



The State Department web site below is a permanent electro information released prior to January 20, 2001. Please see [y](#) material released since President George W. Bush took offic This site is not updated so external links may no longer func [us](#) with any questions about finding information.

NOTE: External links to other Internet sites should not be c endorsement of the views contained therein.



## U.S. Department of State

### Denmark Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, January 30, 1997.

---

#### DENMARK

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democratic rule. Queen Margrethe II is Head of State. The Cabinet, accountable to the unicameral Parliament (Folketing), leads the Government. A minority three-party coalition took office in September 1994 following national elections, but dropped only the Social Democrats and Radical Liberals in December with the withdrawal of the Center Democrats from the coalition.

The national police have sole responsibility for internal security. The civilian authorities maintain effective control of the security forces.

Denmark has an advanced, market-based industrial economy. One-half of the work force is employed in the public sector. The key industries are food processing and metal working; the leading exports are a broad range of industrial goods. The economy provides residents with a high standard of living.

The Government fully respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provide effective means of dealing with instances of individual abuse.

#### RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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

###### a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

There were no reports of political or other extrajudicial 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 officials employed them. The Government responded to a 1994 Amnesty International report by suspending police use of leg locks as a method of restraining detainees.

Prison conditions meet minimum international standards, and the Government permits visits by human rights monitors.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile, and the Government observes this prohibition.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary, and the Government respects this provision in practice. The judiciary provides citizens with a fair and efficient judicial process.

The judicial system consists of a series of local and regional courts, with the Supreme Court at the apex.

The law provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary vigorously enforces this right.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

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

The law prohibits such practices, government authorities generally respect these prohibitions, and violations are subject to effective legal sanction.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of the press, and the Government respects this right in practice. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a democratic political system combine to ensure freedom of speech and of the press, including academic freedom.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law provides for these rights, and the Government respects them in practice.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for religious freedom and the Government respects this right in practice. There is religious instruction in the schools in the state religion, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, but any student may without sanction be excused from religion classes with parental permission.

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

The law provides for these rights, and the Government respects them in practice. The Government cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. The Government provides first asylum (and provided it to approximately 5,800 persons in 1996). There were no reports of forced expulsion of refugees to a country where they feared persecution or of those having a valid claim to refugee status.

### **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 exercise this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage.

The territories of Greenland (whose population is primarily Inuit) and the Faroe Islands (whose inhabitants have their own Norse language) have democratically elected home rule governments with powers encompassing all matters except foreign affairs, monetary affairs, and national security. Greenlanders and Faroese are Danish citizens, with the same rights as those in the rest of the Kingdom. Each territory elects two representatives to the Folketing.

In the current Government, 7 of 20 ministers are women.

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

A number of human rights groups operate without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials are cooperative and responsive to their views.

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

The Government's operations and extensive public services do not discriminate on the basis of any of these factors. The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, and it is effectively enforced by the Government. Discrimination on the basis of race is at present covered by two laws, which prohibit racial slander and denial of access to public places on the basis of race. Human rights organizations such as the Antidiscrimination Center have criticized the Government for failing to expand legislation to other areas of potential discrimination. The rights of indigenous people are carefully protected.

#### Women

An umbrella nongovernmental organization reports that in 1995, women's crisis shelters were contacted 11,516 times, and 2,060 women stayed at shelters. There were 795 sexual assaults including 270 rapes. The law requires equal pay for equal work, but some wage inequality still exists. The law prohibits job discrimination on the basis of sex and provides resources, such as access to the Equal Status Council, for those so affected. Women hold positions of authority throughout society, although they are underrepresented at the top of the business world. Women's rights groups are effective in lobbying the Government in their areas of concern, e.g., wage disparities and parental leave.

## Children

The Government demonstrates a strong commitment to children's rights and welfare through its well-funded systems of public education and medical care. Sections within the Ministries of Social Affairs, Justice, and Education oversee implementation of programs for children. There is no societal pattern of abuse against children.

## People with Disabilities

There is no discrimination against disabled persons in employment, education, or in the provision of other state services. Building regulations require special installations for the disabled in public buildings built or renovated after 1977, and in older buildings that come into public use. The Government enforces these provisions in practice.

## Indigenous People

The law protects the rights of the inhabitants of Greenland and the Faroe Islands. The Greenlandic legal system seeks to accommodate Inuit customs. Accordingly, it provides for the use of lay people as judges, and it sentences most prisoners to holding centers (rather than to prisons) where they are encouraged to work, hunt, or fish during the day. Education in Greenland is provided to the native population in both the Inuit and Danish languages.

## National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The inflow of ethnically and racially diverse refugees and immigrants has provoked a degree of tension between Danes and immigrants (mostly Iranians, Palestinians, and Sri Lankans until late 1992; refugees are now overwhelmingly former Yugoslavs and Somalis). Recent publicity on the involvement of foreigners in street-level drug dealing has increased these tensions to the point that Parliament is debating mandatory deportation for those convicted. Incidents of random, racially motivated violence do occur but are rare. The Government effectively investigates and deals with cases of racially motivated violence.

## Section 6 Worker Rights

### a. The Right of Association

The law states that all workers, including military personnel and the police, may form or join unions of their choosing. Approximately 80 percent of wage earners belong to unions that are independent of the Government and political parties. The Social Democratic Party and the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, at their respective conferences, severed their historic formal link. They no longer have representation on each other's governing boards but maintain close informal ties. Unions may affiliate freely with international organizations, and they do so actively. All unions except those representing civil servants or the military have the right to strike.

### b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Workers and employers acknowledge each other's right to organize. Collective bargaining is protected by law and is widespread in practice. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination by employers against union members and organizers, and there are mechanisms to resolve disputes. Employers found guilty of antiunion discrimination are required to reinstate workers fired for union activities. In the private sector,

salaries, benefits, and working conditions are agreed upon in biennial or triennial negotiations between the various employers' associations and their union counterparts. If the negotiations fail, a national conciliation board mediates, and its proposal is voted on by management and labor. If the proposal is turned down, the Government may force a legislated solution on the parties (usually based upon the mediators' proposal). The agreements, in turn, are used as guidelines throughout the public as well as the private sector. In the public sector, collective bargaining is conducted between the employees' unions and a government group, led by the Finance Ministry.

Labor relations in Greenland are conducted in the same manner as in Denmark. Greenlandic courts are the first recourse in disputes, but Danish mediation services or the Danish Labor Court may also be used.

There is no umbrella labor organization in the Faroes, but individual unions engage in periodic collective bargaining with employers. Disputes are settled by mediation.

There are no export processing zones.

#### c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

Forced or compulsory labor is prohibited by law, which the Government effectively enforces.

#### d. Minimum Age for Employment of Children

The minimum age for full-time employment is 15 years. The law prescribes specific limitations on the employment of those between 15 and 18 years of age, and it is enforced by the Danish Working Environment Service (DWES), an autonomous arm of the Ministry of Labor.

#### e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no legally mandated national minimum wage, but national labor agreements effectively set a wage floor. The lowest wage paid is currently about \$13 (DKr 75) per hour, effective in September 1995, which is sufficient for a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The law provides for 5 weeks of paid vacation per year. A 37-hour workweek is the norm, established by contract, not by law. The law does, however, require at least 11 hours between the end of one work period and the start of the next.

The law also prescribes conditions of work, including safety and health; duties of employers, supervisors, and employees; work performance; rest periods and days off; and medical examinations. The DWES ensures compliance with labor legislation. Workers may remove themselves from hazardous situations or arms production without jeopardizing their employment rights, and there are legal protections for workers who file complaints about unsafe or unhealthy conditions.

Similar conditions of work are found in Greenland and the Faroes, except that their workweek is 40 hours. As in Denmark, this is established by contract, not by law.

[end of document]



[Return](#) to 1996 Human Rights Practices report home page.

[Return](#) to DOSFAN home page.

This is an [official U.S. Government source](#) for information on the WWW. Inclusion of non-U.S. Government links does not imply endorsement of contents.