The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates established with no democratically elected institutions or political parties. Traditional rule in the emirates generally is patriarchal, with political allegiance defined in terms of loyalty to the tribal leaders, to the leaders of the individual emirates, and to the leaders of the federation. There are no general elections; however, citizens may express their concerns directly to their leaders through traditional consultative mechanisms, such as the open majilis, or council. The seven emirate rulers constitute a Federal Supreme Council, the highest legislative and executive body. The Council selects a President and Vice President from its membership; the President, in turn, appoints the Prime Minister and Cabinet. In 2001, the Council reelected Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan as head of the state for 5 years. The Constitution requires the Council to meet annually, although individual leaders meet frequently in more traditional settings. The Cabinet manages the Federation on a day-to-day basis. A consultative body, the Federal National Council (FNC), consisting of 40 advisors appointed for 2-year terms by the emirate rulers, reviews proposed legislation, discusses the annual budget, and may question federal government ministers in open sessions. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, its decisions were subject to review by the political leadership.

Each emirate maintains its own independent police force. While all emirate internal security organs theoretically are branches of one federal organization, in practice they operated with considerable independence. The Government maintained effective control over security forces. There were no reports that security forces committed human rights abuses.

The country has a free market economy based on oil and gas production, trade, tourism, and light manufacturing. The expatriate population comprised about 85 percent of the estimated 3.8 million population. Each emirate independently owns local petroleum production, with most of the country's petroleum resources located in Abu Dhabi. The emirate of Dubai has developed into the region's leading financial, commercial, transport, and tourism center. The economy provided citizens with a high per capita income, but it was heavily dependent on foreign skilled and unskilled workers.

Serious problems remain, although the Government's respect for human rights improved in a few areas. Citizens do not have the right to change their government. The Government restricted freedom of speech and of the press. The press continued to practice self-censorship. The Government restricted free assembly and association, and somewhat restricted religious freedom by banning proselytizing of Muslims. In August, the Government closed the Zayed Centre for Coordination and Follow-up for sponsoring anti-Jewish activities. The Government restricted the rights of workers, many of whom are not protected by labor laws. There are no labor unions; however, the Government mediated several labor disputes and often ruled in favor of employees. There were reports of poor working conditions for some laborers, failure to pay wages, and abuse of foreign domestic servants in an economy in which 98 percent of the private sector workforce is foreign. Trafficking in women and children continued to be a problem, despite Government efforts to end the practice.

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 of arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life committed by the Government or its agents. There were no developments in the 2001 case of Libyan national Abdullah Abu al Ghazali, who died while in security force custody.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
The Constitution prohibits torture, and there were no reports that government officials employed it; however, Shari'a (Islamic law) courts sometimes impose flogging sentences on Muslims (except in Dubai, where flogging is banned), and some non-Muslims, found guilty of adultery, prostitution, and drug or alcohol abuse. There were reports that flogging sometimes was carried out to satisfy major or permanent injuries; however, during the year there was at least one case in Abu Dhabi Emirate of authorities using a leather strap to administer the flogging sentence, which caused the recipient significant pain and left substantial bruising, welting, and open wounds on the body.

Convictions in Shari'a courts do not require the Shari'a penalties on non-Muslims; however, such sentences were carried out in some cases. According to a 2002 Amnesty International (AI) report, at least 20 flogging sentences were passed in cases of adultery. For example, on August 17, the federal court ordered the flogging of a 15-year-old girl for adultery. She was sentenced to 90 lashes. The girl, who also faced deportation, appealed twice on the grounds that she was a juvenile but the federal court upheld the ruling under Shari'a law. The Federal Supreme Court overturned the ruling 5 days later, stating she was not responsible for the adultery charge under Shari'a due to her age. The court also overturned the deportation penalty.

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Prison conditions generally met international standards and the Government permitted visits by independent human rights observers; however, rural prison conditions at times were inadequate. The Research Center of Abu Dhabi Police Department reported that all six of Abu Dhabi's prisons were overcrowded. Noncitizens represented approximately 85 percent of all prisoners. According to the Jurists Association, prison conditions varied widely from emirate to emirate. Men and women are housed separately. Pre-trial detainees were held separately from convicted criminals until the trial begins. Juveniles were held separately from adults. Political or security prisoners were kept separately and, in some cases, were transferred from the custody of the Ministry of Interior to the State Security Agency.

Police in Dubai and Abu Dhabi allow NGOs access to observe prison conditions; however, there were no reports of any such visits during the year.

In March, the Dubai police Human Rights Department launched the "Victim Care" program to provide psychological, emotional, and legal assistance to victims of sexual crimes and crimes against children. The program aims to protect victims from further harassment. In December, the Deputy Ruler of Dubai and Minister of Finance and Industry granted $40,984 (150,000 dirhams) to the Human Rights Department in support of the Victim Care program.

In 2002, the Dubai police established a Human Rights Department within its prison system to monitor conditions, address prisoners' concerns, and maintain rehabilitation programs. The department organizes lectures, maintains libraries, and provides educational opportunities to prisoners.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, the law permits incommunicado detention. The Government generally uses it in sensitive criminal cases in which the police claim that communication between the accused and a third party could jeopardize their investigation. In such cases, no one is notified that the person has been arrested. There were no reports of incommunicado detention during the year. In concert with other governments, there were arrests and detentions in 2001 of numerous individuals suspected of ties to extremist groups. Most of them were released.

The law prohibits arrest or search without probable cause.

Under the Criminal Procedures Code, the police must report arrests within 48 hours to the Public Prosecutor, who must determine within the next 24 hours whether to charge, release, or order further detention pending an investigation. The Public Prosecutor may order that detainees be held up to 21 days without charge. In cases of felonies or misdemeanors punishable by imprisonment, the authorities must obtain a court order after 21 days for additional detention. A court-ordered extension may not exceed an additional 30 days of detention without charge. Some diplomatic missions complain that authorities do not always notify them when their citizens are detained or arrested. The Federal Constitution provides accused persons the right to a speedy trial. This right most often was invoked in civil cases, with civil defendants at times demanding same-day disposition of the cases filed against them. Authorities reportedly brought criminal defendants to trial in approximately 2 to 3 months, with the exception of drug-related cases. In drug-related cases, the authorities are required to inform the office of the ruler for the emirate in which the offense was committed of the charges, which may prolong the process considerably.

Trials can last a substantial period of time, depending on the seriousness of the charges, number of witnesses, and availability of judges. Serious cases such as rape sometimes take more than 1 year to get to trial.

There is no formal system of bail; however, authorities can release detainees temporarily who deposit money, an important document such as a passport, and/or an unsecured personal guarantee statement signed by a third party. Those arrested on regular charges were generally allowed to telephone third parties while in detention.

Defendants in cases involving loss of life, including involuntary manslaughter, can be denied release in accordance with the law. However, bail usually is permitted after a payment of compensation to the victims’ families, commonly called "blood money," or diya, which is a form of financial penalty imposed on defendants in criminal cases involving a killing.
Review of criminal cases by the local ruler's diwan, as well as bureaucratic delays in processing or releasing prisoners, at times resulted in detainees serving time in the central prisons beyond their original sentences.

Rulers of the individual emirates regularly pardon prisoners on religious and national holidays. Those pardoned generally were serving sentences from 3 to 5 years for financial crimes, immigration violations, or other minor offenses. Pardons were not extended to prisoners convicted of more serious charges such as murder, rape, and kidnapping. Most pardoned foreign nationals were deported, while those jailed for financial crimes often were given a grace period before deportation to settle amounts still owed.

The Constitution prohibits forced exile, and there were no reported cases during the year.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, its decisions were subject to review by the political leadership.

Many judges were noncitizen Arabs, whose mandates were subject to periodic renewal by the Government. The percentage of citizens serving as public prosecutors and judges, particularly at the federal level, continued to grow. Of all judges, 55 percent were country nationals, and 45 percent were non-nationals.

There is a dual system of Shari'a (Islamic) courts for criminal and family law matters and civil courts for civil law matters. Civil courts generally are part of the federal system, except in the Dubai and Ras Al-Khaimah Emirates, and are accountable to the Federal Supreme Court, located in Abu Dhabi. The Federal Supreme Court has the power of judicial review, as well as original jurisdiction in disputes between emirates or between the federal Government and individual emirates. The emirates of Dubai and Ras Al-Khaimah have their own local and appellate courts, which have jurisdiction over matters within their territories that the Constitution or federal legislation does not specifically reserve for the federal system. The emirates of Dubai and Ras Al-Khaimah do not refer cases in their courts to the Federal Supreme Court located in Abu Dhabi for judicial review, although they maintained a liaison with the federal Ministries of Justice, Islamic Affairs, and Awqaf.

Each emirate administers Shari'a courts. In some emirates, these courts consider all types of civil and commercial cases as well as serious criminal cases and family matters. They act in accordance with traditional Islamic law and practice, but also are required to answer to the Federal Supreme Court. Dubai has a special Shi'a council to act on matters pertaining to Shi'a family law (see Section 5).

Legal counsel may represent defendants in both court systems. Under the Criminal Procedures Code, the defendant has a right to government-provided counsel in all cases involving a capital crime or possible life imprisonment, regardless of whether the defendant is financially able to hire counsel. The Government provides counsel to indigent defendants charged with felonies punishable by "provisional imprisonment," or imprisonment of 3 to 15 years.

A defendant is entitled to an attorney only after the police have completed their investigation. As a result, police can question accused persons sometimes for days or weeks, as in narcotics cases, without benefit of legal counsel.

Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty. There are no jury trials. The number of judges sitting for a case depends on the type of crime alleged. Generally, three judges sit for felony criminal cases, and one judge sits for all other cases. All trials are public, except for national security cases and those deemed by the judge likely to harm public morality.

Each court system has an appeals process. Death sentences may be appealed to the ruler of the emirate in which the offense is committed, or to the President of the Federation. Non-Muslims who are tried for criminal offenses in Shari'a courts can receive civil penalties at the discretion of the judge. Shari'a penalties imposed on non-Muslims can be overturned or modified by a higher court.

In cases in which a defendant is acquitted of a crime, the prosecutor may appeal the acquittal to a higher court. If the case is appealed, the higher court reviews the case and may receive additional evidence. If convinced of the defendant's guilt, the appellate court may set aside the lower court's verdict of not guilty, enter a verdict of guilty, and order the defendant to pay compensation. The appellate standard for overturning an acquittal is "without the slightest doubt of guilt."

In cases in which a defendant is sentenced to death, the sentence may be reduced to a term of imprisonment if the victim or victim's family provides a statement to the court forgiving the defendant. This waiver by the victim or victim's family is sometimes made in exchange for a "diya," or a financial payment from the defendant. The term of imprisonment in criminal cases is not related to the defendant's payment of compensation to the victim or victim's family.

The local rulers' diwans, following traditional prerogatives, maintain the practice of reviewing many types of criminal and civil offenses before cases are referred to the prosecutor's office. The diwans may review sentences passed by judges and return cases to the court on appeal. The diwans' involvement, which typically occurs when the case involves parties from two different emirates or a citizen and a noncitizen, can lead to long delays prior to and following the judicial process, causing some prisoners to remain in prison after they have completed their original sentences. Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of prisoners being convicted of more serious charges such as murder, rape, and kidnapping.
of intervention by other emirates' rulers in specific cases of personal interest.

The military has its own court system. Military tribunals try only military personnel. There is no separate national security court system. Convicted criminals may request a pardon at any time, unless convicted of serious offenses such as murder.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

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

The Constitution prohibits entry into homes without the owner's permission, except with a warrant and in accordance with the law. Only police officers and public prosecutors carrying a warrant are permitted entry into homes. Officers' actions in searching premises are subject to review, and officers are subject to disciplinary action if their actions are judged to be irresponsible. Local custom and practice place a high value on privacy, and entry into private homes without owners' permission was rare. A female police officer is required to be present during the search of a private home when male family members are absent.

Authorities do not commonly screen private correspondence; however, there have been reports of censorship of incoming international mail. The Government-owned Internet provider, Etisalat, regularly blocks Internet sites determined to be "objectionable" (see Section 2.a.).

Family matters for Muslims are governed by Shari'a law and the local Shari'a courts. Muslim women are forbidden to marry non-Muslims. In such cases, both parties can be arrested and tried. However, Muslim men are free to marry all women "of the book," which means Muslim, Christian and Jewish women.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech; however, the Government restricted this right in practice. The law prohibits, under penalty of imprisonment, criticism of the Government, ruling families, and friendly governments, as well as other statements that threaten social stability; however, the law was rarely enforced because journalists commonly practiced self-censorship.

Freedom of the press also was restricted. Two of the country's newspapers were government-owned and one, Al Bayan, received government subsidies. Privately owned newspapers no longer received government subsidies. The country's largest English- and Arabic-language newspapers were privately owned. Newspapers often relied on news agencies for material. Government-owned Emirates News Agency regularly provided newspapers with articles regarding domestic and international issues. This material was printed verbatim by most newspapers.

By law, the Ministry of Information licenses all publications. The ministry also approves the appointment of editors. The law governs press content and contains a list of proscribed subjects. Government officials reportedly warn journalists when they published material deemed politically or culturally sensitive.

A de facto ban prohibiting 10 prominent intellectuals from publishing opinion pieces in the country's Arabic and English language media continued. In 2002, 6 academics from Al Ain University were also banned. The ban was reportedly linked to the controversial Islamic fundamentalist political opinions held by those affected.

The government-owned Emirates Media, which published Al-Ittihad newspaper and owns Abu Dhabi's radio and television stations, forbids all its employees, including journalists, from speaking with representatives of foreign diplomatic missions without prior approval, although this rule was not enforced in practice.

While self-censorship affected what is reported locally, foreign journalists and news organizations operating out of Dubai Media Free Zone, reported few or no restrictions on the content of print and broadcast material produced for use outside the country.

Except for those located in Dubai's "Media Free Zone," most television and radio stations were government-owned and conformed to unpublished government reporting guidelines; however, these guidelines were not always applied consistently. Satellite receiving dishes were widespread and provided access to international broadcasts without apparent censorship. The main pan-Arab dailies were not censored and were distributed on the same day of publication. Censors at the Ministry of Information and Culture review imported newspapers, magazines, periodicals, books, films, and videos. They banned or censored before distribution material considered pornographic, excessively violent, derogatory to Islam, supportive of certain Israeli government positions, unduly critical of friendly countries, or critical of the Government or ruling families.

Internet access, which was open to public use with an estimated 1.11 million users, was provided through a state-owned monopoly, Etisalat. A proxy server blocked material regarded as pornographic or morally offensive, or as promoting radical Islamic ideologies, as well as anti-government sites. Generally, the proxy server did not appear to block news services, political
expression unrelated to radical Islamic ideologies, or material originating from specific countries. However, it occasionally blocked individual news stories on news websites. Etisalat blocked AOL in the UAE because AOL offers a program that allows users to access censored sites. The Internet monopoly solicits suggestions from users regarding “objectionable” sites, and at times the Government responds by briefly blocking some politically oriented sites, which are later unblocked. The also blocks commercial "voice-chat" sites on the Internet.

Academic materials destined for schools were subject to censorship. Students were banned from reading texts featuring sexuality or pictures of the human body. In 2002, the Ministry of Education and Youth listed 26 books prohibited in schools, although the same books are widely available in bookstores. The Ministry also obligates private schools to comply with its censorship rules regarding curricula and textbooks. In 2001, over 60 employees of the Ministry of Education and Youth were either retired or transferred involuntarily, reportedly due to their extremist religious and/or political views. In 2002, six professors at UAE University, primarily political science professors, were banned from lecturing at the university, reportedly because of their extremist political views. At least one of them was also banned from publishing writings in newspapers.

In August, the Government closed the Zayed Centre for Coordination and Follow-up, a think tank that published and distributed literature, sponsored lectures, and operated a website. The center published some books with anti-Jewish themes such as "The Zionist Movement and its Animosity to Jews" and "Al Buraq Wall, Not Wailing Wall." It also allowed some anti-Semitic language on its website, and hosted some speakers who promoted anti-Semitic views. According to a statement from President Zayed's office, the Government closed the center because its activities "starkly contradicted the principles of interfaith tolerance" advocated by the president (see Sections 2.c.).

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Government does not provide for freedom of assembly. Organized public gatherings require a government permit. In practice, the Government does not regularly interfere with informal gatherings held without a government permit in public places, unless complaints are made.

During the year, there were a number of widely publicized, organized gatherings of workers complaining of unpaid wages and unsuitable working conditions before the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs building. Increasingly, the Ministry of Labor has mediated such disputes, ruling most often in favor of the workers. There also were a number of peaceful marches and rallies conducted in support of Palestinians and Iraq after the police granted permission.

Citizens normally confined their political discussions to the numerous gatherings, or majlises, held in private homes. There were many associations organized for economic, religious, labor, social, cultural, sports, and other purposes.

In March, anti-war demonstrations reportedly took place in Al Ain, Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah. Authorities reportedly allowed the protests and no arrests were made. In June, approximately 200 Iranians demonstrated in Dubai in support of student demonstrators in Iran. Police reportedly detained and questioned four students after molotov cocktails were thrown into the Iranian Consulate compound. However, Dubai police deny that this occurred.

The Government does not permit freedom of association without prior permission. However, there were no reports that the Government interfered with associations that formed without prior permission.

Unauthorized political organizations are prohibited. There were no political parties, independent human rights groups, or trade unions (see Sections 3 and 6.a.).

All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are required to register with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. There were approximately 100 domestic NGOs registered with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. However, a number of unregistered local NGOs operate in the country, with little or no government interference. Local NGOs focus on a multitude of topics, including women's issues, the environment, natural history, and archaeology. The Jurists Association's Human Rights Committee focused on local and regional human rights issues. The percentage of citizen membership in NGOs varied widely. All private associations, including children's clubs, charitable groups, and hobby associations, required approval and licensing by local authorities, although this requirement was enforced loosely in some emirates. NGOs registered and licensed with the Government reportedly received subsidies from the Government, with the amount received based on the size of their membership (see Section 4).

Private associations must follow the Government's censorship guidelines and receive prior government approval before publishing any material. In practice, some groups did not seek prior Government approval before printing and distributing materials, and were not persecuted by the Government for doing so.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion in accordance with established customs and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some restrictions. The Federal Constitution declares that Islam is the official religion of all seven of the constituent emirates of the federal union.
The Government controls virtually all Sunni mosques, prohibited proselytizing, and restricted the freedom of assembly and association, thereby limiting the ability of religious groups without dedicated religious buildings to worship and conduct business. The Government funded or subsidized virtually all Sunni mosques and employed all Sunni imams; approximately 5 percent of Sunni mosques were entirely private, and several large mosques have large private endowments. The Government distributes guidance on religious sermons to mosques and imams, whether Sunni or Shi'a, and monitors all sermons for political content.

The federal Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs and Awqaf, which regulates mosques, distributes weekly guidance to both Sunni imams and Shi'a sheikhs regarding subject matter, themes, and content of religious sermons. There were reports that an unknown number of imams were deported throughout the year for preaching messages of intolerance. All Sunni imams are employees of either the Federal Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Awqaf, or individual emirate departments. The emirate of Dubai's Department of Islamic Affairs and Endowments has approval authority over the appointment of preachers in that emirate's private mosques, as well as the conduct of their work.

The Shi'a minority, which was concentrated in the northern emirates, was free to worship and maintain its own mosques. All Shi'a mosques were considered private and received no funds from the Government. The Government did not appoint sheikhs for Shi'a mosques, but did monitor them closely. Shi'a Muslims in Dubai can pursue Shi'a family law cases through a special Shi'a council rather than the Shari'a courts.

Some non-Muslim groups can own their own houses of worship in which they can practice their religion freely. Although the title for the land remains with the ruler, they may request a land grant and permission to build a compound from the local ruler. The local ruler may approve or deny any or all such requests. Religious groups without land grants were limited in their ability to assemble for worship and conduct religious business. Some, but not all, were permitted to worship on the compounds of other religious groups. Groups that did not have their own buildings were required to use the facilities of other religious organizations or worship in private homes. The police or other security forces did not interfere with gatherings held in private homes.

The Government in practice interfered very little in the religious activities of non-Muslims. The treatment of Muslim and non-Muslim groups differed between citizens and noncitizens rather than because of religious differences.

During the year, there were serious accusations of religious and ethnic intolerance leveled at the Zayed Centre for Coordination and Follow-up, a local think tank. Critics worldwide cited multiple examples of anti-Jewish literature, website material, and lectures sponsored by the Zayed Centre, and began an international publicity campaign to expose the center's anti-Jewish bias. The center strongly refuted the charges; however, the Government shut down the center in August, stating that the center engaged in discourses that "starkly contradicted the principles of interfaith tolerance (see Sections 2.a. and 4).

Individual emirates excused considerable autonomy in religious matters. There did not appear to be a formalized method of granting official status to religious groups. Rather, the ruling families choose whether to grant access to land and permission to build houses of worship thereon. Since not all religious groups were given land use grants, several unrelated congregations were often required to share common facilities. Because Islam respects Christianity as one of the monotheistic religions, facilities for Christian congregations are far greater in number and size than those for other non-Muslim groups, despite the fact that Christians represented only approximately one quarter of non-Muslim noncitizens, according to government figures. No Jewish synagogues existed in the country. There were two Sikh temples and one Hindu temple operating in the country, all located in Dubai. There were no Buddhist temples; however, Buddhists, along with Hindus and Sikhs in cities without temples, conducted religious ceremonies in private homes without interference. There was a Baha'i cemetery in Abu Dhabi Emirate. There were only two cremation facilities and associated cemeteries for the large Hindu community, one in Dubai and the other in Sharjah. Official permission must be obtained to use the facilities in every instance, which posed a hardship for the large Hindu community.

Conversion of Muslims to other religions is prohibited. Although non-Muslims in the country are free to practice their religion, they are not allowed to proselytize or distribute religious literature to Muslims under penalty of criminal prosecution, imprisonment, and deportation. There are no specific laws against missionary activities, and unlike in previous years, authorities did not revoke the residence permits of persons suspected of such activities during the year. Although the Government does not permit foreign missionaries to proselytize Muslims, missionaries have performed nontraditional humanitarian work since before the country's independence in 1971. An International Bible Society representative in Al-Ain distributed Bibles and other religious materials to Christian religious groups countrywide.

In 2002, Dubai Police Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested a Filipino evangelical Christian pastor, for distributing religious materials in public in violation of the prohibition against proselytizing. He was detained for 1 month before being released on bail and he continued his preaching activity without restriction. On April 27, the pastor was found guilty of abusing Islam and missionary activity and received a 1-year suspended jail sentence. He departed the country voluntarily shortly after sentencing.

According to the country's first census in 2001, out of a total population of 3,754,000, 76 percent of the population was Muslim, 9 percent was Christian, and 15 percent belonged to other religious groups.

For a more detailed discussion, see the 2003 International Religious Freedom Report.
d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for freedom of movement or relocation within the country and the Government generally respected these rights in practice.

Unrestricted foreign travel and emigration is permitted for male citizens, except those involved in legal disputes under adjudication. Custom dictates that a husband can bar his wife, minor children, and adult unmarried daughters from leaving the country, which he usually accomplishes by taking custody of their passports (see Section 5). However, there was no enforcement of this custom at exit points unless there was a court order barring an individual from traveling. All citizens have the right to return.

There was a small population of "stateless" residents who either were without citizenship or had no proof of citizenship to any country. Many such families have lived in the country for more than one generation. Many stateless residents originally were from Iran and South Asia. Other stateless residents included Bedouins or the descendants of Bedouins who were unable to prove they originated in the country. There is no formal procedure for naturalization, although foreign women receive citizenship through marriage to a citizen, and anyone may receive a passport by presidential fiat. Because they were not of the original tribal groups, passports and citizenship status of naturalized citizens may be revoked for criminal or politically provocative actions. However, such revocations were rare and there were no reports of such occurrences during the year.

A child born to at least one citizen parent acquires citizenship at birth.

During the year, the Government prohibited the long-standing practice of employers collecting and holding employees' passports. Embassies, consulates, and media reports confirm that police were enforcing the law. There were reports that the practice continued; however, there were also reports that the Ministry of Labor and police departments took action against these employers after employees filed complaints. There was wide media coverage of this change in law (see Section 6).

In July, the Ministry of Interior banned the widespread practice of employers forcing foreign national employees to surrender their passports as a condition of employment. This practice prevented international travel or repatriation by foreign national employees without their employers' consent, and especially affected employees in the resolution of employment disputes. Employers sometimes petitioned immigration authorities to blacklist employees with whom they were engaged in contract disputes. However, immigration authorities did not blacklist employees or employers without legal justification. Citizens are not restricted in seeking or changing employment. However, foreign nationals in specific occupations are not permitted to change employers without first leaving the country for 6 months (see Section 6.e.).

The law does not provide for the granting of refugee status or asylum to persons who meet the definition in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. In practice, the Government does not provide protection against refoulement, and does not routinely grant refugee status or asylum.

Refugees generally are required to petition for settlement in third countries. In the past, the Government detained persons seeking refugee status, particularly non-Arabs, while they awaited resettlement in third countries.

There were cases during the year in which the Government indicated its intention to force refugee seekers to return to countries where they feared persecution. There were no reports that such deportations took place before the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) resettled the refugees in safe countries of transit.

In February, Dubai police, under orders from the Ministry of Interior, deported a group of noncitizens after the killing of an Indian businessman. Although, the group's involvement in the killing was unclear, the group was ordered administratively removed from the country for security reasons.

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

The law does not provide citizens with the right to change their government peacefully. There are no democratic institutions, and citizens do not have the right to form political parties.

Federal executive and legislative power is in the hands of the Federal Supreme Council, a body composed of the hereditary rulers of the seven emirates that elects from its members the country's president and vice-president. Decisions at the federal level generally were made by consensus among the rulers, their families, and other leading families. The seven emirate rulers, their extended families, and those persons and families to whom they are allied by historical ties, marriage, or common interest, held political and economic power in their respective emirates.

The rulers appoint the Federal National Council (FNC), a 40-person advisory federal consultative body. The Advisors are drawn from each emirate, with proportion based on emirate population. The FNC has no legislative authority but it may question ministers and make policy recommendations to the Cabinet. Its sessions usually were open to the public.
families were presumed to have the right to rule, but their incumbency ultimately depended on the quality of their leadership and their responsiveness to their subjects' needs. Emirate rulers were accessible, in varying degrees, to citizens who had a problem or a request.

There were very few women in senior positions. There were no female members of the FNC. In Sharjah, there were five women in the 40-seat Consultative Council. The new female Council members served on the Council's Family Development Committee. However, they reportedly were not limited to working on social issues and may also join the Council's other committees if they choose to do so. Other women in senior government positions included an undersecretary in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and an assistant undersecretary for planning and evaluation in the Ministry of Education. On July 8, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs swore in eight female diplomats, raising the total number of women serving in the diplomatic corps to 16. Prior to 2001, women were not allowed to serve as diplomats.

Although the small Shi'a minority enjoyed commercial success, few Shi'as held top positions in the federal government.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Few domestic and international human rights groups operate in the country. Although they must register with the government and are subject to regulations, in practice they generally operate without government restriction. There are legal restrictions regarding investigating and publishing findings on human rights cases. However, these restrictions, if violated, are often overlooked, and Government officials generally are cooperative and responsive to the groups.

In August, the Government closed the Zayed Centre for Coordination and Follow-up, a local think tank that published and distributed literature, sponsored lectures, and operated a website. The center published some materials with anti-Jewish themes, and hosted some speakers who promoted anti-Jewish views. The Government stated that it closed the center because its activities "starkly contradicted the principles of interfaith tolerance" advocated by the president.

The Jurists' Association Human Rights Committee, which focuses on human rights education, operated an independent domestic human rights NGO. During the year, the Committee regularly conducted seminars and symposia throughout the year on various human rights issues.

AI last visited the country in September 2002. During the year, the Government cooperated with other foreign NGOs and worked with foreign governments on issues involving the practice of trafficking in boys for use as child camel jockeys (see Section 6.f.). The Ministry of the Interior operated a Human Rights Department to monitor abuses and to increase human rights awareness. The Dubai Police Academy regularly offered a course on human rights in its curriculum for fourth-year students.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for equality before the law without regard to race, nationality, or social status; however, there was institutional and cultural discrimination based on sex and nationality.

Women

Abuse and rape are criminal offenses, and offenders are prosecuted and penalized. There were some reported cases of spousal abuse. The law protects women from verbal abuse and harassment from men, and violators are subject to criminal action. Police units were stationed at major public hospitals so that victims of abuse may file complaints, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Shari'a courts. In addition, attending physicians may call police to interview suspected victims of abuse. Social workers and counselors also maintained offices in public hospitals. However, women sometimes were reluctant to file formal charges for social, cultural, and economic reasons. When abuse is reported to local police, authorities may take action to protect the complainant. The Women's Da'waa Administration, part of the Dubai Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Department, operates a telephone hotline for women and children. The hotline has direct access to the Dubai Police, and is open to requests for assistance from women in all emirates.

There continued to be credible reports of physical and sexual abuse of female domestic servants by some local and foreign employers (see Section 6.e.).

"Honor killings" were rare and there were no reports during the year.

Prostitution is illegal; however, it has become an increasing problem in recent years, particularly in Dubai. Substantial numbers of women reportedly arrive regularly from the states of the former Soviet Union, Africa, East Asia, Eastern Europe, and other states of the Middle East for temporary stays, during which they allegedly engage in prostitution and possibly other activities connected with organized crime. While some prostitutes were trafficked to the country, there was credible evidence others entered the country of their own volition to make substantially more money than in their home countries (see Section 6.f.).

While prostitution was acknowledged widely to exist, the Government did not address the issue publicly because of societal
sensitivities. However, during the year, there were newspaper reports highlighting the problems of prostitution and trafficking. In an effort to combat prostitution, the Dubai police conducted special patrols in areas frequented by prostitutes, and the immigration and police forces formed special units that conduct raids and sting operations in areas frequented by prostitutes. To further address the problem, authorities restricted the number of visas issued to single young women from certain countries of concern; however, there were ongoing reports that airlines and tourism companies continued to obtain visitor visas for single young women, some of whom may have participated in prostitution upon their arrival. Other unconfirmed reports stated that some women were entering the country at smaller airports in the northern emirates to avoid unwanted scrutiny at the larger airports in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Trafficking in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation remained a problem, although the Government took steps to address the problem. Late in the year, the Dubai Police Department created an "Anti-Trafficking in Persons" department. The new department, along with the Human Rights Care Department and other police sections, the Immigration and Residency Administration, and public prosecutors formed a "Human Rights Council" to reportedly coordinate efforts to safeguard all aspects of human rights, and combat trafficking in persons (see Section 6.f.). Neither the labor law nor the civil service law, which covers labor matters in the public sector, prohibits the employment of women. A man has no right under Shari'a law to ban his wife from working if she was employed at the time of their marriage. By custom and tradition, some government bodies do not employ married women without their husbands' written consent. Reportedly in such cases, permission usually was granted.

There are no legal prohibitions against women owning their own businesses. Traditionally, professional women, including doctors, architects, and lawyers, did not face restrictions on licensing businesses in their names. The Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce regularly conducted programs to encourage small business entrepreneurship by women. In October, the First Economic Business Women's Forum, sponsored by the General Women's Union, provided a networking platform for Arab businesswomen, as well as ways to enhance the role of Arab businesswomen in the economic field. The Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Abu Dhabi and Dubai Emirates had Businesswomen's Councils.

Women who worked outside the home sometimes did not receive equal benefits, such as housing, and some faced discrimination in promotion. For example, if a woman and her husband were both employed by the Government, both housing allowances will be paid to the husband because he is obliged under Shari'a law to provide for housing. The Government provided employee housing allowances to single women and to married women whose husbands were employed in the private sector.

Maternity leave for public sector employees is a minimum of 60 days to a maximum of 6 months--2 months with full pay, 2 additional months of nursing leave with half salary, and the possibility of 2 more months without salary.

Opportunities for women were growing in government service, education, private business, and health services. According to a Ministry of Planning report issued during the year, citizen and noncitizen women constituted approximately 22 percent of the national workforce. The Government publicly encouraged citizen women to join the workforce and ensured public sector employment for all that apply. Women comprise the majority of primary and secondary school teachers and health care workers, and accounted for almost half of all government workers.

The Shari'a law of inheritance applies equally to men and women, although laws of distribution may differ. When a woman marries, her separate property--including her dowry, which is set by law at a maximum of approximately $13,700 (50,000 dirhams)--and the income of her separate property remain under her control and are not commingled with the separate property of her husband. During the marriage, the husband is obliged to provide a marital home and necessities for his wife and children. In the event of divorce, a woman takes her separate property, any amounts she receives in a property settlement with her husband, plus any allowances granted to her for maintenance for herself and her children.

Custom dictates that a husband can bar his wife, minor children, and adult unmarried daughters from leaving the country. When practiced, this was commonly accomplished by taking custody of their passports (see Section 2.d.).

Shari'a law is applied in personal status cases. The law permits men to have more than one wife, but not more than four at any given time.

Divorce is permissible. A woman may be granted a divorce if she can prove that her husband has inflicted physical or moral harm upon her. A woman also may sue for divorce if her husband has deliberately stayed away from her for a minimum of 3 months, or if he has not maintained the upkeep of her or her children. Divorced women also normally receive custody of female children until they reach the age of maturity or marry. Divorced women are also normally granted custody of male children until they reach the age of 13. If the court deems the mother to be unfit, custody normally reverts to the next able female relative on the mother's side. A woman who remarries may forfeit her right to the custody of children from a previous marriage.

The law prohibits cohabitation by unmarried couples; however, authorities generally did not pursue such cases. The Government may imprison and deport noncitizen women if they bear children out of wedlock. In the event that a court sentences a woman to prison for such an offense, local authorities, at the request of the prisoner, may hold the newborn children in a special area within the confines of the prison or place them with a relative. In rare cases, children are held in other facilities until the mother's release from prison. In Dubai Emirate, unmarried pregnant noncitizen women generally must marry the father of the child or repatriate to their home country. Otherwise, both parties are subject to arrest for fornication.
The law prohibits sexual harassment. As a form of deterrence, Dubai-based newspapers regularly published pictures of men arrested in Dubai for harassing women in public places.

Women constitute nearly 72 percent of the country's student body. Coeducation is prohibited in government schools and universities, with the one exception of the UAE University Executive MBA Program. In this program, men and women, as well as Emirati and expatriate students, were allowed to take classes together. The American Universities in Dubai and Sharjah, both private institutions, are coeducational as well. Government-sponsored women's centers which provide adult education and technical training courses. The federal armed forces accepts female volunteers. The Dubai Police College also recruits women. Many are employed in airports, immigration offices, and women's prisons.

Children

The Government is committed to children's rights and welfare, and expends resources on the welfare of child citizens; however, noncitizen children receive fewer benefits.

Citizen children receive free public education through the university level and free health care. Housing also is routinely granted to citizens with children who apply for this benefit in their respective emirates. Some citizens opted for a land grant and interest-free loans available to finance building a house, since the waiting period was long for the Government to provide a house. Citizens employed by the Government also are eligible to receive aid from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare for children who are under the age of 18, are unmarried, or have disabilities.

Noncitizen resident children are not permitted to enroll in public schools unless they live in rural areas that lack private schools. Many foreign workers in private sector employment received education allowances as part of their salary packages. The Government provided an annual subsidy of approximately $1,600 (6,000 dirhams) per family to its noncitizen employees for private school tuition for those who do not receive the extra salary benefit.

Citizen children are required to attend school-segregated by gender-through the sixth grade, the last grade of primary education, when children can be as young as 10 or 11 years old. However, compulsory education was not enforced, and some children did not attend school.

Child abuse was not prevalent. Trafficking of young, noncitizen boys employed as camel jockeys continued to be a problem; however, the Government took measures to eliminate the use of boys under the age of 15 as camel jockeys (see Sections 6.c., 6.d., and 6.f.).

Persons with Disabilities

The law states that there is no federal legislation requiring accessibility for persons with disabilities; however, most public buildings provided access to disabled persons. There were no reported incidents of discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, or in the provision of other state services.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs sponsored six government-managed physical and mental rehabilitation centers, which were open only to citizens. During the year, 17 additional similar centers were created by individuals, associations, and local governments. The Ministry of Interior runs a Rehabilitation and Employment Special Care Center to provide training for people with disabilities, with the goal of integrating them into society. Other rehabilitation centers were partially owned by the Government or were maintained by charity associations. Initiatives included monthly social aid funds, special education, transportation assistance, and sponsoring a Special Olympics team. There was also a significant amount of nongovernmental financial assistance, services, and emotional support to persons with disabilities.

The Ministry of the Interior operated, in Abu Dhabi Emirate, a Rehabilitation, Training, and Recruitment Center for People with Special Needs. The center provided comprehensive education, training, guidance, and job placement assistance to disabled persons between 14 and 40 years of age.

During the year, the Cabinet appropriated 1 percent of all federal jobs in the government sector for persons with disabilities.

Citizens employed by the Government who have disabled children are eligible to receive financial assistance for their maintenance from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Societal discrimination against noncitizens, while not legally sanctioned, was prevalent and occurred in most areas of daily life, including employment, housing, and social interaction. Employment, immigration, and security policies, as well as cultural attitudes towards noncitizens, who comprised approximately 85 percent of the national population, were conditioned by national origin.
It was estimated that more than 50 percent of foreign workers were from the Indian subcontinent. Noncitizens are denied access to many free or reduced-cost services provided by the Government to citizens, including child and adult education, health care, housing, and social and recreational club memberships.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law does not entitle workers to form or join unions, and no unions existed. However, the government allowed workers to associate freely for the advancement of common goals and interests. In practice, workers addressed grievances and negotiated disputes or matters of interest with employers through formal and informal mechanisms.

In April, the Government reportedly implemented ILO biohazard rules on occupational health and safety, and ratified ILO convention 81 on labor inspections. Discussions between the Government and the ILO regarding implementation of a national labor union and labor rights were ongoing during the year. The Government has not ratified either of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) "Core" Conventions on Freedom of Association, Nos. 87 and 98.

Since 1995, the country has been suspended from the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation insurance programs because of the Government's lack of compliance with internationally recognized worker rights standards. The ILO reported in April that the country, along with other Gulf States, had agreed to start projects to improve respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Although the law does not grant workers the right to engage in collective bargaining, it expressly authorizes collective work dispute resolution. The Government granted some professional associations greater freedom to raise work-related concerns, to lobby the Government for redress, or to file grievances with the Government.

Labor law does not address the right to strike; however, the media has quoted a high-ranking Ministry of Labor official as saying that the law does not forbid strikes, and if laborers are denied their rights, they can stop working. In practice, there were numerous strikes by private sector employees in addition to organized gatherings of workers who complained of unpaid wages to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. In May, 1,600 workers reportedly went on strike in Dubai to protest a company decision to stop paying overtime. There were no reports that workers who went on strike were deported. The Government prohibits strikes by public sector employees on national security grounds.

The Ministry of Labor reviews employment contracts for workers in the industrial and service sectors to ensure compliance with the labor laws.

The Ministry of Labor distributed information to foreign workers outlining their rights under the labor law and how to pursue labor disputes, whether individually or collectively. Employees may file individual employment dispute complaints with the Ministry of Labor, which serves as the mediator between the parties. If the dispute remains unresolved, the employee may file a complaint with the labor court system. In a collective work dispute concerning a subject of interest to a group in an establishment, trade, vocation or in a certain vocational sector, employees or employers may file complaints with the Ministry of Labor if they are unable to settle such disputes amicably. If the Ministry of Labor is unable to mediate a settlement within 10 days, the complaint is submitted to a Conciliation Committee for settlement. Either the employee or employer can appeal the Conciliation Committee's decision to a Supreme Committee of Conciliation, whose decision is final. While these regulations exist, there was little information available about their implementation in practice.

Labor laws do not cover, and therefore do not protect, government employees, domestic servants, and agricultural workers. The latter two groups face considerable difficulty in negotiating employment contracts because the mandatory requirements contained in the labor law do not apply. They also face considerable difficulty in obtaining assistance to resolve disputes with their employers. The employer generally ties an employee's residency or visa to his employment and sponsorship. If the employee terminates his employment and is unable to secure new employment and a new sponsor, the employee loses residency and can be required to leave the country.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs intensified the inspection of establishments to ensure compliance with labor laws and ferret out violators.

The Ministry of Interior's Naturalization and Residency Administration reviews the contracts of foreign domestic employees as part of the residency permit processing to ensure that the negotiated salaries and terms are adequate. Although not protected by the national labor law, domestic workers may bring work-related disputes to conciliation committees organized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs or to special labor courts.

Businesses in free trade zones must comply with federal labor laws; however, the Ministry of Labor did not regulate them. Instead, each free trade zone maintains its own labor department to address workers' concerns.
c. Prohibition of Forced or Bonded Labor

Forced or bonded labor is illegal; however, some employment agents continued to bring foreign workers to the country under conditions approaching indenture. Some women reportedly were brought to the country for service sector employment and were later forced into prostitution (see Section 6.f.). Some low-paid unskilled and semi-skilled workers were victims of contract switching.

The Government prohibits forced and bonded child labor and generally enforced this prohibition effectively. In particular, it took concrete steps to resolve problems faced by child camel jockeys (see Sections 4, 6.d., and 6.f.).

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The labor law prohibits employment of persons under the age of 15 and has special provisions for employing those 15 to 18 years of age. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is responsible for enforcing the regulations. The Government does not issue work permits for foreign workers under the age of 18 years. Child labor was not tolerated, with the exception in the past of child camel jockeys (see Section 5, 6.c., and 6.f.). In 2002, the Government implemented and began enforcing a child camel jockey ban, building on a previous ban passed in 1993. There are criminal penalties for violators of a child camel jockey ban up to and including imprisonment. The ban prohibits the use of camel jockeys less than 15 years old and weighing less than 45 kilograms (99 pounds).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Approximately 98 percent of the private sector workforce consisted of foreigners. The country also was a destination for a large number of unskilled workers, including up to 300,000 domestic servants, most of them women from South and East Asia, and an even larger number of unskilled male workers, mostly from South Asia. These unskilled laborers actively competed for jobs in the country and other Gulf countries, and sometimes were subject to poor working conditions.

In January, the Government adopted a 6-month amnesty program that encouraged illegal immigrants to exit the country without paying fines or suffering other legal liabilities related to their immigration status. The Government's stated purpose in implementing the amnesty was to regulate and stabilize the labor market by removing marginal and ineffective manpower. Official reports declared that approximately 100,000 illegal laborers departed the country during the amnesty.

The standard workday is 8 hours per day, and the standard workweek is 6 days per week; however, these standards were not enforced strictly. Certain types of workers, notably domestic servants and agricultural workers, are not covered by labor laws and were reportedly obliged to work longer than the mandated standard. According to the Ministry of Labor and the Labor Law, employees are entitled 2 days per month after finishing six months on the job, up until that person passes the one year mark. After finishing 1 year on the job, the employee is entitled to 30 calendar days of annual leave in addition to the holidays. There is no minimum wage. Salaries depended on the occupation and employer and ranged from $109 (400 dirhams) per month for construction workers working for companies to much higher salaries for highly skilled employees. Compensation packages generally provided housing or housing allowances. In addition, other benefits, such as homeward passage or health cards for minimal to no-cost health care, were often provided for employees by their employers. Local newspapers detailed numerous cases of non-payment of wages to foreign workers, but also reported the Ministry of Labor blacklisted hundreds of firms for violating labor laws, particularly the failure to pay salaries.

The Ministry Labor and Social Affairs reviews labor contracts and does not approve any pact that stipulates a clearly unacceptable wage.

Most foreign workers do not earn the salary required to obtain residency permits for their families. The required monthly minimum salary to permit accompanying families is $1,090 (3,924 dirhams) or $817 (2,941 dirhams), when a housing allowance is provided.

In 2002, a number of citizens were involuntarily transferred, retired, or terminated from government employment reportedly due to their affiliations or opinions affecting the long held assumption of almost total job security for citizens. The federal civil service laws, rather than the labor laws, covered public sector employees. According to press reports, 10 national employees of the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Awqaf filed complaints in June alleging that adverse employment actions taken against them involuntarily, prior to the legal age of retirement, were in violation of the civil service laws and the Social Security Law. There were no further developments at year's end. In 2002, some employees of the Ministry of Education and Youth also were affected by adverse employment decisions. Press reports indicated that these national employees were retired involuntarily, whereas others were transferred involuntarily to other federal ministries. The affected employees claimed they had good service records and alleged that the adverse employment actions were taken without stated reasons, cause, notice or process. There were no further developments at year's end. In 2002, a number of workers from the construction, transport, hotel and education sectors filed complaints with the Labor Ministry over unpaid salary and loss of benefits, there were no further developments on these cases at year's end. In 2001, the Government introduced a law requiring employers to deposit guarantees with third party banks to protect employees from working without wages. Banks, insurance and petroleum firms, certain hotels, and companies owned wholly or partially by the Government are exempt from the guarantee requirement. The
Labor Ministry announced that the institution of bank guarantees had been mostly successful as the number of labor disputes, had decreased. After reports that some employers were making their employees pay the amount of the bank guarantee, the Labor Ministry warned employers that such actions were in violation of the labor laws.

Some foreign nationals involved in disputes with employers -- particularly in cases in which the employee signs a contract containing a clause not to complete (i.e. the employee must work for the full duration of the contract) -- can be blacklisted by the employer with immigration authorities, effectively preventing their return for a specified period of time. Employers also have the option to petition to ban from the work force for 6 months any foreign employee who leaves his job without fulfilling the terms of his contract (see Section 2.d.).

Employers did not always follow laws regarding the sponsorship of foreign employees. Under the regulations, a company that has one or more employee whose work permit has expired and not been renewed will be barred from employing new staff. However, the rule was enforced unevenly.

In March, the Government enacted a law requiring all foreign workers seeking jobs in the private sector to have at least a high school certificate or equivalent degree. Arabs and construction, agricultural, and domestic workers are exempt from the regulation.

The Ministries of Health and of Labor and Social Affairs, municipalities, and civil defense enforce health and safety standards, and the Government requires every large industrial concern to employ a certified occupational safety officer. However, health and safety standards were not observed uniformly.

In July, the Government approved the recommendations developed at the ILO Conference in June, requiring new standards for the prevention of biological hazards in the workplace.

In 2002, in Dubai, the steel roof of a four-story power plant building under construction collapsed, killing 9 laborers and injuring 19, 5 of them seriously. During the year, following investigations, the Minister of Labor required the responsible companies to make visits to the building to ensure builders were adopting safety measures.

The law requires that employers provide employees with a safe work environment. Medical experts in the country reported that it is inadvisable for laborers to work outdoors when the temperature exceeds 40 degrees Celsius. In August, local press reported complaints filed by Filipino workers against an employer for violating health and safety laws by forcing them to work outside during peak heat hours. Also, in August, the Ministry of Labor permitted Moroccan laborers to terminate their employment contracts due to their inability to adapt to the extreme heat of the local climate.

According to media reports, safety measures include wearing helmets during the summer heat, and adjusting work hours so that workers can be less exposed to the sun. Workers’ jobs are not protected if they remove themselves from what they consider to be unsafe working conditions; however, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs can require employers to reinstate workers who are dismissed for not performing unsafe work. Injured workers are entitled to fair compensation, and all workers have the right to lodge grievances with ministry officials, who make an effort to investigate all complaints.

Rulings on complaints may be appealed within the ministry, and ultimately to the courts. However, reportedly many workers choose not to protest for fear of reprisals or deportation.

There were reports of abuse of domestic workers by their employers. Allegations included excessive work hours, nonpayment of wages, and verbal, physical, and sexual abuse.

Sponsorship and residency laws do not permit most foreign national employees to change employers. Some categories of professional or skilled workers are allowed to change employers after a certain period of time; however, most workers are not allowed to change sponsors. Employers normally hold their employees’ passports and many servants are unable to leave their employment and return to their home countries or find other jobs. In July, the Federal Supreme Court ruled that employers cannot withhold employees’ passports, because they are personal documents (see Section 6.f.). The Ministry of Interior issued a statement enforcing the ruling. When reported, police implement the laws and act to have the passports returned to foreign workers. However, there was no information regarding the extent that these actions have had a practical impact.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not specifically prohibit trafficking in persons, although child smuggling, prostitution, and pornography are crimes. Trafficking in women and girls used as prostitutes and domestic laborers, and men used as servants, laborers and unskilled workers, and young boys used as camel jockeys continues to be a problem. Camel racing regulations prohibit the use of children as camel jockeys, in an effort to end this use of child labor and eliminate the trafficking of young boys to the country for this purpose. To implement the ban, the Government tightened controls at points of entry into the country for noncitizen boys under the age of 15 years. The Government further enforced the ban by conducting inspections at camel races.
The Government established the following penalties for violators of the child camel jockey ban: first offense, a fine of approximately $5,500 (20,000 dirhams); second offense, a ban from participation in camel races for 1 year; third and subsequent offenses, imprisonment.

The regulations prohibit the use of camel jockeys who are less than 15 years of age and weigh less than 45 kilograms (99 pounds). All camel jockeys are required to have government-issued identification cards, which are issued after physical examinations by a special medical committee using x-rays and other tests to confirm that the children are at least 15 years of age. The Government also regularly performed DNA testing to prove the relationship of foreign boys coming into the country to work in the camel racing industry and adults claiming to be their parents.

In 2002, Bangladeshi NGOs reported that camel jockeys working in the country were subjected to extremely harsh conditions that at times led to serious injuries or death. Some of the children were allegedly subject to physical abuse by their employers. Further reports accused some employers of physical neglect due to the practice of underfeeding the boys in order to keep down their weight. The Government took steps to remove these boys from these conditions and repatriate them to their countries of origin.

The Government worked closely with the governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh to repatriate many of the boys who were trafficked to work as camel jockeys. During the year, Pakistani Embassy in Abu Dhabi, stated that 125 Pakistani boys were repatriated. The Bangladeshi Consulate estimated that it repatriated between 120 and 150 boys during the year. There were no statistics available to document how many more of these boys were repatriated, or how many remained in the country.

There continued to be credible reports of trafficking in women and girls to the country, although the Government took some measures to eliminate this practice. Some foreign diplomats and NGOs reported some women were brought to the country under the false pretense of working in the service sector or as domestic servants, but then were forced into prostitution. When these women and girls arrived in the country, the traffickers did not provide the promised employment. The traffickers reportedly took their passports and forced them to work as prostitutes to repay their travel expenses; however, the women received little payment from the traffickers, which made it difficult to repay their debts. The Federal Supreme Court has ruled that it is illegal for employers to require employees to turn over their passports (see Section 6.e.). Police were called upon to enforce the ruling, and have done so when incidents were reported.

Traffickers warned the women that police will arrest them if they turned to the authorities for help. It was unclear whether this trafficking activity was conducted with the full complicity of the women’s citizen sponsors, or if the women’s noncitizen agents were exploiting the sponsorship system to engage in illicit activity (see Section 5).

Law enforcement actively investigated trafficking cases and complaints of abuse. The Institute for Judicial Training and Studies at the Ministry of Justice has mandatory courses for prosecutors and judges on human rights, sex offenses, immigration, and labor violations. The Department of Naturalization and Residency at the Ministry of Interior established a central operations room to track the arrival and departure of individuals in the country, some of whom may be trafficking victims. The Dubai Tourist Security Department operated a 24-hour hotline to assist visitors with problems. Information about the hotline was distributed at ports of entry. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked with source country embassies to combat trafficking. The Ministry of Health trained medical personnel on how to spot specific signs of abuse.

The Government also provided assistance to trafficking victims. Counseling services are available in public hospitals. Police did not jail trafficking victims, and they were not prosecuted for violations of other laws. The Dubai Police developed a Crime Victims’ Assistance Program, and assigned program coordinators in police stations throughout the city. Police were also trained in victim protection and assistance.