

concern that Māori made up 50% of the total prison population and 65% of the female prison population, despite being only 15% of the general population.

The Working Group underlined the inadequacy of legal protections for 17-year-olds, considered adults under criminal law, and criticized New Zealand's reservation to Article 37(c) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the detention of youth and adult offenders in the same facilities.

WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The 2013 Technical Report on Child Poverty found that 27% of New Zealand children remained in poverty. Māori and Pacific Island children were disproportionately represented in child poverty statistics, highlighting systemic discrimination.

Violence against women and children remained high. Māori were over-represented as both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. The Vulnerable Children Act 2014 aimed to protect children from violence but there was no national plan of action to combat domestic violence.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

New Zealand retained the option to enact legislation to utilize offshore immigration detention centres. Disparities remained in the quality of services provided to refugees who arrived under the humanitarian intake of UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, and those arriving in the country spontaneously and whose refugee claims were accepted by the government.

RIGHTS TO PRIVACY AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

A 2013 report found the Government Communication Security Bureau (GCSB) illegally spied on individuals within New Zealand. Domestic legislation was subsequently amended to allow the GCSB to target New Zealanders' communications.

In 2014 the government passed the Countering Terrorist Fighters Legislation Act

which significantly impacted rights to privacy and freedom of movement. The extremely limited time period for consideration of the bill restricted public consultation and prohibited a robust assessment of compliance with international human rights standards.²

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1. New Zealand rejects international recommendations to address inequality (Press release)
www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/new-zealand-rejects-international-recommendations-address-inequality-2014-0
 2. Joint statement on the Countering Terrorist Fighters (Foreign Fighters) Bill 2014 (Public statement)
www.amnesty.org.nz/files/NEW-ZEALAND_Joint-Statement-on-Countering-Terrorist-Fighters-Bill.pdf

NICARAGUA

Republic of Nicaragua

Head of state and government: **Daniel Ortega Saavedra**

Changes introduced by the government to the Comprehensive Law against Violence against Women raised serious concerns. The total ban on abortion remained in place.

BACKGROUND

Amendments to the Constitution entered into force in February, allowing the President to be elected with a simple majority. Restrictions on consecutive presidential re-election were also lifted.

In May, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture expressed deep concern at the situation of people deprived of liberty in the country. Nicaragua's human rights record was assessed under the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The state accepted recommendations relating to discrimination against Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent but rejected calls for the decriminalization of abortion and to accede

to additional international human rights instruments.

On 19 July, people travelling home after attending the Sandinista revolution anniversary celebrations were shot at in two separate incidents. Five people died and 19 were injured. In October, 12 men were tried and sentenced to between two and 30 years' imprisonment for the attack. Three of them testified in court that they were tortured and forced to give a confession, raising concerns about the investigation and the fairness of the trial.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Reforms passed in September 2013 weakened the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Law against Violence against Women (Law 779), introduced in 2012. As a result of the reforms, women who filed complaints about domestic violence may be offered mediation with their attackers in cases involving crimes punishable by less than five years' imprisonment, such as actual bodily harm, the abduction of children, and threats. This means that women may find themselves having to face their attackers in the mediation process, while those accused of committing abuses may avoid being held to account for their crimes. According to the NGO Women's Network against Violence, seven of the 47 women killed in the first six months of 2014 had been in mediation with their abusive partner. An executive decree issued in July further reinforced the mediation aspect of the law and reduced the definition of femicide to killings of women within relationships. The executive decree raised concerns around the use of mediation to redress violence against women. Numerous legal challenges against the decree were submitted to the Supreme Court of Justice.

The total ban on all forms of abortion remained in place. Since the total ban was introduced in 2006, dozens of appeals against it have been submitted to the Supreme Court of Justice. However, the Court had yet to rule on these appeals.

On 8 March, International Women's Day, a peaceful demonstration to highlight gender inequalities and violence against women was blocked by police. Women human rights defenders claimed they had obtained the necessary permission for the event and feared it marked a further limitation on independent civil society movements.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

No progress was made in investigating alleged beatings of students and senior citizen demonstrators in Managua in June 2013 by what appeared to be government supporters, while the police stood by. More than 100 students supported the protest by senior citizen groups to demand a minimum state pension.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

In March, Indigenous, Afro-descendant and other groups expressed concern at the government's decision to grant a licence for the construction of a major infrastructure project known as the Gran Canal Interoceánico, a channel connecting the Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean. Among other concerns, the groups claimed that the licence was granted without the free, prior or informed consent of the Indigenous groups whose territory the canal would cut across. Works started in December, amid protests that resulted in clashes with protesters and included reports of police beatings of detainees.

NIGER

Republic of Niger

Head of state: **Mahamadou Issoufou**

Head of government: **Brigi Rafini**

A new government was appointed in August 2013 incorporating members of