

On 9 October, the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights held hearings on human rights in Turkmenistan.

Rights to freedom of expression and association

Human rights defenders were unable to operate openly. Critical media reporting was rarely tolerated and journalists, human rights defenders and other activists continued to be subjected to harassment.

Several prisoners of conscience remained imprisoned for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression. Annakurban Amanklychev and Sapardurdy Khadziev remained arbitrarily detained after being sentenced following unfair trials in August 2006 for their human rights work.

■ On 11 January, the Law on Political Parties was passed, legalizing the formation of political parties. On 21 August, the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs was established, the first alternative to the ruling Turkmenistan Democratic Party permitted since 1991. However, human rights defenders and political opposition activists expressed doubts about the government's willingness to allow open political debate.

■ On 5 October, former government minister Geldimurat Nurmuhammedov was detained in Ashgabat and sent to a drug rehabilitation centre in Dashoguz for six months of treatment. He had no history of drug use. There were fears he would be subjected to forced medical treatment, possibly as punishment for his political activities and an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, where he criticized the government and called the ruling party "unlawful".

Torture and other ill-treatment

There were credible allegations of torture and other ill-treatment by security forces against people suspected of criminal offences. These included electric shocks, asphyxiation, rape, forcibly administering psychotropic drugs, deprivation of food and drink and exposure to extreme cold. Impunity for such abuses remained the norm and complaints by victims were rarely pursued.

■ On 4 August, the Foreign Ministry announced that amendments had been made to the Criminal Code criminalizing torture.

Prison conditions

Prison conditions fell short of international standards. Overcrowding, poor sanitation and poor nutrition were common and facilitated the spread of disease. Bribes were often required to obtain food and medicine.

Enforced disappearances and incommunicado detention

The whereabouts of dozens of people convicted in unfair trials in 2002 and 2003 for the alleged assassination attempt on then President Niyazov remained unknown. Relatives had heard nothing for over 10 years, and did not know if their loved ones were still alive. The authorities reportedly harassed and intimidated relatives of detainees who tried to lodge appeals.

Despite allegations by non-government sources that at least eight of those convicted had died in detention, the authorities failed to disclose any information or open investigations.

■ Turkish Tyrmyev, former Commander of Border Troops of Turkmenistan, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in 2002 for abuse of power. His relatives did not know his location but reported in March that he had been given an additional seven-year sentence as his release date approached, allegedly for a crime against a prison guard.

Freedom of movement

The *propiska* system of registering an individual's place of residence remained in place, restricting freedom of movement and impeding access to housing, employment and services.

UGANDA

REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Head of state and government:

Yoweri Kaguta Museveni

Restrictions on freedoms of expression and association continued. LGBTI people continued to face harassment. Police and other law enforcement officials continued to commit human rights violations, including torture, and perpetrators were not held to account.

Background

The government accepted recommendations on the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and non-discrimination in February during the assessment of the country's human rights record under the UN Universal Periodic Review in 2011.

The courts nullified constituency election results from 2011 which led to by-elections. Opposition parties subsequently won seven out of the nine seats contested.

Allegations of embezzlement within the Office of the Prime Minister led the UK, Sweden and Denmark to withhold aid money. Ministers charged in connection with allegations of embezzlement of public funds intended for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2007 were acquitted.

Freedom of expression

Journalists, opposition leaders and activists critical of the authorities continued to face intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest and trumped-up charges. At least 70 journalists reported physical attacks and arbitrary detention during the year.

■ Police harassed, beat and damaged equipment of journalists Isaac Kasamani and William Ntege while they filmed the arrest of Dr Kizza Besigye, leader of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), in September.

The government body regulating the mass media, the Ugandan Media Council (UMC), banned the staging of two plays in theatres. When one of them, *The River and the Mountain*, was informally staged in other areas in September, its co-producer, David Cecil, was arrested. He was charged with "disobeying an order by a public official" and released on bail. It was strongly suspected that the play was banned because the authorities believed it promoted homosexuality. Another play, *State of the Nation*, which was critical of the government's stance on corruption and poor governance issues, was banned in October. The producers subsequently staged the play twice and no further action was taken against them.

Freedom of assembly and association

The Attorney General declared the pressure group Activists for Change (A4C) an unlawful society and banned it in April. The group had resumed demonstrations which began in 2011 against the rising cost of living, corruption and poor governance,

and which were violently suppressed by the police. The declaration was inconsistent with respect for the rights of freedom of assembly, speech and association.

In October, the authorities banned demonstrations ahead of Uganda's 50th anniversary of independence, and dispersed marches organized by the group For God and My Country (4GC) to demand investigations into the killings of protesters in 2011. Dr Kizza Besigye, leader of the FDC, was arbitrarily arrested twice and released without charge. Police justified the restrictions on the grounds that 4GC comprised many of the same people as the banned group A4C.

Government targeted advocacy NGOs and activists with dissenting views on oil governance, land, corruption and human rights for intimidation, harassment, surveillance and obstruction. Offices of some NGOs were reportedly broken into and equipment stolen and police searched and confiscated equipment of some NGOs.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

The 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill was reintroduced before Parliament in February, but was not debated pending a report by the Parliamentary and Legal Affairs Committee. In October, the Speaker of Parliament stated that the Bill would "soon" be debated. If passed, it would further entrench discrimination against LGBTI people and lead to other human rights violations.

Restrictions on the right to freedom of association by LGBTI groups increased. In February the Minister of Ethics and Integrity forcibly closed a workshop for LGBTI activists in Entebbe, alleging that it was illegal. In June, police arbitrarily closed a workshop and briefly detained the organizers. The workshop, organized by the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, was to teach human rights monitoring skills to LGBTI activists from Rwanda, Tanzania and Kenya, as well as Uganda. The Ministry of Internal Affairs threatened to deregister 38 NGOs, accusing them of promoting homosexuality.

International justice

In May, Caesar Acellam Otto, a senior commander in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), was captured by government forces. The same month, the Minister of

Internal Affairs removed a provision in the Amnesty Act 2010 which had granted amnesty to LRA fighters. The law had previously shielded perpetrators of international crimes from prosecution and denied justice to victims.

The government began investigations into Caesar Acellam Otto, but by the end of the year no charges were preferred against him and his detention remained incommunicado. It was unclear whether he and others subsequently captured would be effectively prosecuted by the International Crimes Division of the High Court.

The International Criminal Court's arrest warrants issued in 2005 remained in force for LRA leader Joseph Kony and three LRA commanders. The men were still at large at the end of the year.

Refugees and migrants

The cessation of international protection for Rwandan refugees and asylum-seekers who fled before 1998 was postponed until June 2013. Uganda, Rwanda and UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, held tripartite discussions about implementing the cessation clause.

In March, the Constitutional Court heard a petition to determine whether refugees have the right to acquire Ugandan citizenship. The hearing was repeatedly postponed and remained pending, raising concerns that it might be difficult for Rwandan refugees who do not want to return to Rwanda to obtain alternative status, including citizenship.

Over 40,000 Congolese refugees fled into Uganda because of renewed fighting between the Congolese army and the armed group known as M23, and the general insecurity caused by various armed groups in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from April onwards.

Torture and other ill-treatment

The Anti-Torture Act, which came into force in 2012, prohibits, criminalizes and holds individuals responsible for acts of torture. It expands the definition of torture to include non-state actors and makes information obtained through torture inadmissible in court. If enforced, the Anti-Torture Act would address impunity, enable justice for the victims and reduce torture.

However, torture and other ill-treatment by police remained widespread. Despite investigations by the Uganda Human Rights Commission, no action was

taken to hold law enforcement officials responsible for human rights violations to account, or to grant victims and their families an effective remedy.

Death penalty

Civilian and military courts continued to impose the death penalty for capital offences. There were no executions in 2012.

UKRAINE

UKRAINE

Head of state:

Viktor Yanukovich

Head of government:

Mykola Azarov

Torture and other ill-treatment remained widespread, and impunity for such acts continued. Failings in the criminal justice system led to lengthy periods of pre-trial detention, and a lack of safeguards for detainees. Refugees and asylum-seekers risked detention and forcible return to countries where they faced human rights violations. The rights of LGBTI individuals were at risk.

Torture and other ill-treatment

There were continuing reports of torture and other ill-treatment in police detention. In a report on a visit to Ukraine in 2011, published in November, the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture stated that it had been "inundated with allegations from detained persons" who had been subjected to physical or psychological ill-treatment by police officers. Shevchenkivskiy police station in Kyiv was singled out as being particularly "problematic".

On 18 September, Parliament passed legislation allowing the Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights' Office to carry out the functions of a National Preventive Mechanism, in fulfilment of Ukraine's obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture.

■ Mikhail Belikov, a retired miner, was tortured by police officers from Petrovskiy District police station in Donetsk on 17 June. He was approached by three duty police officers in a park for drinking in public. He reported that he was beaten in the park and then taken