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2009 Human Rights Report: Norway

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

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Norway is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. The population is approximately 4.82 million. The country is governed by a prime minister, a cabinet, and the 169-seat parliament (Storting) that is elected every four years and cannot be dissolved. Free and fair elections to the multiparty parliament were held in September. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

During the year, racial profiling, violence against women, and trafficking of men, women, and children were continuing problems.

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

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions mostly met international standards; however, there were reports of juveniles held with adults and prison overcrowding. In September the police disclosed that, due to prison overcrowding, they had already detained approximately 1,500 arrestees during the year in temporary holding cells for longer than the 48 hours allowed by law. The police holding cells are austere and designed for short stays and a transient inmate population.

There were reports that juveniles were imprisoned in cells with adults and often exposed to drug use. One nongovernmental organization (NGO) documented a case of a 16-year-old boy who was held in a prison cell with adult

males. Prison officials told him not to disclose his age to the adult prisoners for his own protection. He was isolated 23 hours a day for seven days, did not receive his prescribed medication, and was not informed of his right to parental and attorney visitation.

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The prison system was considered transparent; prisoners were represented by an ombudsman who could visit at a prisoner's request or at the ombudsman's own initiative. The government permitted monitoring visits by independent human rights groups, the media, and the International Committee of the Red Cross; however, no such visits took place during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

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

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The national police have primary responsibility for internal security; the police may call on the armed forces for assistance in crises. In such circumstances, the armed forces are under police authority. The Ministry of Justice and Police oversees the police force.

The police force was generally effective, and corruption was not generally a problem. Adequate measures were in place to investigate police abuses. An independent police complaint commission investigated reports of corruption within the police force.

NGOs reported that public security officials used discriminatory racial profiling techniques to stop and search members of ethnic minorities. Evidence of racial profiling was anecdotal, since police did not keep records of stop and search activities. NGOs also reported that customs officials routinely and disproportionately targeted nonwhite travelers for search; officials could not verify the reports, since no records are kept of the ethnicity of individuals stopped at the border.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention

The law requires warrants for arrests except when the perpetrator is caught in the act of committing a crime, and police generally arrested a person based on a warrant authorized by a prosecutor. Police are required to file a justification to hold detained persons in custody within four hours of their arrest, and detainees must be informed of the charges against them within three days. An arrested suspect is required to be arraigned within 24 hours (not including Saturday and Sunday), at which time the arraigning judge determines whether the accused should be held in custody or released pending trial. Nonresident foreigners were not released pending trial. There is no bail system. Defendants accused of minor crimes were routinely released pending trial. Defendants accused of serious or violent crimes generally remained in custody until trial.

Arrested persons were allowed access to a lawyer of their choosing prior to being interrogated or, if they could not afford one, to an attorney appointed by the government. Arrested persons were generally allowed access to family members. The law mandates that detainees be transferred from a temporary police holding cell to a regular prison cell within 48 hours.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence in practice.

During 2008 the European Court on Human Rights (ECHR) issued judgments which found one violation of the right to a fair trial and one violation involving length of proceedings; both violations were of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Trial Procedures

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence. Trials are public. Juries are used only in criminal cases heard by the court of appeals. Defendants have the right to be present, to have counsel, at public expense if necessary, to confront and question witnesses, to present evidence and witnesses, and to appeal. Defendants and their attorneys have access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases. The law extends the above rights to all citizens.

There are no military courts; military crimes are tried in a civilian court, with the addition of a military judge to assist the civilian judges in trying the case.

The constitution and law provide for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters that can adjudicate cases involving human rights violations.

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

The constitution 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 constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to ensure freedom of speech and of the press.

In December 2008 the ECHR ruled that the prohibition on paid advertising on television by political parties barred the Pensioners Party from its only access to television and interfered with the right of free expression. The government changed the governing statutes of the public broadcaster NRK to give smaller parties greater access to free media.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chat rooms. Individuals and groups could engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail. According to International Telecommunication Union statistics for 2008, approximately 83 percent of the country's inhabitants used the Internet.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

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

c. Freedom of Religion

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

The state church is the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway, which the government supported financially. The constitution requires that the king and at least half of the cabinet belong to this church. Other denominations operated freely.

A religious community is required to register with the government if it desires government financial support, which is provided to all registered denominations on a proportional basis in accordance with their membership.

The law permits private or religious schools and day care centers to ask persons seeking employment whether they will respect and teach the denomination's beliefs and principles. Employers may reject applicants on the basis of their responses.

Classes about religion in general are mandatory for children in public schools from grades one through 10, and several major religions and philosophies are covered in an objective manner. Parents may seek an exemption for their children from "activities" connected with the class (such as field trips) but not from the class itself.

The city of Oslo prohibits the wearing of burkas and niqabs in public schools; however, there were no reports that the prohibition was enforced during the year.

In November 2008 and January 2009, the country's appellate and supreme courts denied appeals by Lawrence Keffer of his Oslo district court conviction for engaging in a demonstration. In May 2008, during public celebration of the country's constitution day, Keffer and Petar Keseljevic were arrested as they attempted to evangelize on the streets of Oslo. The police asked them to move, and, when they refused, they were arrested. Keseljevic claimed that his right to free speech had been violated, but the Oslo district court found that the two evangelists were effectively engaged in a demonstration and the police were therefore justified in asking them to move. Each was fined 10,500 kroner (\$1,800), plus legal fees of 1,500 kroner (\$260).

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The Jewish population is relatively small, with approximately 850 registered members and up to 1,200 total members. A number of anti-Semitic incidents occurred during the year, and there was extensive public criticism of Israel that some observers linked to societal anti-Semitism.

During Israeli military operations against Hamas in the Gaza Strip in January, there were violent anti-Israeli disturbances on several occasions in Oslo, as hundreds of rioters emerged from protest marches that began peacefully. While 139 of the 194 persons arrested by police were of immigrant background, the vast majority were Norwegian citizens. A pro-Israeli march in Bergen was cancelled after police stated that they could not guarantee the participants' safety.

The general atmosphere for Jews in the country worsened early in the year. On January 18, Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre visited the Oslo synagogue to show solidarity with Jewish citizens, who, he stated, "feel alienated" and were "experiencing growing anti-Semitism." A leading newspaper reported that it had difficulty finding Jews who were willing to

be interviewed about anti-Semitism, as they felt they might be targeted for violence or harassment. During the Israeli military operations in Gaza, the chief rabbi of the Oslo Synagogue reportedly received large amounts of anti-Semitic mail daily.

The location of the line between criticism of Israeli policy and anti-Semitism was frequently discussed in the media. During January both a former prime minister and a high-profile commentator on foreign policy were accused of making anti-Semitic comments. Their statements, which questioned the ability of the United States to be objective in its Middle East policy because of high-ranking Jews in the U.S. government, were criticized as blurring the line between being Jewish and support for Israeli government policy.

In mid-January, a first secretary at the country's embassy in Saudi Arabia used a government system to e-mail a chain message with images likening Israeli soldiers to soldiers of Nazi Germany. Some politicians urged the government to fire the employee; the government did not release information on whether it took disciplinary action, citing privacy rules.

On May 14, the cemetery of the Mosaic Religious Community in Oslo (the Jewish community) was vandalized. Several gravestones were defaced with Nazi symbols; on one, "the war is not over" was written.

The government continued to support organizations working to combat discrimination; it supported the foundation The White Buses, which took students from the country to Auschwitz to educate them about the Holocaust. In March the country assumed the rotating chairmanship of the International Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, which it will hold for a year.

On August 5, the government officially initiated a "Hamsun Year" observing the sesquicentenary of the birth of Knut Hamsun, the 1920 Nobel laureate in literature, who was a prominent Nazi sympathizer and collaborator during World War II. The government emphasized the celebration paid tribute to Hamsun's literary achievements; however, the observance led to a public debate about the darker side of his legacy. Two prominent international Jewish organizations strongly criticized the observance and called on the country to relinquish its chairmanship of the international task force for Holocaust education, remembrance, and research.

On November 12, the board of the Norwegian Technical University in Trondheim unanimously rejected a proposed academic boycott of Israel. The minister of higher education spoke out against the boycott before the board's vote both in parliament and to the media, and then saluted the decision on the grounds that the proposed boycott was inconsistent with academic freedom.

For a more detailed discussion, see the *2009 International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The law provides for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

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

Protection of Refugees

The country is a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Its laws provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees.

The country is party to the Dublin II regulation, which allows for the return of refugees and asylum seekers to the first country they entered that is also party to the regulation. In February 2008 the country's authorities ceased return of asylum seekers to a certain Dublin II regulation country except when in receipt of a written guarantee from that country's authorities concerning how the case would be handled. In August the returns to that country resumed on a case-by-case basis, and the authorities no longer demanded a guarantee letter.

In practice the government provided protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The government granted refugee status or asylum and accepted refugees for resettlement.

The government also provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees and provided it to 2,580 persons.

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

The constitution provides citizens the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections based on universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

On September 14, the country held parliamentary elections that were considered free and fair. The elections resulted in the formation of a coalition government of the Labor, Socialist Left, and Center parties.

Political parties operated without restriction or outside interference.

Following the September elections, there were 67 women in the 169-seat parliament. There were eight women among the 19 Supreme Court justices, and women headed 10 of the 19 government ministries. There was one member of an ethnic minority in parliament. There were no minority ministers or Supreme Court justices.

Section 4 Official Corruption and Government Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. There were no confirmed reports of government corruption during the year.

Public officials are subject to financial disclosure laws. The Ministry of Justice and Police and the Ministry of Finance are responsible for combating corruption.

The law provides for public access to government information, and the government provided access in practice to both citizens and noncitizens, including foreign media.

Section 5 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 generally were cooperative and responsive to their views.

The country has parliamentary ombudsmen for public administration, for children, and for equality and antidiscrimination. All of the ombudsmen enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government interference. The ombudsmen hear complaints on actions by government officials, but their offices did not issue any reports specifically on human rights issues. Although the ombudsmen's recommendations are not legally binding, in practice government authorities generally complied with them.

Section 6 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 this prohibition in practice, although racial profiling, violence against women, and trafficking in persons were problems.

Women

The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, and the government generally enforced the law. There were reports of 1,084 rapes and attempted rapes reported during 2008 and 1,126 rapes and attempted rapes during 2009.

The penalty for rape is generally one to 10 years in prison, depending on the severity of the assault, the age of the victim, and the circumstances under which the crime occurred. Very few cases, however, have ever resulted in a maximum sentence. Ninety percent of rape cases reported to police during the year never reached the courts, usually due to reluctance on the part of the victim to press charges. Approximately 35 percent of rape trials during the year ended in acquittal. In 2007 a government task force examining the high rate of acquittals in rape cases identified gender bias as a factor that affected judicial assessments of the credibility of rape victims and suspected assailants. The Ministry of Defense separately identified a gap in the reporting and investigation of sexual assaults against female enlistees.

In January 2008 a government-appointed public committee released a white paper on ways to prevent and combat rape. Its main conclusion was that the lack of proper police investigations, due to a structural failure to prioritize rape cases, led to the low percentage of cases prosecuted and offenders convicted. A prominent NGO criticized the government's failure to follow up the conclusions of the white paper with an action plan on rape by which the government could be held accountable for results. By the end of the year, many of the recommendations in the report had not been implemented, including the recommendation that the police set up an independent sexual violence unit.

Violence against women, including spousal abuse, was a problem. The law provides higher penalties for domestic violence than for simple assault--generally one to six years in prison--with an increased term in more severe cases. The government enforced the law in practice. In 2008, the latest period for which data was available, 1,457 cases of domestic violence were registered, an increase over 2007.

The government generally and police agencies in particular had programs to prevent rape and domestic violence and to counsel victims. Each of the country's 27 police districts had a domestic violence coordinator to assist victims. Public and private organizations ran 50 government-funded shelters and managed five 24-hour crisis hotlines. The shelters provided support and counseling for victims and helped them gain access to social services, doctors, lawyers, and housing authorities.

It is illegal for citizens to purchase, but not to sell, sexual services. The prohibition applies to citizens regardless of where in the world the purchase takes place. Organized prostitution and pimping are also prohibited. NGOs and the government estimated that approximately 3,000 persons sold sexual services in the country during the year. Girls were trafficked in the country for commercial sexual exploitation. An NGO that worked directly with prostitutes estimated that 60 percent of the persons engaged in prostitution during the year were foreign women.

The law provides that "employees shall not be subjected to harassment or other unseemly behavior," and the government effectively enforced this provision. Employers who violate this law are subject to fines or prison sentences of up to two years, depending on the seriousness of the offense.

Couples and individuals have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. There was easy access to contraception and skilled attendance during childbirth; women were diagnosed and treated for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, equally with men.

Women have the same legal status as men and enjoy identical rights under family and property laws and in the judicial system. The office of the equality and antidiscrimination ombudsman generally was effective in processing and investigating complaints of sexual discrimination. In 2008, the latest year for which data were available, the office received 597 complaints. In response to 539, it gave guidance to one of the parties without finding an illegal practice; the remaining 58 cases were pending at year's end. Ombudsman statements can conclude in a finding of illegality.

The law provides that women and men engaged in the same activity shall receive equal wages for work of equal value. According to the office of the equality and antidiscrimination ombudsman, which monitors enforcement, women received an average of 10 to 15 percent less pay and benefits than men for equal work.

The law mandates that 40 percent of the directors of publicly listed companies be women; virtually all public companies complied with the law.

Children

Citizenship is derived from one's parents (*jus sanguinis*); children born in the country do not automatically become citizens. All birth clinics in the country reported childbirths to a central birth register. Names, birth certificates, and social security numbers, including those of the parents, were reported.

In 2008 childcare services investigated 27,850 allegations of abuse and intervened in 6,512 cases that authorities considered to constitute child abuse or failure to care for a child. An independent children's ombudsman office within the Ministry of Children and Families is responsible for the protection of children under the law. The directorate for children, youth, and family affairs provides assistance and support services. With five regional offices and 26 professional teams, the directorate is the government's principal agency for the welfare and protection of children and families.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is illegal. During the year there were several criminal investigations for FGM involving families originally from countries where the practice is customary. None of the cases involved FGM performed in the country. In 2008 a government report on FGM estimated the total number of cases to be a few dozen and the practice to be declining.

Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons, but there were reports that women and girls were trafficked to and in the country for commercial sexual exploitation and that men and children were trafficked for labor.

In 2008 the country was a destination for women, men and children trafficked from Nigeria (115), Romania (40), Eritrea (18), Lithuania (15), Ethiopia (12), China (11), Bulgaria (10), Kenya (10), Russia (10), and Sri Lanka (10). Another 40 countries in Africa, Europe, Latin America, and Asia were source countries for 10 or fewer victims each.

Victims were sometimes trafficked to the country through Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Italy, and the Baltic and Balkan countries. Six cases of trafficking for labor were reported in the first 11 months of the year, four of which remained under

investigation at the end of the year. In 2008 the government identified 256 possible trafficking victims, including both persons trafficked for prostitution and persons trafficked for labor. Of these victims, 94 were under the age of 18.

Traffickers used a variety of methods to recruit, transport, harbor, and obtain victims. Methods ranged from falsely promising victims legitimate jobs in other countries, legally marrying them and coercing them into prostitution to help with family finances, and outright intimidation and abuse. Government officials believed that organized crime groups were responsible for most trafficking and identified a number of possible victims trafficked by organized criminals for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The maximum sentence for trafficking in persons is five years or up to 10 years for aggravated cases. Sentences are determined by several factors, including the victim's age, the use of violence or coercion, and any proceeds derived from exploitation. Traffickers can also be charged with violating laws against pimping, immigration, and slavery. Victims may sue their traffickers for compensation without impediment. Suspected victims were often reluctant to press charges, making it difficult for police to identify and assist victims and to prosecute traffickers.

During 2008 there were 46 trafficking investigations, 41 of which involved trafficking for sexual exploitation, four for labor exploitation, and one for removal of organs. There were six prosecutions of accused traffickers and six convictions. During the year there were 43 trafficking investigations, 38 for sexual exploitation, four for labor exploitation, and one for removal of organs. The Ministry of Justice and Police, specifically the police coordinator for human trafficking was responsible for combating trafficking. The government assisted other European governments in combating trafficking and pursuing investigations and prosecutions of traffickers residing outside the country.

Trafficking victims are given immunity from prosecution for violating immigration laws and may not be deported if they cooperate in the investigation of their trafficker. Decisions to deport victims of trafficking may be suspended for a 90-day reflection period in order to provide the victim time to receive assistance and counseling.

The government assisted trafficking victims, providing safe housing in shelters through the ROSA project, a government-funded program specifically to help victims of sexual exploitation. Through ROSA and the welfare system, victims received a variety of assistance, including housing, legal aid, access to the police (if they wished to press charges against their traffickers), money for food, health care, Norwegian language classes, and other support. If victims chose to stay in the country legally, they received complete and full aid from the social welfare system.

The government had programs to prevent and to identify trafficking and used a guide to identify possible victims of trafficking and to provide government employees who might encounter trafficking victims information on contacts for assistance. The government also conducted an information campaign on the Internet designed to make purchasers of sex aware of the relationship between trafficking and prostitution. Advertisements in airports alerted possible sex tourists to the potential legal consequences of their actions.

The Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* can be found at www.state.gov/g/tip.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, and in the provision of other state services. The law mandates access to public buildings for persons with disabilities, and the government generally enforced this provision in practice. The office for disabled persons in the Ministry of Labor and social inclusion is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. The office coordinated national policy and managed the social benefits system for persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Immigrants and their children sometimes had more difficulty finding employment than equally qualified ethnic Norwegians. There were also stark differences in the overall unemployment rate. As of August, the unemployment rate among immigrants of African background was 14.2 percent and the unemployment rate among immigrants of Asian background was 9 percent, compared with just 2.5 percent among nonimmigrants, according to government statistics.

In what officials described as an effort to control female genital mutilation (FGM), the national government initiated a pilot project under which it designated several local governments to focus on girls whose parents originated in African countries where more than 30 percent of women were victims of FGM. The project involved requesting parents of such children to submit their child to a "voluntary" physical checkup to see that she has not been subject to FGM. The minister for children and equality stated that, if the parents did not acquiesce, they may be referred to the department of child protective services. NGOs reported that parents who are of African ancestry felt stigmatized.

Indigenous People

To protect the rights of the indigenous Sami, the government provided Sami language instruction at schools in their areas, radio and television programs broadcast or subtitled in Sami, and subsidies for Sami-oriented newspapers and books. A deputy minister in the Ministry of Labor and Social Inclusion dealt specifically with Sami issues.

In addition to participating freely in the national political process, the country's Sami elect their own parliament, the Samediggi. The law establishing the Sami parliament stipulates that this 39-seat consultative group meet regularly to deal with "all matters, which in [its] opinion are of special importance to the Sami people."

Societal Abuses, Discrimination, and Acts of Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Several lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender organizations operated freely in the country. Gay pride marches were authorized and registered. On June 22, the main march during the year took place in Oslo.

On August 9, an unknown assailant attacked two gay men who were holding hands while walking in a majority Muslim neighborhood of Oslo. The assailant stated that he did not condone the men's lifestyle and that they were in a Muslim neighborhood, and then kicked one of the men. The other man called the police while the attacker ran away. The attack was under police investigation at year's end.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

There were no media reports of societal violence against persons with HIV/AIDS. However, an NGO reported that, in some cases, dentists and other medical personnel refused to treat persons with HIV/AIDS and that medical staff forced HIV/AIDS patients to change their own hospital bedding, refused them access to hospital cafeterias, and allowed them to eat using disposable utensils only. In some case, medical personnel entered HIV/AIDS patient hospital rooms only when wearing biohazard suits.

Section 7 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law allows workers to form and join independent unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements, and workers exercised these rights in practice. Approximately 53 percent of the workforce was unionized. The law allows unions to conduct their activities without government interference, and workers exercised this right in practice.

The law provides for the right to strike, except for military forces and senior civil servants, and workers exercised this right in practice. However, the government may, with the approval of parliament, compel arbitration in all industrial sectors under certain circumstances, as when a strike threatens the quality of health care or implicates public safety. The government did not invoke compulsory arbitration during the year.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

All workers, including government employees and military personnel, have the right to organize and bargain collectively, and they exercised this right in practice.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children, and the government enforced these provisions in practice. However, there were reports that women and children were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and that persons were trafficked for labor.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

There are laws to protect children from exploitation in the workplace, and the government effectively enforced these laws; however, children were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor.

Children 13 to 15 years of age may be employed up to 12 hours per week in light work that does not adversely affect their health, development, or schooling. Between the ages of 15 and 18, persons not in school may work up to 40 hours per week, while persons who remain in school may work only a number of hours that does not adversely affect their schooling, which in practice is substantially less than 40 hours. Minimum age rules were observed in practice and enforced by the Norwegian Labor Inspection Authority (NLIA).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no legislated or specified minimum wage. Wages are set in collective bargaining agreements negotiated by labor unions, employers, and the government. The average daily wage provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family. In March unions and employers agreed to raise wages by one krone (\$0.17) per hour for those low-income workers earning less than 90 percent of the average industrial wage.

The law limits the normal workweek to 37.5 hours and provides for 25 working days of paid leave per year (31 days for workers over age 60). The law mandates a 28-hour rest period on weekends and holidays. The law provides for premium pay of 40 percent of salary for overtime and prohibits compulsory overtime in excess of 10 hours per week. Although the law provides the same benefits for citizens and foreign or migrant workers, there were reports, especially in the construction industry, of foreign workers' being underpaid or overworked beyond what is legally permissible.

The law provides for safe and physically acceptable working conditions for all employed persons. The NLIA, in consultation with nongovernment experts, set specific standards. Under the law, environment committees composed of representatives of management, workers, and health personnel must be established in enterprises with 50 or more workers and safety delegates must be elected in all enterprises. Workers have the right to remove themselves from situations that endanger their health, but no data was available on whether they exercised this right in practice. The directorate of labor inspections effectively monitored compliance with labor legislation and standards.