

of their gender under certain compulsory conditions, including reassignment surgery.

MACEDONIA

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Head of state: **Gjorge Ivanov**

Head of government: **Nikola Gruevski**

Human rights were increasingly curtailed. Relations between the Macedonian and ethnic Albanian populations were marred by violent protests. New details emerged about the rendition of a CIA detainee with the complicity of Macedonia.

BACKGROUND

The ruling party, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, remained in power following parliamentary elections in May, which were not recognized by the main opposition party. Freedom of expression was increasingly curtailed. The authorities exercised excessive influence over the police and judiciary. While the European Commission again recommended that talks on EU accession should start, in December the EU Council of Ministers for the sixth time deferred the decision.

Relations between Macedonians and ethnic Albanians remained precarious. In May, the arrest of an ethnic Albanian student, suspected of killing a Macedonian student, triggered two days of inter-ethnic rioting in the Gorce Petrov municipality of Skopje, the capital.

On 30 June, six ethnic Albanians were convicted - two in their absence - of murder defined as "terrorism" for the killing of five ethnic Macedonians near Lake Smilkovci in April 2012, and sentenced to life imprisonment; one defendant was acquitted.

On 4 July, thousands of Albanians marched into the centre of Skopje, saying "We are not terrorists". The peaceful demonstration escalated outside the High Court with riot police using excessive force against protesters, including rubber bullets, tear gas, stun grenades and water cannons. On 6 July, further protests took place. In the predominantly Albanian cities of Tetovo and Gostivar, police used tear gas and stun grenades. Six men were sentenced to three years' imprisonment for "participation in a crowd to commit a crime".

CRIMES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

Impunity continued for war crimes and crimes against humanity which occurred during the 2001 internal armed conflict. No measures were taken to locate the bodies of 13 persons still missing after the armed conflict.

COUNTER-TERROR AND SECURITY

The December release of a US Senate report on CIA secret detention operations included confirmation that former detainee Khaled el-Masri's 2003 apprehension by the Macedonian authorities was a case of mistaken identity and the CIA took measures to cover up the incident. The European Court of Human Rights ruled in a 2013 landmark judgment that Macedonia was liable for Khaled el-Masri's incommunicado detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, for his transfer out of Macedonia to locations where the German national suffered other serious violations of his human rights, and for the failure to carry out an effective investigation.

At the end of the year, the authorities had failed to submit to the Committee of Ministers an action plan, overdue since October 2013, to implement the Court's judgment.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Allegations against police officials continued, including disproportionately against Roma. In May, two Roma minors, wrongly suspected of stealing a purse, were beaten by members

of the Alfi Special Police unit. The older child was interrogated in a police station for two hours in the absence of a lawyer or his parents, and suffered bruising to his head, neck and chest.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In April, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression criticized the deterioration of freedom of expression, pluralism and media independence. The government reportedly spent 1% of its budget on placing advertisements in, or otherwise favouring, pro-government media. International organizations reported that state media election coverage was biased towards the ruling party.

During the May riots, police seized equipment from three media outlets and erased their video footage. Politicians continued to file defamation cases against journalists. International and domestic organizations called for the Nova Makedonija journalist Tomislav Kezharovski to be released from house arrest. He was originally imprisoned in 2013 for revealing the identity of an alleged protected witness, in what was considered to be a politically motivated prosecution. After international protests, he was released into house arrest.

DISCRIMINATION - ROMA

The authorities failed to prevent, and protect Roma from, multiple forms of discrimination. Action plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion and recommendations on the rights of Roma women made in 2013 by the UN CEDAW Committee were not implemented.

In June, the Constitutional Court ruled that articles of the Law on Travel Documents, enabling the authorities to revoke the passports of Macedonian citizens who had been returned or deported from another country, were incompatible with the right to freedom of movement. This followed a complaint by the NGO European Roma Rights Centre on behalf of Roma who

experienced disproportionate discrimination by border officials.

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

Anti-discrimination legislation was not amended to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. LGBTI human rights defenders were subject to regular threats. In October, 30 young men attacked a celebration of the second anniversary of the LGBTI Centre in Skopje, seriously injuring two people; no one has yet been brought to justice. In July the government proposed a constitutional amendment defining marriage as solely between a man and a woman.

REFUGEES, ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND MIGRANTS

Around 850 Kosovo Roma and Ashkali refugees remained in Macedonia, without a durable solution. By the end of September, 7,105 Macedonian citizens had applied for asylum in the EU.

Around 440 of the 1,260 registered asylum-seekers applied for asylum in Macedonia, but only 10 Syrians were granted refugee status and one person was granted subsidiary protection. Migrants, including women and unaccompanied minors, and Syrian refugees were detained in appalling conditions. Border guards were complicit in push-backs from Serbia.

MALAWI

Republic of Malawi

Head of state and government: **Arthur Peter Mutharika (replaced Joyce Banda in May)**

Those responsible for the deaths of two students in 2011 and 2012 were not brought to justice. Homosexuality continued to be criminalized under the penal code,