

FRANCE

French Republic

Head of state: **François Hollande**

Head of government: **Manuel Valls (replaced Jean-Marc Ayrault in March)**

Migrant Roma continued to be forcibly evicted from informal settlements; individuals and communities were often not consulted or offered adequate alternative accommodation. Concerns remained about the impartiality and thoroughness of investigations into allegations of ill-treatment by the police. Same-sex couples could enter into civil marriage following a change in the law in 2013.

DISCRIMINATION - ROMA

Officially, more than 19,000 people lived in 429 informal settlements at the beginning of the year. Most of them were migrant Roma from Romania, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslavia. The French authorities continued to forcibly evict them throughout the year. According to the League of Human Rights and the European Roma Rights Centre, more than 11,000 individuals were forcibly evicted in the first nine months of the year.

On 31 January, the Minister of Housing announced a plan to provide long-term housing solutions to the inhabitants of informal settlements. On 28 February, an agreement was signed between the government and Adoma, a publicly funded accommodation provider, and some communities evicted from informal settlements were offered alternative housing.

In spite of these developments, most of the evicted individuals and families reportedly did not receive any alternative housing. For instance, on 18 June, some 400 individuals were forcibly evicted from La Parette, the largest informal settlement in Marseille. Only 18 families (150 people) were offered some form of alternative accommodation.

On 21 October, more than 300 individuals were forcibly evicted from the informal settlement Les Coquetiers in Bobigny, a Paris suburb, following an eviction order issued by the municipality. According to the authorities, 134 individuals were offered some rehousing solutions. More than 100 reportedly left the settlement before the eviction took place as they had not been offered any alternative accommodation. About 60 individuals were forcibly evicted and subsequently offered short-term accommodation in Paris.¹

While the authorities did not collect official data on hate crimes against Roma, civil society organizations reported several violent attacks against Roma. Concerns remained that the authorities often did not take into account any alleged discriminatory motive in the investigation of these cases. The criminal investigation against four police officers who had injured a Roma man in November 2011, while carrying out a forced eviction in Marseille, was still ongoing at the end of the year.²

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

On 18 May 2013, civil marriage was made available to all couples irrespective of gender. Adoption rights were extended to married same-gender couples.

Despite repeated commitments by the government to reform abusive practices, transgender people continued to be subjected to psychiatric diagnosis and unnecessary medical treatments such as surgery and sterilization in order to obtain legal recognition of their gender.³

DISCRIMINATION - MUSLIMS

Two judgments issued during the year failed to uphold Muslim women's right to freedoms of expression, religion and belief, and non-discrimination. On 25 June, the Court of Cassation found that the management of a private kindergarten did not discriminate against a Muslim employee in 2008 when she was dismissed for wearing a headscarf

in the workplace. On 1 July, in the case of *SAS v. France*, the European Court of Human Rights found that the 2011 law prohibiting the complete covering of the face in public did not constitute a disproportionate restriction of the right to freedom of religion.⁴

POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES

In 2013, the Defender of Rights, an independent public authority, dealt with almost 1,000 allegations of acts of violence perpetrated by police. However, concerns remained about the impartiality and thoroughness of investigations into these allegations by judicial authorities.

In February 2014, the Court of Cassation reopened the case of Ali Ziri, an Algerian man who died in custody in 2009, which had been dismissed in 2012. On 19 November, the prosecuting authorities requested before the Rennes Appeal Court that further investigation be conducted into the case. However, on 12 December the Investigative Chamber of the Rennes Appeal Court confirmed the 2012 dismissal.

On 23 September, Raymond Gurême, an 89-year-old French Traveller, suffered several injuries allegedly as a result of excessive force during a police operation at the site where he lived. An investigation was ongoing at the end of the year.

On 26 October, 21-year-old Rémi Fraisse was fatally injured by an explosive anti-riot grenade thrown by National Gendarmerie officers during a demonstration against the Sivens dam project in the Tarn region. About 20 other complaints of police ill-treatment were reportedly filed by people protesting against the project. On 2 December, an internal investigation found that the National Gendarmerie officers abided by the law. Concerns remained about the impartiality and thoroughness of this investigation.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

On 24 October the Lyon Court of Appeal authorized the extradition of Mukhtar Ablaev, a Kazakhstani banker and

opposition leader, to Russia, from where he could be forcibly returned to Kazakhstan. At the end of the year, an appeal was pending before the Court of Cassation. If extradited, he risked facing unfair trial in Russia and torture or other ill-treatment in Kazakhstan.⁵

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

On 16 October 2013, President Hollande announced that 500 Syrian refugees would be resettled in France during 2014. Between 300 and 350 were resettled by the end of the year. On 27 March, 85 Syrian nationals were reportedly stopped by police on arrival at Paris Gare de Lyon railway station. They were not given the opportunity to claim asylum and were given one month to leave France.

Also in March, a circular by the Minister of the Interior concerning undocumented migrants instructed authorities to deport foreign nationals whose asylum claims had been rejected by OFPRA, the French Office for Refugees and Stateless People, through the priority asylum procedure. While these decisions could be appealed against before the National Court of the Right to Asylum, the appeal did not have the effect of suspending the deportation. A bill aimed at reforming asylum procedures was adopted by the National Assembly and was pending before the Senate.

On 10 July, the European Court of Human Rights found that the refusal of French authorities to issue visas for the purpose of family reunification to the children of two refugees and three migrants residing in France violated the applicants' right to family life.

In October, more than 2,500 migrants and asylum-seekers, mainly from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Syria, were living in harsh conditions in the Calais region. Most were attempting to reach the UK. In May, the authorities forcibly evicted 700 migrants and asylum-seekers from informal settlements in the area following a reported outbreak of scabies.⁶ Discussions concerning the opening

of a new reception centre were ongoing at the end of the year.

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

On 14 March, Rwandan national and former head of the Rwandan intelligence services Pascal Simbikangwa, was sentenced by the Paris Assize Court to 25 years' imprisonment for genocide and complicity in crimes against humanity perpetrated in the context of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. This was the first case to come to trial on the basis of extraterritorial jurisdiction since the establishment in 2012 of a specialized investigative unit tasked to deal with cases concerning genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. At the end of the year, the unit was investigating more than 30 alleged crimes perpetrated abroad.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Several demonstrations concerning the situation in Gaza, including two demonstrations scheduled to take place in Paris on 19 and 26 July, were prohibited on grounds of security. The demonstrations took place despite the ban. Although some incidents of violence occurred, concerns remained as to whether the decisions to ban them were necessary and proportionate.

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1. France: Bobigny forced eviction set to leave Roma families homeless (News story)
www.amnesty.org/en/news/france-bobigny-forced-eviction-set-leave-roma-families-homeless-2014-10-20
 2. "We ask for justice": Europe's failure to protect Roma from racist violence (EUR 01/007/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR01/007/2014/en
 3. The state decides who I am: Lack of legal gender recognition for transgender people in Europe (EUR 01/001/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR01/001/2014/en
 4. European Court ruling on full-face veils punishes women for expressing their beliefs (News story)
www.amnesty.org/en/news/european-court-ruling-full-face-veils-punishes-women-expressing-their-religion-2014-07-01

5. France: Stop extradition of Kazakhstani opposition activist at risk of torture (News story)
www.amnesty.org/en/news/france-stop-extradition-kazakhstani-opposition-activist-risk-torture-2014-10-24
6. France: Forced evictions add to climate of fear amid alleged hate crimes (EUR 21/003/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR21/003/2014/en

GAMBIA

Republic of the Gambia

Head of state and government: **Yahya Jammeh**

2014 marked 20 years since President Yahya Jammeh came to power.¹ The authorities continued to repress dissent. The government continued its policy of non-co-operation with UN human rights mechanisms. Successive legislation was passed further restricting freedom of expression and increasing punitive measures against journalists. Human rights defenders and journalists continued to face imprisonment and harassment. The rights of lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people were further threatened. The year ended with an attempted coup on 30 December, leading to dozens of arrests and widespread crackdowns on media outlets.

BACKGROUND

Gambia's human rights record was assessed under the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in October.² Concerns by UN member states included Gambia's restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, its renewed use of the death penalty, and discrimination and attacks on people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

During their visit to Gambia in November, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on torture were denied