman's office and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). After each visit, the group provided recommendations to the facility on how to improve conditions and prevent problems, and then followed up on the recommendations with the facility's administrators to verify implementation.

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

Police are centrally organized under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior. The ministry oversees the drafting of basic guidelines, security policy, and regulations governing the work of the police and exercises special inspectorial authority in monitoring police performance, with an emphasis on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The police provided effective law enforcement.

During the year the Independent Commission for the Prevention of Corruption referred 28 credible reports of police corruption or corruption-related criminal acts to police and the state prosecutor for further investigation. There were no reports of prosecutorial corruption.

The law provides procedures for the review of alleged police abuse by a three-person government committee that includes two representatives of civil society organizations. The committee does not have authority to conduct independent investigations, and it relied on information provided by Ministry of Interior or police investigators. Committee findings were usually forwarded to the state prosecutor's office and published; cooperation between the committee and the state prosecutor's office reportedly increased during the year.

During the year the police internal investigation division, which began operations in November 2007, investigated 201 allegations of misconduct by police, prosecutors, and judges.

Arrest and Detention

Persons taken into police custody were generally apprehended openly with evidential warrants issued by either a prosecutor or judge. Persons can be detained for 48 hours before charges are brought. Authorities must also advise detainees in writing within 48 hours of the reasons for their arrest. Upon arrest, detainees have the right to contact legal counsel of their choice, and authorities generally respected this right in practice. The government provides indigent detainees with free counsel, and detainees were generally allowed prompt access to family members. The law also provides safeguards against self-incrimination.

Once charges are brought, pretrial detention may last for up to four months, depending on the severity of the criminal act, and must be certified by an investigative judge. Once trial procedures have begun, the total period of detention may be extended for up to two years. Persons detained more than two years while awaiting trial or while their trial is ongoing must be released pending conclusion of their trial. Lengthy pretrial detention was not a

widespread problem, and defendants generally were released on bail, except in the most serious criminal cases.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence in practice. Despite a law that took effect in January 2007 providing the right to a trial without undue delay, court backlogs continued to sometimes result in lengthy delays in trials. As of September 30, the backlog totaled 275,627 cases, and the ministry hired 155 judges and clerks during the year to cope with the backlog.

Trial Procedures

The constitution and law provide for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. The judicial system was overburdened and lacked administrative support; as a result, the judicial process frequently was protracted. In many cases, criminal trials lasted from two to five years.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The constitution and law provide for an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters. As with criminal matters, court backlogs sometimes resulted in lengthy trials.

Property Restitution

As of June 30, the government had resolved 38,584 or 97.3 percent, of the 39,642 property restitution claims that have been filed with authorities. Unresolved cases included those in which the courts had not reached a final decision and those pending appeal. Court backlogs, a lack of trained judicial and administrative personnel, amendments to the Denationalization Act, and inadequate land ownership records slowed claims processing. Some claimants have complained of a general lack of transparency, bias, and potential conflicts of interest on the part of adjudicators, and procedures that were inconsistent with the law. An effort to initiate a program for the restitution of Jewish communal property has encountered a number of delays.

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

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

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respected these rights in practice; however, there were reports of indirect government influence on the media.

The penal code criminalizes the promotion of "national, race, or religious discord or intolerance or the promotion of superiority of one race over others." There were no reports that criminal charges were brought against individuals or publications under this provision during the year.

Individuals could criticize the government publicly or privately without reprisal, and the government did not attempt to impede criticism.

The independent media were active and expressed a variety of views, and international media operated freely. The major print media were supported through private investment and advertising; however, the government owned substantial stock in many companies that were shareholders in the major media houses. There were reports that indirect political and economic pressures and partial government ownership of media companies influenced journalists and the media, and that self-censorship was practiced in some media outlets. The office of the government's human rights ombudsman stated that these indirect attempts by government to control media failed with respect to print media, but did slightly influence broadcast media. Following a March 19-20 visit to the country, the International Press Institute released a report highlighting concerns about media ownership structures, the lack of government-media dialogue, and the delay in creating an independent media commission. At year's end, the government had not established a commission.

The government operated a "media pluralization" fund intended to ensure that media reflected a diversity of viewpoints. Some media watchdog groups reported that a disproportionate level of pluralization funds have gone to Catholic Church media and media outlets favorably disposed towards the government.

The law provides criminal penalties for defamation that harms a person's honor or name; there were no reports of any prosecutions for defamation during the year.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chat rooms. Individuals and groups could engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail. Internet access was widely available, and nearly one-half of citizens used the Internet at least once a month.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

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

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

While there are no governmental restrictions on the Muslim community's freedom of worship, services were commonly held in private homes for lack of a larger venue. On June 30, the Ljubljana city council adopted a zoning plan for the country's first mosque, and the Islamic community's representative and Ljubljana's mayor signed the contract for purchase of the land on December 24. At year's end, construction had not begun.

In July 2007 the justice minister, who was the chair of the government Commission for Religious Communities, and Mufti Nedžad Grabus signed an agreement that acknowledged the Muslim community as an integral part of society, more clearly defined the areas of its activities, and facilitated the implementation of its programs. It also gave the

Muslim community the right to establish its own media and educational institutions, to preserve historical and cultural heritage, to conduct religious services in hospitals and for army and police forces, and placed Muslim charities on equal footing with other charities. Negotiations on implementing the agreement were ongoing at year's end.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There are approximately 300 Jews in the country. Jewish community representatives reported some prejudice, ignorance, and false stereotypes of Jews propagated within society, largely through public discourse. There were no reports of anti-Semitic violence or overt discrimination.

The government promoted antibias and tolerance education in the primary and secondary schools, and the Holocaust is a mandatory topic in the contemporary history curriculum. On September 7, the Jewish community, supported by local government officials, held the third annual European Day of Jewish Culture festival. President Turk was the honorary patron for the celebrations held in Ljubljana, Maribor, and Lendava.

For a more detailed discussion, see the 2008 International Religious Freedom Report at www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/rpt.

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 government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern. The law prohibits forced exile, and the government did not employ it.

Protection of Refugees

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. The country adheres to the European Union's Asylum Policy Directive/Treaty of Amsterdam requirements. In practice, the government provided some protection against expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened. As of September 1, the government had received 146 requests for refugee status or asylum and granted asylum in two cases.

During the year the government did not provide temporary protection to persons who may not have qualified as refugees under the 1951 convention or the 1967 protocol.

The government cooperated with the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers.

Border police can perform an initial screen of asylum seekers and reject applications they deem to be "manifestly unfounded." This procedure could prevent the applications of some asylum seekers from receiving a thorough review. In 2006 the Constitutional Court ruled that asylum seekers should be allowed to change their asylum application if there were considerable changes in their circumstances; however, at year's end, this ruling had not been implemented.

The law provides asylum seekers with the right to appeal decisions on their applications, but many asylum seekers were not informed of this right. The independent ombudsman for human rights, the UNHCR, and several NGOs

reported that the government put excessive restrictions on refugees' freedom of movement by requiring asylum seekers to sign a statement renouncing their claim to asylum if they left the premises of the asylum center. The government received some complaints about living conditions, but few complaints about the asylum process itself.

The country's law is intended to comply with European Union asylum directives. However, Amnesty International (AI) expressed concern that the law provides for accelerated asylum procedures with few safeguards, and that its exclusion clauses and broad detention powers could lower the country's asylum standards.

Stateless Persons

Human rights NGOs estimated that there are approximately 4,000 to 6,000 persons without legal status in the country as the result of the government's 1992 erasure of the names of approximately 18,000 persons from the register of permanent residents. These persons were mostly Yugoslav citizens residing in the country at the time of independence who did not apply for citizenship in 1991-92. The deletion of these records has been characterized by some as an administrative decision and by others as a politically motivated act, based on a desire to exclude former Yugoslav nationals who did not actively seek Slovenian citizenship. Some of those affected complained that they had been legal residents at the time of the deletions and therefore saw no need to apply for citizenship. Others stated that they were not properly informed of the requirement to apply for citizenship. The deletion of records resulted in a loss of legal status and, as a consequence, the loss of housing, employment, health insurance, pension rights, and access to higher education for some.

In 2003 the Constitutional Court ruled portions of a law governing the legal status of former Yugoslav citizens to be unconstitutional because the law neither recognized the full period in which "erased" persons resided in the country nor provided them the opportunity to apply for permanent residency. As of year's end, the government had not completed legislation to resolve the court's concerns.

In 2006 a group of 11 "erased" persons filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights claiming several violations of their rights, including discriminatory treatment, denial of social benefits, a loss of legal status, and the lack of effective legal remedy due to the government's failure to implement the constitutional court ruling. The case was still pending at year's end. In a 2006 report, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights urged the government to restore the status of permanent resident to all individuals concerned to allow them to reclaim access to social services, education, and employment. In March local NGOs organized a four-day protest, criticizing the government for failing to rectify the plight of the "erased" persons.

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

The constitution and law provide citizens 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

On September 21, the country held free and fair national parliamentary elections.

Political parties operated without restriction or outside interference.

There were 12 women in the 90-seat National Assembly and one woman in the 40-seat National Council. There were five women in the 18 member cabinet.

There were two members of minority groups in the 90-seat National Assembly and none in the 40-seat National

Council or in the cabinet. The constitution provides the "autochthonous" (indigenous) Italian and Hungarian minorities the right, as a community, to have at least one representative in the National Assembly. However, the law does not provide such rights to any other minority group.

Twenty distinct Romani communities, each designated autochthonous at the local level, are entitled to a seat on their local municipal council. As of year's end, one municipality--Grosuplje--remained in noncompliance with this law for a third straight year. Although in 2007 and 2008 both the government Office for Nationalities and the Romani community submitted proposals to freeze the municipality's budget until it complied with the law, the government did not take any action on the proposals before year's end.

Government Corruption and Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively; however, officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices.

Corruption was perceived by the public to be a widespread problem. Only the highest-level government officials--approximately 5,000 of the country's 80,000 public servants--are subject to financial disclosure laws. As of September 1, the Independent Commission for the Prevention of Corruption received 661 cases of suspected corruption and found 116 out of the 465 cases that were assessed during the year to be credible. The remaining cases were not assessed by year's end.

The commission played an active role in educating the public and civil servants about corruption; however, it claimed it had neither adequate staff nor funding to fulfill its mandate and assess all cases of suspected corruption that it received during the year. In 2006 the Constitutional Court stayed legislation that would have terminated the commission and replaced it with a parliamentary anticorruption commission. During the year the commission forwarded 143 suspected cases of corruption to police and prosecutors and 65 cases to other state institutions, including cases received in 2007 but not processed until the next year.

The law provides for free public access to all government information, and the government provided access for citizens and noncitizens alike, including foreign media. The government may deny public access only to classified information, personal data protected by privacy laws, and other narrowly defined exceptions.

The office of the government information commissioner reported that the number of complaints related to the nonresponsiveness of state institutions declined. During the year the office received 258 complaints of nonresponsiveness of state institutions and 167 complaints under the Law on Access to Public Information.

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 generally were cooperative and responsive to their views, although some human rights groups complained of lengthy delays in government responses.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the government generally enforced these provisions in practice. However, violence against women and children, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against homosexuals and Roma were problems.

Women

Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal; however, it was a problem. In 2007, AI and SOS Phone, an NGO that provided anonymous emergency counseling and services to domestic violence victims, estimated that one in seven women was raped during her lifetime, but that only 5 percent sought assistance or counseling. Spousal rape, in particular, was rarely reported to authorities. Police actively investigated reports of rape and prosecuted offenders. The penalty for rape was one to 10 years in prison. During the year there were 62 criminal acts of rape, 60 criminal acts of sexual violence, 19 criminal acts of sexual abuse of the weak, and 178 criminal acts of sexual attack on a minor under the age of 15 reported to authorities.

Although no accurate statistics were available, violence against women, including spousal abuse, occurred and was generally underreported. The Office for Equal Opportunity began funding a multiyear research project to gather domestic violence data. Domestic violence, although not specifically prohibited by the law, was prosecuted under statutes criminalizing assault, which provide for penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment in the case of aggravated and grievous bodily harm. SOS Phone estimated that 25 percent of women had experienced domestic violence. The NGOs SOS Phone and Kljuc provided support hot lines, and SOS Phone reported receiving 5,287 calls during the year. The government partially funded 19 shelters, safe houses, and maternity homes (12 run by NGOs and seven by government organizations) that offered 305 total beds. Although the government's report on funding did not distinguish between the types of facilities, SOS Phone reported that only 11 of the 19 shelters are specifically for battered women and children and the total number of beds in these shelters is 182. The other eight facilities--maternity homes or social work centers--were for more general assistance, with staff that were not all trained to work with victims of violence, and did not always accept victims. The government worked with NGOs to implement the law with regard to handling domestic violence cases, including providing shelters and social work centers. When police received reports of spousal abuse or violence, they generally intervened and prosecuted offenders. The police academy offered training on domestic violence.

Prostitution is illegal, but the government did not actively enforce this prohibition. Antitrafficking authorities and NGOs informally estimated that as many as 80 bars and clubs across the country could be engaged in facilitating or promoting prostitution.

Sexual harassment remained a widespread problem. The amended penal code, effective November 1, expanded the prohibition on sexual harassment to cover the entire workforce and not just the civil service. During the year, 31 criminal acts were reported.

The law provides for equal rights for women, and there is no official discrimination against women in family law, property law, or the judicial system. The Office of Equal Opportunities protected the legal rights of women. While the average length of unemployment was the same for men and women, women frequently held lower paying jobs. On average, women's earnings were 93 percent of those of men.

Children

The government was committed to protecting children's rights and welfare.

While education for children is compulsory through grade nine, a 2006 AI report noted that school attendance by Romani children varied widely by region (39 percent of Romani children attend school in the southeastern Dolenjska region and 70 percent attend school in the northeastern Prekmurje region). Poverty, discrimination, and language continued to be the main barriers to the participation of Romani children in education programs. AI reported that the Romani literacy rate was 10 percent. A number of Roma reported that their children attended segregated classes and were selected by authorities in disproportionate numbers to attend classes for students with special

needs. A 2006 report by the Council of Europe commissioner for human rights noted that de facto segregation continued to exist in the Brsljin school district in Novo Mesto. For the 2007-08 academic year, the government hired five additional teachers for the Brsljin schools to work specifically on helping Romani children reach basic standards in Slovene, mathematics, and English.

During the year the government completed a bilingual primary school curriculum. The government continued funding efforts to codify the Romani language, but the Roma Association did not accept the codification due to linguistic differences between the two major Romani groups (in Dolenjska and Prekmurje). The Ministry of Education signed an agreement with the European Social Fund to provide six years of funding to hire 26 Romani educators to work with teachers and parents. Prior to this agreement, Romani assistants worked in some schools, but many schools could not hire Romani coordinators due to administrative impediments.

Child abuse was a problem. During the year there were 178 criminal acts of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 15 reported to authorities. Trafficking in children, mainly teenage girls transiting the country, was a problem. The law provides special protection for children from exploitation and mistreatment, and the government generally enforced the law in practice. The amended penal code, effective November 1, criminalizes the possession of child pornography, in addition to the sale, purchase, or propagation of it prohibited by the previous statute.

The Center for Social Work Grosuplje, the Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs, and the retail company Mercator operated the "Palcica" safe house, which provided shelter for children up to the age of six who were victims of domestic violence or whose parents had died suddenly.

Child marriage occurred within the Romani community; however, it was not a widespread problem.

Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons; however, the country continued to be a transit country and, to a lesser extent, a destination country for men, primarily for labor exploitation, and women trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. Trafficking in children, mainly teenage girls transiting the country, was a problem. There were also rare reports that it was a country of origin for trafficking.

Sources for persons trafficked to or through the country included Ukraine, Slovakia, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Turkey, Albania, and Montenegro. A 2006 Peace Institute study reported that, although the majority of trafficking victims were transiting from southern, eastern, and central Europe through the country, it was a source country for trafficking to countries such as Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and Germany. The study reported that victims were trafficked primarily for sexual exploitation and that traffickers lured victims through advertisements promising high wages, marriage, employment as entertainers and dancers, and employment without indication that it would involve the sex industry. Organized criminal groups, nightclub owners, and local pimps were primarily responsible for trafficking. Those at particular risk of being trafficked were teenage girls and young women who lived in impoverished areas with high unemployment. Many of these women were unaware of the trafficking problem and the risk that they might become trafficking victims.

Penalties for trafficking range from six months to 10 years' imprisonment. Authorities can also prosecute persons for rape, pimping, procurement of sexual acts, inducement to prostitution, sexual assault, slavery, and other related offenses.

The government apprehended, investigated, and prosecuted traffickers; police investigated nine instances of human trafficking and seven instances of forced prostitution. During the year there were nine criminal acts of trafficking reported to authorities. There were no trafficking convictions during the year for crimes committed in

previous years. Regional police directorates had departments that investigated trafficking and organized crime. One prosecutor in each regional state prosecutor's office was dedicated to trafficking cases.

During the year the government continued to actively cooperate with NGOs and Interpol in project "Red Routes" by sharing information about traffickers and patterns of illegal migration. The Ministry of Interior Border Police Division also actively participated in Plan ILAEIRA, a Greek-led international trans-border police cooperation project to combat trafficking. The government did not extradite any persons who were accused of trafficking in other countries.

The government's national coordinator for trafficking in persons served as the head of the interagency working group on trafficking in persons, which is responsible for the government's long-term national strategy to combat trafficking. The working group consisted of representatives of ministries, NGOs, international organizations, and the media, and met more than six times during the year. In 2007 the group established a 2008-09 action plan against trafficking that included trafficking legislation, prevention, prosecution, victims' assistance, and projects. During the year the Ministry of Interior funded public awareness campaigns conducted by the NGOs Karitas and Kljuc that targeted groups most vulnerable to trafficking. The national coordinator did radio interviews and appeared on television talk shows to highlight the problem. In October the working group facilitated programs in high schools throughout the country in connection with European Antitrafficking Day.

Karitas and Kljuc provided shelter and assistance to trafficking victims under a contract with the Ministry of Labor.

The Ministry of Interior, the UNHCR, Kljuc, and the NGO Filantropia jointly administered a project that addressed trafficking and gender based violence by providing information and assistance to asylum seekers at greatest risk of being trafficked, particularly single women and children separated from their parents.

The government also continued the "Vijolica" and "CAP" programs, administered by Kljuc, to provide trafficking awareness classes for elementary and secondary school students.

The State Department's 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 in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other government services, and the government generally enforced these provisions in practice. The law mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities. Modification of public and private structures to improve access for persons with disabilities continued at a slow pace, and many buildings were not accessible in practice. The Ministry for Labor, Family, and Social Affairs has primary responsibility for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law provides special rights and protections to "autochthonous" (indigenous) Italian and Hungarian minorities, including the right to use their own national symbols and have bilingual education and the right for each to be represented as a community in parliament. Other minorities do not have comparable special rights and protections.

Ethnic Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Kosovo Albanians, and Roma from Kosovo and Albania were considered "new" minorities; they were not protected by the special constitutional provisions for autochthonous minorities and faced some governmental and societal discrimination with respect to employment, housing, and education. A 2006 AI report noted that Roma continue to suffer prejudice and discrimination, in particular with access to health services,

education, and employment.

A 2006 law on protection of the Romani community resulted in the establishment of the Roma Council and the legalization of nearly 40 Romani settlements. After complaints from the Romani community and NGOs, the government updated the national employment register to include the employment advisor positions that the 2006 law had created. During the year these advisors began working in local employment offices to facilitate Roma employment.

In a 2006 report the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights expressed concern that discriminatory attitudes and practices against Roma persisted and that the distinction between "indigenous" Roma and "new" Roma could give rise to new discrimination. The report also cited the committee's concern that "nonindigenous" Roma do not enjoy protection of their cultural rights, such as education in their mother tongue, unlike members of Hungarian and Italian minorities who enjoy this right under bilateral international agreements.

Many Roma lived in settlements, apart from other communities, that lacked such basic utilities as electricity, running water, and sanitation, as well as access to transportation. According to Roma Association officials, 68 percent of Romani settlements were illegal, and Roma reported that discrimination in employment complicated their housing situation. Organizations monitoring conditions in the Romani community have noted in recent years that Romani exclusion from the housing market was a problem and that the unemployment rate among Roma was approximately 90 percent.

Following government-facilitated relocation in 2006, approximately 30 members of a Romani family received a new home and land near Ljubljana following the December 2007 conclusion of an agreement between their legal representative and the minister of environment and spatial planning.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation; however, societal discrimination was widespread, and isolated cases of violence against homosexuals occurred. Recent data on the problem's scope was not available.

On June 21, the eighth annual gay pride parade in Ljubljana took place with the support of local government officials, although there were reports that bystanders shouted homophobic slurs at participants, and antigay graffiti and stickers were seen in various locations around the city. Organizers reported satisfactory police presence during the parade. However, two individuals were assaulted following the parade, and three other assaults occurred during evening events. Police did not apprehend the perpetrators.

The law permits homosexual civil unions. In 2006 gay activists filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court that the law does not afford the same social, family, and inheritance rights as those granted to heterosexual married couples. The court had not issued a ruling on the complaint by year's end.

There were no reports of societal violence or discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law allows workers to form and join unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements, and workers exercised this right in practice. All workers, except police and military personnel, are eligible to form and join labor organizations. Approximately 30 percent of the workforce was unionized.

The law provides for the right to strike, and workers exercised this right in practice. The law prohibits retaliation against strikers, and the government effectively enforced this provision in practice. The law restricts strikes by some public sector employees, primarily the police and members of the military services, and provides for arbitration to ensure due process and protection of these workers' rights.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference, and the government protected this right in practice. The law provides for the right to bargain collectively, and it was practiced freely; however, the law requires that 10 percent of the workers in an industry sector be union members before collective bargaining can be applied to the sector as a whole. All workers were covered by either a general collective bargaining agreement or a collective bargaining agreement that focused on a specific business segment.

There were no reports of antiunion discrimination.

There are no special laws or exemptions from regular labor laws in the country's sole export processing zone at Koper.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that women were trafficked for forced prostitution.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

There are laws to protect children from exploitation in the workplace; the government effectively enforced these laws.

The minimum age for employment is 15; however, younger rural children often worked during the harvest season and on other farm chores. The law limits working hours and sets occupational health and safety standards for children; the government effectively enforced these provisions in practice. Urban employers generally respected the age limits.

The Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs is responsible for monitoring labor practices and has inspection authority; police are responsible for investigating violations of the law. Enforcement practices were generally effective.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The national monthly minimum wage of approximately 590 euros (approximately \$826) provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The law limits the workweek to 40 hours and provides for minimum annual leave of 20 days and a mandatory rest period of at least one day per week. Premium pay for overtime was regulated by collective agreements and was not standardized, and maximum overtime was limited to eight hours per week, 20 hours per month, and 180 hours per year. The Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs is responsible for monitoring labor practices and has inspection authority; police are responsible for investigating violations of the law. The laws were enforced effectively.

Special commissions under the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs set and enforced standards for occupational health and safety. Workers had the legal right to remove themselves from

dangerous work situations without jeopardy to their continued employment, and authorities effectively enforced this right.