

been suspended. The legislation removed a number of important safeguards and will allow people to be returned to other countries regardless of Australia's *non-refoulement* obligations under international law.

Australia also maintained its mandatory detention policy for those arriving without valid visas. By 1 December, there were 3,176 individuals in detention centres in mainland Australia and on Christmas Island, including 556 children. In August, the government announced it would transfer the majority of children and their families from onshore detention centres to the community on bridging visas.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Due to the failure of successive governments to effectively address Indigenous disadvantage, Indigenous Peoples continued to be over-represented in prisons. They comprised 27.4% of adults and 57.2% of juveniles in prisons, despite accounting for just 2.3% of all adults and 5.5% of youth in the general population.

In August, a young Aboriginal woman died in police detention in Western Australia when she was returned to custody twice by the local hospital with serious internal injuries. She had been detained to pay a fine, a policy that disproportionately affects Indigenous Peoples.

Between September and December, the Western Australian government demolished the majority of buildings in the remote Aboriginal community of Oombulgurri following a 2011 forced eviction. Many remote communities across Australia were at risk following the Federal government's decision in September to discontinue funding essential and municipal services.

COUNTER-TERROR AND SECURITY

National laws were introduced broadening intelligence agency powers, monitoring online activity and preventing the reporting of unlawful conduct by members of those agencies. New laws criminalized travel to areas abroad designated by the government

as places where a listed terrorist organization was engaged in "hostile activity", while shifting the evidentiary burden on to the accused. The operation of controversial preventative detention and control orders were extended and an ill-defined offence of "advocating" terrorism introduced.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Australia had its fifth periodic review before the UN Committee against Torture in November. The Committee criticized Australia for continuing with its policies of mandatory detention and offshore processing of asylum-seekers. It also raised concerns about overcrowding in prisons and the disproportionately high rates of Indigenous incarceration. The Committee called on Australia to swiftly ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

AUSTRIA

Republic of Austria

Head of state: **Heinz Fischer**

Head of government: **Werner Faymann**

Chronic neglect of detainees in preventive detention was exposed. Inquiries were ongoing into allegations of excessive use of force by police during demonstrations. Second-partner adoption was made legal for same-sex partners. Protection gaps remained in anti-discrimination legislation. A new humanitarian programme to grant refugee status to 1,000 Syrian nationals was launched. Asylum procedures remained long and the provision of independent legal advice to asylum-seekers was inadequate. Austria ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and the Arms Trade Treaty.

PRISON CONDITIONS

Media investigations exposed structural shortcomings in the juvenile prison and preventive detention systems. In May, reports of the neglect of detainees prompted the Minister of Justice to accelerate the planned reform of the preventive detention system for dangerous offenders. Recommendations issued in October 2013 by a taskforce on the detention of juveniles, established by the Ministry of Justice, were gradually being implemented. Also in May, media reports revealed that in Stein prison a 74-year-old man held in preventive detention since 2008 had been gravely neglected for several months, including being left without medical care. Criminal investigations were opened against prison officials and guards.

POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES

In January and May, clashes between police and protesters prompted allegations that police used excessive force to contain demonstrators. An inquiry by the Ombudsman Board was ongoing. In May, the Minister of the Interior told media that police officers could be equipped with body cameras. A group of experts was instructed to look into their use. The Minister reiterated the government's rejection of a compulsory identification system for police officers.

DISCRIMINATION

Legal amendments were introduced to allow same-sex couples to adopt each other's biological children, following a European Court of Human Rights judgment in February 2013. In all other circumstances, adoption continued to be denied to same-sex couples.

Despite the government's commitment in the UN Universal Periodic Review follow-up process to fill protection gaps, the Anti-Discrimination Law did not ensure equal protection against all forms of discrimination. Gaps remained in particular as to protection against discrimination on the basis of religion and belief, age and sexual orientation in the access to goods and services.

REFUGEES, ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND MIGRANTS

In April, Austria launched a new humanitarian admission programme for 1,000 Syrian refugees from countries neighbouring Syria and committed to granting refugee status to all upon arrival.

The asylum procedure remained long, often lasting several years. The authorities failed to ensure effective and adequate access for all asylum-seekers to independent legal advice throughout the procedure.

Asylum-seekers' access to adequate housing, social benefits and health care remained inadequate. Conditions in some reception centres were reportedly poor and unhygienic and in some cases amounted to degrading treatment.

AZERBAIJAN

Republic of Azerbaijan

Head of state: **Ilham Aliyev**

Head of government: **Artur Rasizade**

At least six prominent human rights defenders were imprisoned and leading human rights organizations forced to shut down or cease their activities. Independent journalists continued to face harassment, violence and trumped-up criminal charges. Freedom of assembly remained restricted. There were frequent reports of torture and other ill-treatment.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

NGO leaders continued to face threats and harassment from the authorities, including raids by security forces, the confiscation of equipment and imposition of travel bans. At least 10 leading human rights NGOs were prevented from operating as their bank accounts were frozen under a high-profile criminal investigation from May onwards.