

[Home](#)[Issues & Press](#)[Travel & Business](#)[Youth & Education](#)[About State Department](#)

Belgium

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2005](#)

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
March 8, 2006

Belgium, with a population of approximately 10.4 million, is a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarch who plays a mainly symbolic role. The council of ministers (cabinet), led by the prime minister, holds office as long as it retains the confidence of the lower house of the bicameral parliament. Federal parliamentary elections held in May 2003 were free and fair and resulted in a four-party coalition government. The country is a federal state with several levels of government, including national, regional (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels), community (Flemish, Francophone, and German), provincial, and local. The civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and the judiciary provided effective means of addressing individual instances of abuse. The following human rights problems were reported:

- lengthy pretrial detention
- violence against ethnic and religious minorities
- domestic violence against women
- trafficking in women and children

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them.

There was violence towards Muslims and Jews (see section 2.c.).

A delegation of the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) visited the country between April 18 and 27. The delegation followed up on a number of issues examined during previous visits, in particular the treatment of persons allegedly deprived of their liberty by the police, the procedure and methods applied during the repatriation of foreign nationals, as well as the conditions in prisons and psychiatric hospitals. The CPT had not released its finding by year's end. The investigation into the 2003 death of a prisoner at Lantin penitentiary continued and was still pending at year's end.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prisons generally met international standards. The government was upgrading some older facilities but overcrowding remained a problem as incarcerations outpaced construction. During the year the country expanded psychiatric prison ward capacity following criticism of inmate treatment.

Juvenile prisoners were sometimes held with adults. Convicted criminals and pretrial detainees were held together.

The government permitted visits by members of parliament and independent human rights groups; they visited during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The federal police council, an anticorruption unit, and the federal interior ministry managed the operations of the federal police forces. An independent oversight committee monitored police activities and compiled an annual report for parliament. The federal police were responsible for internal security and nationwide law and order. The local police operated branches in all 196 police districts responsible for local law enforcement. There were incidents of corruption in the police force. In March four police in Boom were arrested on corruption charges; their trial began in November. A parliamentary oversight committee continued to report on cases of wrongful use of force, racism, and verbal abuse by police at all levels. These reports were under investigation at year's end.

Arrest and Detention

An individual can be arrested while in the commission of a crime, or based on a warrant issued by a prosecutor, and must be brought before a judge within 24 hours. Detainees are promptly informed of the charges against them. While the law provides for bail, it was not a prevailing practice and was only occasionally granted. In practice arrested persons have prompt access to a lawyer of their choosing or, if they could not afford one, to a state-appointed attorney.

The courts rarely used the Summary Trial Act, which allows for the immediate arrest and summary appearance of criminals caught in the act of committing a crime.

There were no reports of political detainees.

Pretrial confinement was subject to monthly review by a panel of judges, which could extend detention based on established criteria, for example, if the court deemed the arrested person likely to commit further crimes or attempt to flee if released. There were instances where lengthy pretrial detention was a problem. During the year 38 percent of the prison population consisted of pretrial detainees. The average length of pretrial detention was 90 days.

Fehriye Erdhal, a Kurdish woman accused of involvement in a 1996 terrorist attack in Turkey, remained under house arrest. In April the Bruges Chamber of Indictment ruled that she, together with 10 Turkish DHKP/C militants, must appear in court to answer charges of arms possession and belonging to a terrorist organization. In June the same chamber of indictment ruled that the government has no power to try Erdhal for her role in a Turkish murder case of 1996. In October the Ghent chamber of indictment ruled that the court of assizes could not try Erdhal since the Turkish murder case was outside its jurisdiction.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected this provision in practice.

The judicial system is composed of civil and criminal courts, which both refer cases to courts of appeal. The courts of first instance (district courts) are responsible for civil and commercial litigation for matters that exceed the jurisdiction of a justice of the peace. There are five appeal courts and one supreme court of appeal (*Cour de Cassation*) overseeing both the civil and criminal courts. The supreme court of appeal verifies that the law has been correctly applied and that no procedural errors have been committed. When the supreme court of appeal overturns a ruling, the case is referred to one of the appeals courts to reexamine the facts.

The criminal courts consist of the magistrate's court, correctional courts, and the criminal chambers of the court of appeal. Additionally each province has a court of assize, with a public jury judging the cases. These courts have jurisdiction over all the most serious crimes and political crimes. The courts of assize are courts of first and last instance and their rulings cannot be appealed.

Each judicial district has a labor court, which deals with litigation between employers and employees regarding wages, notice, competition clauses, and social security benefits. There is also a magistrate in each district to monitor cases involving religious groups (see section 2.c.).

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. All defendants are presumed innocent and have the right to be present, to have counsel (at public expense if needed), to confront witnesses, to present evidence, and to appeal.

The law authorizes jurisdiction over alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed outside the national territory only when the victim or perpetrator is a citizen of or resides in the country. On June 28, the Brussels Court of Assizes convicted two Rwandan nationals for their part in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. They received 10 and 12 years' imprisonment respectively. In July the same court awarded damages to victims. The government was pursuing the former Chadian president, Hisssein Habre, for crimes against humanity committed against Belgian citizens in Chad.

Political Prisoners

There were no reports of political prisoners.

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

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

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respected these rights in practice and did not restrict academic freedom. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to ensure freedom of speech and of the press.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights in practice.

c. Freedom of Religion

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

The law accorded "recognized" status to six religions and a grouping of nonconfessional philosophical or secular organizations, each of which received benefits from the federal and regional governments. The lack of recognized status generally did not prevent nonrecognized religious groups from freely practicing their religions, and citizens generally practiced their religion without official harassment or impediment.

In 1996 a parliamentary inquiry heard testimony on and from 189 sectarian or nonrecognized religious organizations. As a result of the inquiry, parliament passed a law establishing an independent government funded organization--the Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sects (*Centre d'Information et d'Avis sur les Organisations Sectaires Nuisables* or (CIAOSN). The CIAOSN researches and responds to requests from the government or the public for information about sectarian organizations. While its analysis is not always flattering to the organizations researched, it has yet to declare any group "harmful". For some groups most often inquired about, the CIAOSN has published informational booklets. Some groups continued to complain that their inclusion in the report of the parliamentary commission caused discriminatory action against them. While the list (an annex to the parliamentary proceedings) has no official status, the groups continued to state that the prominence of the list and governmental funding of the CIAOSN caused negative assumptions and guilt by association. In practice the CIAOSN, with a staff of 8 persons, maintained information on more than 500 organizations in its library. In July Justice Minister Laurette Onkelinx announced that the government would not recognize the Church of Scientology and reaffirmed that the church appeared on the parliamentary list.

In June a Brussels appellate court judge ruled that the Church of the Kingdom of God had suffered damage by appearing in the parliamentary report of sectarian organizations. The president of the chamber of representatives argued that the judge's ruling undermined the legislative authority and independence of the lawmakers and filed an appeal with the country's highest court. The case was pending at year's end.

Political leaders avoided parliamentary debate over the use of religious symbols in public schools and allowed individual schools to continue to determine such matters. In June the Antwerp appellate court ruled that public schools could ban headscarves if it serves the educational aims of the school. The Movement against Racism, Anti-Semitism, and Xenophobia appealed to the council of state seeking annulment of individual school directives banning scarves. The appeal was pending at year's end.

The Maaseik municipal authorities fined a woman wearing a *niqaab* (a garment which covers the entire head with only the eyes visible) based on 1993 directive, ordering that all people walking the streets should be identifiable. The community accepted the ruling, and women have refrained from wearing the *niqaab* in public.

There is no provision in immigration law for foreign members of religious groups to enter the country to conduct religious work or for them to obtain work permits for that purpose. However, various religious groups, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, continued to receive visas for members from abroad temporarily to conduct missionary activities.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Jewish advocacy groups noted 27 anti-Semitic incidents during the first half of the year, and Muslim organizations reported several anti-Islamic incidents. As of October there were 42 incidents reported as opposed to 27 for the same period in 2004. These included verbal abuse, swastikas painted on buildings, and a few physical attacks.

In April the Antwerp appellate court convicted an author who in writings denied the existence of the genocide committed by the Nazis. He

was sentenced to one-year's imprisonment and the payment of symbolic damages. He also was stripped of his civil rights for a 10-year period.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2005 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights, and the government generally respected them in practice.

The law prohibits forced exile, and the government did not employ it.

Protection of Refugees

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice the government provided protection against *refoulement*, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution. The government granted refugee status or asylum.

The government also provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 convention and the 1967 protocol and provided it to approximately one thousand persons during the year.

The government cooperated with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers.

The government, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), provided relocation assistance to unsuccessful asylum applicants who agreed to repatriate voluntarily to their country of origin. Unsuccessful applicants who did not leave voluntarily were subject to forced repatriation.

There are six detention centers for aliens who entered the country illegally. During the year the government upgraded its facilities to house underage detainees separately from adults. Children of asylum seekers including those awaiting repatriation attended school. In practice the government delayed repatriation for entire families who had children attending school.

Undocumented asylum seekers arriving by air, whose claims did not appear legitimate as determined by immigration officials, were not allowed to enter but were held in an airport closed detention center while awaiting forced or voluntary repatriation.

During the year Kurdish asylum seekers went on hunger strike and were given a two-month suspension of their deportation order. There were other incidents with asylum seekers on hunger strike in protest of their pending repatriation; their stay in country was not extended.

During the summer there were incidents with the police moving rejected asylum seekers from open to closed detention centers. Following the incidents, advocacy groups and interior ministry officials agreed to make the stay in the closed center prior to deportation as short as possible.

In April a Brussels court ordered the government to pay damages to a Kurd who had waited seven years to receive final word regarding his asylum application. The court found the government had failed to handle the application expeditiously.

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

The law provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens ages 18 and older exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage. Voting in all elections is compulsory, with failure to vote subject to a nominal fine.

Elections and Political Participation

Federal parliamentary elections, considered free and fair, were held in May 2003 and resulted in a four-party coalition government. Most major institutions, including political parties, are divided along linguistic lines. Federal, regional, and linguistic national decisions often take into account the specific needs of each regional and linguistic group. With three official languages, the country had a complex linguistic regime, including language requirements, for various elective and appointive positions. The law prohibits the official financing of any racist or xenophobic party or any party that does not respect human rights.

There were 53 women in the 150-seat chamber of representatives and 26 women in the 71-seat senate; 5 of the 21 federal cabinet ministers were women, and there were 12 female ministers among 33 regional ministers. In 2002 parliament adopted legislation that requires an equal number of male and female candidates on party tickets for all future regional and federal elections.

There were four members of minorities in the chamber of representatives and six members of minorities in the senate; one of the federal cabinet ministers was a member of a minority, and there were two minority regional ministers.

In 2004 the justice minister decided to create a committee to assist in preparing elections for the representative bodies of the Muslim community. Elections for the general assembly took place March 20. Only 43,765 Muslims voted. Candidates of Turkish origin won 40 of the 68 seats of the assembly, those of Moroccan origin garnered 20 seats, those of other backgrounds won 6, and 2 Belgians of European origin were elected. After the election the executive board reached a consensus to elect a larger share of Moroccan origin representatives to the executive board, as they are the largest Muslim community in the country.

Government Corruption and Transparency

There were several revelations of medium-scale corruption by local officials during the year. Two city councilors were held for several weeks before receiving bail on charges that they took personal benefit from expenses paid by a local housing society they managed. As part of the fallout, the minister president in charge of the region in Wallonia was forced to resign. Other cases remain under investigation.

The government provides free access to citizens and noncitizens to government information; however, there were exceptions, such as material involving national security.

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

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were very cooperative and responsive to their views.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the government generally enforced these laws; however, violence against women, trafficking in persons, and violence against minorities were problems.

Women

Domestic violence against women, including spousal abuse, remained a problem. One in five women was subject to domestic violence, with 13.4 per cent subjected to serious violence (requiring hospitalization). In 2004 federal police reported 10,137 cases of domestic violence. Under a national pilot implemented in two judicial districts, police reports must be forwarded to the prosecutor's office for action. No results were available at year's end. The law defines and criminalizes domestic violence and provides for fines and incarceration. Figures for prosecutions and convictions were not available at year's end. The law allows police to enter a home without the consent of the head of household when investigating a domestic violence complaint; however, there were complaints that the police did not do this frequently in practice. By year's end the government had not fully implemented provisions of the law that required it to establish and maintain a database of statistics on domestic violence.

A number of government-supported shelters and telephone help lines were available across the country. In addition to providing shelter and advice, many offered assistance on legal matters, job placement, and psychological counseling to both partners.

Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal, and the government prosecutes cases of rape. However, no data was available on the number of persons charged or convicted of rape, including spousal rape. A convicted rapist can be imprisoned for a minimum of 10 years to a maximum of life. The maximum sentence is based on the age of the victim.

Prostitution is not illegal; however, the law prohibits organizing prostitution or assisting immigration for the purpose of prostitution.

Trafficking in women was a problem (see section 5, Trafficking).

Sexual harassment is illegal, and the government generally enforced the law. A victim of sexual harassment in the workplace can file a claim with a court of justice and claim damages. While the law provides victims of sexual harassment the right to sue their harassers and provides for financial remedies, most cases of sexual harassment were resolved informally.

Under the law women enjoy the same rights as men, including rights under family law, property law, and in the judicial system. The Institute for the Equality of Men and Women is authorized to initiate lawsuits if it finds that equality laws have been violated. There was some economic discrimination against women; the gross average salary for a woman was 85 percent of the national gross average salary.

Children

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

Free full time education is compulsory from ages 6 to 16; subsequently education remains compulsory until the age of 18, but pupils may continue on a part time basis. Most children over 15 years old (more than 75 percent) finish school with a secondary diploma. There is generally little or no difference in the academic achievement of girls and boys.

The government funded health care; boys and girls had equal access.

There were reports of child abuse. During the year there were 60 prosecutions for child abuse. As a result of public awareness campaigns to sensitize the general public to the problems of child abuse, the number of reports of child abuse and neglect increased. The law provides for the protection of youth against sexual exploitation, abduction, and trafficking. The law provides for severe penalties for child pornography and persons possessing pedophilic materials. It permits the prosecution of residents who commit such crimes abroad and provides that criminals convicted of the sexual abuse of children cannot be paroled without first receiving specialized treatment and must continue counseling and treatment upon their release from prison.

Government and private groups provided shelters for runaways and counseling for children who were physically or sexually abused. Child Focus, the government-sponsored center for missing and exploited children, reported that it handled 3,305 cases concerning 3,658 children in 2004. Approximately 40 percent of the reported cases concerned runaways, 17 percent involved abduction by parents, 30 percent were reports of disappearance, and nearly 10 percent were pedophilia cases.

Although child prostitution was not widespread, it was a problem. As a result of the government's 2004 campaign to prevent child prostitution, the public appeared more aware of the problem, and increased reporting was evident.

Trafficking in children was a problem (see section 5, Trafficking)

Trafficking in Persons

The law criminalizes trafficking in persons; however, the country was both a transit and a destination point for trafficking in women and children. Despite laws that offer protection and continued residence in the country to foreign victims of trafficking who come forward, both governmental and nongovernmental sources indicated a continuing rise in trafficking of women and minors for sexual exploitation.

The law provides that persons convicted of violating the antitrafficking law are subject to one to five years' imprisonment and substantial fines. Members of trafficking "organizations" and persons committing offenses that include aggravated circumstances may be punished by 10 to 15 years of hard labor and higher fines. Penalties for trafficking of children are more severe and include possible life imprisonment if the victim is less than 10 years of age.

New legislation came into force during the year that creates stiffer penalties for trafficking of unaccompanied minors; makes it no longer possible to invoke the defense of the consent of the victim; and creates aggravating factors that can increase the sentence.

In April 2004 the justice minister issued a new directive on investigating trafficking cases. Liaison magistrates are appointed with the courts of first instance, appellate courts, and labor courts. They are part of the Experts Network of the College of Prosecutors General. The directive ordered the magistrates to prioritize cases involving young victims, cases concerning violation of human dignity and involving the use of violence. The minister identified as second priority cases those involving criminal organizations, cases of continued criminal activity, and ones with an important social impact. The directive established new guidelines for conducting investigations, confirming the responsibility of the trafficking unit of the federal police to conduct strategic and operational analyses.

In 2004 the federal police reported a significant increase in Bulgarian gangs involved in forced prostitution and related crimes, an increase in private prostitution and escort services, and a smaller number of African prostitutes working in bars. The government assisted in international trafficking investigations.

Trafficking victims continued to come primarily from sub-Saharan Africa (particularly Nigeria), Central and Eastern Europe (particularly Albania and Bulgaria), and Asia (particularly China). Nigerian and Albanian victims usually were women between the ages of 21 and 30 trafficked for prostitution. Victims of sexual exploitation were increasingly women under age 18. Gangs that controlled the trade sometimes threatened victims with violence, including retribution against the victims' families in their home countries. Chinese victims often were young men trafficked for manual labor in restaurants and sweatshops.

There appeared to be a decreasing number of trafficking cases that were the work of organized gangs from Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Albania. While a growing number of victims came forward, this rarely led to the identification or capture of the traffickers. Traffickers not only moved their victims frequently from city to city within the country, but also used the European Union's open borders to move victims from country to country. Freedom of movement also made it easy for traffickers to evade arrest if one of their victims went to the authorities.

The law provides that victims of trafficking who provide evidence against their trafficker may be granted temporary residence and work permits and are eligible to receive significant financial assistance from government-funded reception centers managed by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In each of the country's three regions, the Government designated and subsidized a nonprofit organization to provide such assistance. At the conclusion of legal proceedings against their traffickers, victims generally were granted permanent residence status and unrestricted work permits. The rights of victims generally were respected in practice, and they were not treated as criminals. The Center for Equal Opportunity and the Fight against Racism (CEOR) did not maintain statistics on how many victims of sexual exploitation were sheltered and assisted.

In 2004 the three regional specialized centers offered shelter to 893 victims, primarily from Nigeria, China, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania.

The government worked closely with the IOM to develop programs to combat trafficking and to assist its victims. For example the government provided funding for information campaigns in countries of origin to warn women of the dangers of trafficking. It also provided funding to the IOM to assist the voluntary return of victims to their home countries and to assist them in readjusting once they had returned home. The government worked closely with and supported NGOs that combated trafficking.

Persons with Disabilities

The law provides for the protection of persons with disabilities from discrimination in employment, education, access to health care, and the provision of other state services. There were no reports of societal discrimination against persons with disabilities. While the government mandated that public buildings erected after 1970 be accessible to such persons, many older buildings are still inaccessible.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Immigrant communities complained of discrimination. Members of the Muslim community, estimated at 450 thousand, and principally of Moroccan and Turkish origin, claimed that discrimination against their community, notably in education and employment and especially against young men, was greater than that experienced by other immigrant communities. In 2004 the CEOOR, which is tasked with investigating complaints of discrimination, handled 924 complaints. In its annual report covering 2004, the CEOOR mentioned an increase in complaints regarding racism and discrimination in the workplace. The discrimination concerned hiring, verbal abuse, and contract termination on the grounds of color of the skin, faith, and wearing a headscarf.

During the year, there continued to be reports of ethnic and religious incidents, primarily directed towards Muslims and Jews (see section 2.c.). Increases in anti-Semitic nonviolent incidents noted in some unofficial reports may have reflected the increased and easier reporting mechanisms.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Discrimination against homosexuals received considerable public and political attention. In April a Nivelles court convicted a landlord who refused to lease a house to a same-sex couple. It was the first ever conviction for discrimination against homosexuals. In May a juvenile court convicted two youngsters for physically assaulting a homosexual couple, under the law combating discrimination. The country permits homosexual marriages.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law provides workers the right to associate freely, including the freedom to organize and to join unions of their own choosing, and workers exercised this right in practice. Approximately 63 percent of employed and unemployed workers were members of labor unions. During the year trade unions complained about difficulties (legal and practical) they encountered when seeking to organize workers in small businesses and retail groups. Fines for antiunion discrimination are too small to deter antiunion discrimination effectively. According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), employers prefer to pay fines rather than reinstate workers dismissed for union activities.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference, and the government protects this right in practice. The right to bargain collectively is recognized, and the government protected this right in practice. Approximately 63 percent of all workers were covered by such agreements. The law provides for the right to strike, and workers exercised this right in practice. According to the ICFTU, the right to strike was often undermined in practice, with many cases in recent years of employers seeking court rulings to ban strikes. Since this practice was widely used, the social partners completed the "gentlemen's agreement", which aimed to promote dialogue between the social partners in the event of collective disputes. Courts have limited the right to strike since 2002 by an agreement that commits both labor and management to "social dialogue." This "social dialogue" did not prevent at least three strikes during the year.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that such practices occurred (see section 5).

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law and policies generally protect children from exploitation in the workplace. The minimum age of employment for children is 15. Youths between the ages of 15 and 18 could participate in part-time work and study programs and work fulltime during school vacations. Trafficking of children occurred (see section 5). The labor courts effectively monitored compliance with national laws and standards, and there were no violations reported by year's end.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The monthly national minimum wage for workers over 21 years of age was approximately \$1,492 (1,243 euros), coupled with extensive social benefits, which provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family.

The standard workweek is not to exceed 38 hours, and the national collective bargaining agreement prohibited more than 11 hours of overtime daily and 50 hours weekly. An 11 hour rest period is required between 2 work periods and overtime is paid at a time and a half premium Monday through Saturday and at double time on Sundays. The ministry of labor and the labor courts effectively enforced these laws and regulations.

There are comprehensive provisions in the law for worker safety. Workers have the right to remove themselves from situations that endanger their safety or health without jeopardy to their continued employment, and workers exercised this right in practice. Regulations were generally enforced effectively.

The CEOOR reported increased discrimination based on national origin and race in the workplace (see section 5).

[Updates](#) | [Frequent Questions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Email this Page](#) | [Subject Index](#) | [Search](#)

The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[FOIA](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Other U.S. Government Information](#)

