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1. Nigeria: At the mercy of the government: Violation of the right to an effective remedy in Badia East, Lagos State (AFR 44/017/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR44/017/2014/en

NORWAY

Kingdom of Norway

Head of state: **King Harald V**

Head of government: **Erna Solberg**

Transgender people continued to face significant obstacles to legal gender recognition. Impunity for rape and sexual violence continued to be the norm.

DISCRIMINATION - TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

Transgender people could only obtain legal recognition of their gender following a psychiatric diagnosis, compulsory hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery including irreversible sterilization.¹ In December 2013, the Directorate of Health established an expert group composed of health professionals, legal experts and representatives of transgender organizations. It was tasked to develop recommendations on legal gender recognition and access to health care for transgender people by 25 February 2015.

In March, John Jeanette Solstad Remø applied to the Ministry of Health and Care Services to change her legal gender. The Ministry refused her request. In September, the Office of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud stated that the Ministry's requirement for diagnosis, hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery including irreversible sterilization was discriminatory and breached the law against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The first national study on the prevalence of rape and sexual violence, published in February, confirmed rape to be a widespread and gendered crime. Nearly one in 10 surveyed women reported having been raped. Half of the victims reported experiencing rape before the age of 18. The report documented that one in three victims had never told anyone about the abuse, and only one in 10 rapes had been reported to the police. Half of those who had reported being raped considered that the police had not investigated the crime. Police statistics indicated that eight out of 10 reported rape cases were dropped at various stages of the legal process, reinforcing longstanding concerns about attrition in rape prosecutions.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

In October 2013, the government announced an amnesty for up to 578 minor children of asylum-seekers whose applications for asylum had been finally rejected and who had been in the country for over three years. NGOs criticized its restricted application to only children from countries with which Norway has a readmission agreement, arguing that such an arbitrary criterion was discriminatory and undermined the principle of best interests of the child. In April, the Minister of Justice stated publicly that only 130 out of the 578 children would be covered by the amnesty. In a new consultation paper issued in June, the Ministry of Justice proposed additional conditions on access to the scheme.

On 18 December, the Immigration Appeals Board announced that it was suspending all forced and voluntary returns to Uzbekistan of asylum-seekers whose applications had been finally rejected.

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

The appeal by a 47-year-old Rwandan national against his conviction for murder during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda remained outstanding at the end of the year.

On 14 February 2013, the Oslo District Court sentenced him to 21 years' imprisonment. He was convicted of premeditated murder under especially aggravating circumstances, but not of genocide, as the article defining the latter only entered into force in 2008 and does not have retrospective effect.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Following Norway's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture in 2013, the National Preventive Mechanism, taken on by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, was fully operational by April 2014. The Mechanism was created with an advisory committee of members from the National Institution for Human Rights, the other Ombudspersons and civil society and NGO representatives.

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1. 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

OMAN

Sultanate of Oman

Head of state and government: **Sultan Qaboos bin Said**

State authorities continued to restrict freedom of expression, including in the media and online. Freedom of assembly was not permitted. Several government critics were detained and held incommunicado for some weeks. Authorities forcibly returned a political activist to Bahrain despite a risk that he would face torture there. Women continued to face discrimination in law and practice. The death penalty remained in force; no executions were reported.

BACKGROUND

In January, Oman ratified the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Security Agreement, the provisions of which jeopardized freedom of expression and other individual rights guaranteed in Oman's Constitution and in international treaties.

The government decreed a new citizenship law in August, to take effect in February 2015. It empowered the authorities to strip Omani nationals of their citizenship and associated rights if they are found to belong to a group deemed to uphold principles or beliefs that undermine Oman's "best interests", potentially allowing the government to arbitrarily withdraw the nationality of and expel its critics.

Also in August, Oman ratified the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

On 27 January, the Omani authorities arrested Bahraini actor and political activist Sadeq Ja'far Mansoor al-Sha'bani and forcibly returned him to Bahrain despite fears that he may be tortured there. He subsequently received a five-year prison sentence in Bahrain along with eight others on charges including "inciting hatred of the regime".

In May, police arrested and detained several men, who were subsequently released on 12 July after they reportedly signed pledges not to participate in advocacy activities or incite sectarianism. Two bloggers who criticized the authorities online were arrested in July and released without charge after several weeks.

In August, Dr Talib al-Ma'mari, a member of the Shura Council, and Saqr al-Balushi, a councillor in the city of Liwa, were sentenced to four years' and one year's imprisonment respectively, on charges including "public gathering with the aim of disturbing law and order" and "closing a road". The two men had participated in an anti-pollution demonstration in Liwa in August 2013.