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2009 Human Rights Report: Sweden

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

March 11, 2010

The Kingdom of Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a multiparty parliamentary form of government. The population is approximately 9.3 million. Legislative authority rests in the unicameral Riksdag (parliament). In national elections in 2006, voters elected a center-right coalition government led by the Moderate Party. The elections were free and fair. The king is the largely symbolic head of state. The prime minister is the head of government and exercises executive authority. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

Reported human rights problems included isolated incidents of excessive force by police, prison overcrowding and lengthy pretrial detention, government surveillance and interference, incidents of anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic discrimination and civil disturbances, abuse of women and children, and trafficking in persons.

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 law prohibits such practices; however, there were isolated reports that police used excessive force. In August 2008, two police officers were reported for assault. The Karlstad police prosecutors unit closed the investigation for lack of evidence.

After a number of incidents during the year in which police made inappropriate statements and racial comments, the national police instituted a program to evaluate police officers' attitudes through their careers. As a preliminary step, the program began to monitor the values and attitudes of the 300 students who started their police education in September.

The national prosecutor's office for police cases received 4,828 reports of misconduct during the year. The reports covered all police employees, officers and civilians, and involved incidents that occurred on active service and outside of work. The majority of the incidents took place while the police employee was not on duty, but 15 percent of the reported cases were work-related accusations that officers had used more violence than the situation required.

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Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions generally met international standards, although overcrowding and lengthy pretrial detention were problems. During the year two persons committed suicide in prison. On December 14, a court found three employees at Mariestad detention center guilty of official misconduct for failing in February 2008 to immediately cut down a man who had hung himself in his cell. The man died. The court sentenced the employees to pay fines proportional to their daily income.

Restrictive conditions for prisoners held in pretrial custody remained a problem. According to the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, approximately 40 percent of pretrial detainees were subject to extended isolation or to restrictions on mail delivery or exercise.

The government permitted visits by independent human rights observers. In June a delegation from the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) conducted a 10-day visit to monitor conditions in the country's police establishments, prisons, the Swedish Migration Board, and psychiatric and juvenile establishments. In its preliminary report on the visit, the delegation reported receiving a few allegations of physical mistreatment of detainees by police officers at the time of their apprehension. The delegation expressed concern over prisoners held in isolation for prolonged periods for their behavior, noting that healthcare staff at the prisons visited expressed concerns over the deleterious mental-health consequences of prolonged isolation. The delegation also noted the "quasi-systematic" imposition of restrictions on pretrial detainees, which led to periods of six to 18 months in isolation. The CPT's report from the June visit, among other things, recommended that detainees be subject to reduced time in isolation and not face more restrictions than necessary in accordance with a court order. Detention conditions should include time outdoors in an exercise yard or under weather shelters, if the detention lasted more than 24 hours; nighttime toilet access when not included in the detention cell; and better information to foreign national prisoners about their legal status and prison regulations in a language they understand. The report also recommended that the government create a separate facility for noncriminal acts to hold persons whose applications for asylum have been denied and who are to be deported.

The justice ombudsman, who worked independently from the government, performed approximately 10 inspections during the year. The national Red Cross and church associations may also visit prisoners, but not monitor or inspect the prisons.

Construction of new detention and prison cells continued during the year and helped mitigate overcrowding.

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 and the national criminal police are responsible in practice for law enforcement and general order within the country. The Security Service is responsible for national security related to terrorism, extremism, and espionage. The armed forces are responsible for external security. The Ministry for Justice provides the funding and the letters of instruction for police activities, but it does not control how they perform their work. According to the constitution, all branches of the police are independent authorities. The chancellor of justice, who is a nonpolitical civil servant appointed by the government, can act as the government's ombudsman in the supervision of the authorities and the civil servants,

and take action in cases where the chancellor suspects abuse. In addition, the security and integrity commission can review the work of the Security Service upon an individual's request and initiate its own investigations if the commission suspects that the Security Service has collected and used personal data wrongfully.

On November 11, the chancellor of justice decided that the Security Service should pay a man 30,000 kronor (approximately \$4,180) and a woman 20,000 kronor (approximately \$2,780) on the basis of a verdict from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 2006.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the national police and the Security Service, and government authorities had effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention

The law requires warrants issued by duly authorized officials for arrests, and the government generally respected this requirement in practice. Persons can be and are arrested without a warrant if they are caught committing a crime or if they are suspected of having committed a crime that is being investigated. A person who is believed to be drunk or under the influence of drugs and intends to drive any vehicle may be arrested without a warrant. Police must file charges within six hours against persons detained for disturbing the public order or considered dangerous and within 12 hours against those detained on other grounds. Police may hold a person for questioning for six hours or up to a maximum of 12 hours if necessary for the investigation. After questioning, the level of suspicion determines whether the individual will be arrested or released. A court order is not needed to hold a person for as long as 12 hours. If a suspect is arrested, the prosecutor has 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances) to request continued detention. An arrested suspect must be arraigned within 48 hours, and initial prosecution must begin within two weeks, unless extenuating circumstances exist. Authorities generally respected these requirements.

There is no system of bail; however, courts routinely released defendants pending trial unless they are considered dangerous or there is a risk that the suspect will leave the country. Detainees may retain a lawyer of their choice; in criminal cases, the government is obligated to provide an attorney, regardless of the defendant's financial situation. Detainees are afforded prompt access to lawyers and to family members. A suspect has a right to legal representation when the prosecutor requests his detention beyond 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances). Prompt access to family members can be influenced by the type of crime that the suspect is accused of committing. Sometimes a suspect is not allowed any contact with family members if it could jeopardize the preinvestigation.

Following its June visit to the country, the CPT delegation noted that, despite entry into force in 2008 of legal provisions obliging police to inform family members of a person's detention, it appeared that the right of notification of custody was often delayed "in the interests of the investigation" until a person has been remanded to custody by a court. The delegation also expressed concern in its preliminary observations over the situation of juveniles in police custody, "who apparently may be questioned without the presence of their parents or social welfare representatives."

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

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

Trial Procedures

The constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and have the right of appeal. Trials are generally public. Juries are used only in cases

involving freedom of the press or freedom of speech. In other cases, judges or court-appointed civilian representatives make determinations of guilt or innocence. Cases of a sensitive nature, including those involving children, child molestation, rape, and national security, can be closed to the public. The court system distinguishes between civil and criminal cases. Defendants have the right to be present at their trials and to consult an attorney in a timely manner. In criminal cases, the government is obligated to provide a defense attorney. A "free evidence" system allows parties to present in court any evidence, regardless of how it was acquired.

In 2008 the ECHR issued a judgment that found a violation by the country of Article 6 (length of proceedings) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The court ordered the government to pay the applicant 1,500 euros (\$2,150) for nonpecuniary damages and 2,500 euros (\$3,580) for court costs.

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. There is no specific court for human rights violations, and human rights cases are tried in the general court system. Citizens can appeal to the ECHR in matters related to the state.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions in practice.

Human rights organizations, including Civil Rights Defenders (formerly called the Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights), expressed concern over the growing number of government proposals to permit greater surveillance by police. Human rights groups asserted that allowing additional surveillance methods, such as wiretapping, would conflict with protection of the individual's right to privacy. In 2008 courts issued 990 permits for wiretapping and denied eight. In January a law came into effect that gives the National Defense Radio Establishment (FRA) the authority to monitor international cable traffic with the prior approval of a special court. Under this law, only government ministries and the armed forces are allowed to commission surveillance from the FRA.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution provides 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.

The law criminalizes expression considered to be hate speech and prohibits threats or expressions of contempt for a group or member of a group based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation. Hate speech may be punished by penalties ranging from fines to a maximum of four years in prison.

On August 17, an article in the country's largest tabloid newspaper, *Aftonbladet*, cited a Palestinian source alleging that Israeli troops harvested organs from Palestinian prisoners for sale on international markets. The Israeli government asked the government to condemn the article. However, the country's officials stated they were bound by the constitution and unable to make such statements, which would violate the freedom of press. After the Swedish ambassador to Israel issued an apologetic statement in response to the article and posted it on the embassy's Web page, a member of parliament filed a complaint with the parliament's Committee on the Constitution that the ambassador's apology

constituted "interference" with the freedom of press. Separately, a private citizen filed a complaint with the chancellor of justice against *Aftonbladet* for inciting racial agitation. In September the chancellor ruled the article did not involve racial agitation, and no further investigation was conducted.

On October 19, *Aftonbladet* published an opinion piece by **Jimmie Akesson**, the leader of the far-right Sweden Democrats Party, in which he asserted that the spread of Islam represented the country's "greatest external threat since World War II." The Center against Racism reported the article to the chancellor of justice. On October 23, the chancellor of justice decided not to start a preinvestigation against the Sweden Democrats and Akesson.

In 2008 the ECHR found a violation by the country of Article 10 (freedom to receive information) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The case involved a family of Iraqi origin that was evicted from their apartment for failing to remove a satellite dish needed to receive broadcasts in Arabic and Farsi from their country of origin. The court held that the family's eviction had been disproportionate to the state's aim and that the interference with the applicant's right to freedom of information constituted a violation of the European convention. The court ordered the government to pay the complainants 6,500 euros (approximately \$9,300) in pecuniary damages, 5,000 euros (approximately \$7,150) in nonpecuniary damages, and 10,000 euros (approximately \$14,300) for costs and expenses.

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 peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail. According to International Telecommunication Union statistics for 2008, approximately 88 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 provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights in practice.

c. Freedom of Religion

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

The Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities, a government body under the authority of the Ministry of Culture, provides financial aid to religious groups. In reviewing applications from religious groups, the only criteria the commission considers are the number of members in the group and the length of time since the group's establishment. In 2008, the most recent period for which data was available, approximately 48,476,000 kronor (approximately \$6.8 million) was distributed to 22 registered religious groups, including 39 subgroups. The government promoted interfaith understanding and met annually with representatives of various religious groups.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The Jewish community estimated that there were 20,000 Jews in the country. During the year the Jewish community reported an increase in anti-Semitism in connection with the conflict in the Gaza Strip, and police raised their security preparedness level. Debates regarding what constitutes expression of anti-Israeli sentiment as opposed to anti-Semitism

were featured prominently in the press. On January 2 and January 5, arson severely damaged a synagogue in Helsingborg. On January 5, vandals attempted to set fire to the funeral chapel at the Jewish cemetery in Malmo.

In June the National Council for Crime Prevention presented its annual study on hate crimes for 2008, including anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, and other religion-related hate crimes. During 2008 there were approximately 600 reports of hate crimes involving religion, 45 percent of which were Islamophobic, 26 percent anti-Semitic, and 28 percent were related to other religious groups. In 2008 there were 159 reports of anti-Semitic crimes, an increase of 41 from 2007, and 272 reports of Islamophobic crimes, an increase of 66 from 2007. Of the hate crimes involving religion in 2008, 12 percent reportedly had a white-supremacist motive.

The council's report stated that illegal threats and "agitation against an ethnic group" were the most common offenses related to religion. The most frequent anti-Semitic crimes were "agitation against an ethnic group," with 37 reported incidents in 2008, and 80 reported cases of "unlawful threat or molestation." Half of the Islamophobic crimes, or 138 cases, included "molestation or unlawful threat." Nazi symbols, such as Hitler salutes and swastikas, were associated with 32 percent of reported anti-Semitic cases. According to the report, one-third of anti-Semitic crimes and 7 percent of Islamophobic crimes were ideologically motivated. Religious hate crimes more frequently occurred in school or at work. The victim rarely knew the perpetrator, and the majority of both suspects and victims were men. By March police completed investigation of 61 percent of the Islamophobic cases and 75 percent of anti-Semitic cases from 2007. During the year they investigated 123 such cases, of which 19 resulted in prosecution and 186 were dropped for lack of evidence or failure to meet the standards of a hate crime.

The Stockholm police have a hate-crime hotline to receive complaints. In April a unit to train police officers to detect hate crimes and raise public awareness of them was expanded from Stockholm city to the entire country. Representatives from the unit visited high schools to raise awareness of hate crimes and encourage more victims to report abuses. Information for victims of hate crimes was available in several languages, and interpreters were provided to facilitate reporting.

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 (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

The constitution and law prohibit 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.

During the year the UNHCR continued to criticize the government's lengthy turnaround times for asylum applications. In August, to provide transparency, the Migration Board invited a UNHCR official to follow and report on approximately 200 asylum cases.

The government deported asylum seekers who arrived from other EU countries or from countries with which it maintained reciprocal return agreements. In most instances the persons who were deported had passed through, or had asylum

determinations pending, in other EU countries. The government authorized financial repatriation support for asylum seekers who had been denied residence in the country in the amount of 30,000 kronor (\$4,180) per adult and 15,000 kronor (\$2,090) per child, with a maximum of 75,000 kronor (\$10,400). During the first half of the year, the government provided repatriation support to 1,158 persons, most of them of Iraqi origin.

During the year the government forcibly repatriated 471 Iraqis. Members of parliament, human rights organizations, and the Iraqi migration minister criticized the migration minister in connection with the forced repatriations. The Iraqi minister claimed the forced returns violated the February 2008 repatriation agreement between the two countries.

In practice, the government provided some 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. Asylum seekers can appeal rulings of the Migration Board to two special migration appeals courts.

In September 2008 the Migration Board denied asylum to Adil Hakimjan, an ethnic Uighur from China and a detainee in Guantanamo, despite a direct appeal from the European Parliament. Hakimjan asserted that he could not return to China because his life would be threatened there. He appealed the board's decision to the Migration Court, which in May reversed the decision and granted Hakimjan permanent residency in the country.

The UN Committee for the Prevention of Torture received complaints against the government during the year; most of them concerned repatriation of refugees.

During the first half of the year, the migration board provided temporary protection to 38 persons who did not qualify as refugees by allowing them to remain in the country.

Stateless Persons

Citizenship is derived from one's parents (*jus sanguinis*). According to UNHCR data, there were 7,592 stateless persons in the country at the end of September. The large number related to the influx of immigrants and the birth of children to stateless parents, who remained stateless until one parent has acquired citizenship. The majority of the stateless population came from the Middle East (the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq) and Somalia.

Once stateless persons are granted permanent residence, they can obtain citizenship through the same naturalization process as other permanent residents. The timeframe for gaining citizenship is generally four to eight years, depending on the individual's grounds for residency, ability to establish identity, and lack of a criminal record.

There is no legal discrimination against stateless persons in employment, education, housing, health services, marriage or birth registration, access to courts and judicial procedures, or owning land or property.

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

In the 2006 parliamentary elections, citizens voted out the Social Democratic Party, which had dominated the political system for most of the previous 70 years. The new government was a center-right coalition led by the Moderate Party.

On June 7, the country held elections to the European Parliament that were considered free and fair.

Political parties operated without restrictions or outside interference.

There were 165 women in the 349-seat parliament and 10 women in the 22-member cabinet.

No official statistics on minority representation in government were available because the law prohibits the government from holding information about the racial or ethnic background of its citizens. However, media reports stated that there was one ethnic minority member in the cabinet, and 6.5 percent of parliament members were born in other countries.

Section 4 Official Corruption and Government Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. The prosecutor's office has a special unit working on cases involving corruption. The unit initiated 49 investigations during the year, resulting in 23 prosecutions. Public officials and political parties are subject to financial disclosure laws.

The constitution and law provide for public access to government information, and the government generally granted access in practice to citizens and noncitizens, including foreign media. The public has the right of access to government documents unless they are subject to secrecy laws, according to which information may be withheld if its release poses a threat to national security or to individual or corporate privacy.

Section 5 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. At the national level, the country has seven ombudsmen: four justice ombudsmen, the chancellor of justice, the children's ombudsman, and the discrimination ombudsman with responsibility for ethnicity, gender, transsexual identity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disabilities. There are normally ombudsmen down to the municipal level as well. Government officials often were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Section 6 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, age, disability, language, social status, or sexual orientation.

Women

Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal, and the government enforced the law effectively. The law stipulates more severe penalties for repeated crimes and for cases in which the perpetrator had a close relationship to the victim. The National Council for Crime Prevention (NCCP) reported 2,931 rapes of persons over the age of 14 during the year, compared with 3,880 in 2008.

The NCCP reported 26,091 cases of assault against women during the year. During the same period, approximately 95 homicides of women and girls were reported; most were committed by men closely related to the victim. Authorities apprehended and prosecuted abusers in most cases.

The law provides victims with protection from contact with their abusers. When necessary, authorities helped victims protect their identities or to obtain new identities and homes. According to official statistics, approximately 1,000 persons--mostly women--received such services. Both national and local governments helped fund volunteer groups that provided shelter and other assistance for abused women, and both private and public organizations ran shelters and operated hotlines.

Authorities estimated that since 2002, 1,500 to 2,000 women had been subject to honor-related violence (patriarchal violence often linked to cultural and religious convictions about female chastity and marriage). Honor-related violence exclusively involved immigrants from Muslim countries; the police concentrated on educating police officers and prosecutors to increase awareness of the problem and to improve its detection and prevention. A survey by Stockholm University of 2,300 15-year-old students from 36 schools revealed that 11 percent of the participants fulfilled the researchers' definition of leading a life that could be considered "honor controlled." Of the girls, 16 percent responded they were expected to follow someone else's decision when choosing a future husband. A parent had also forbidden approximately 10 percent of the students to attend classes in mandatory subjects, such as sports and sex education. On December 29, the Ministry for Integration and Gender Equality announced that it had granted the county administration boards 36 million kronor (\$5 million) for their continued work against honor-related oppression.

A 19-year-old female citizen of Somali origin, who was sent back to her country of origin by her mother for female circumcision in 2001, obtained redress of 400,000 kronor (approximately \$55,700) from the crime victim compensation and support authority.

Selling sexual services is legal, but the purchase of sexual services and procurement are illegal. In recent years, the government has sought to curb prostitution by focusing on the demand rather than the supply and by arresting clients rather than prostitutes. There were 349 cases of individuals buying sexual services reported during the year, compared with 187 in 2008.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs continued to encourage citizens to report suspicions of sex tourism to the country's diplomatic missions abroad. A police criminal investigator was stationed in Bangkok to cover Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Philippines and to provide liaison between police in those countries and Nordic authorities.

The law prohibits sexual harassment, and the government generally enforced this law in practice. Employers who do not investigate and intervene against harassment at work may be liable for damages to the victim. There are no criminal penalties for this crime.

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 enjoy the same legal rights as men, including rights under family law, property law, and in the judicial system. Some sectors of the labor market, including the financial sector and high-ranking positions in both in the public and private sectors, still showed significant gender disparities in terms of salaries, especially in male-dominated occupations. Women's salaries averaged 86.5 percent of men's, adjusting for age, education, and occupational differences.

The discrimination ombudsman investigated complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. Complaints could also be filed with the courts or with the employer. Labor unions generally mediated in cases filed with the employer. During the year the discrimination ombudsman's office registered 290 cases. Women filed approximately 75 percent of the cases; 25 percent of the cases concerned salaries. There were 46 discrimination complaints related to pregnancy in 2008, the last year for which data was available.

During the year the government began implementing a 235 million kronor (\$33 million) strategy for promoting gender equality in the labor market and business. The strategy coordinated and developed gender-equality measures in the workplace and business and involved education and social policy.

In February the government appointed a committee to promote gender equality in higher education. With a budget of 60 million (\$8.4 million) until the end of 2010, the committee focused on combating gender-based subject choices and reversing the trend toward fewer male students in higher education. It also addressed gender differences in terms of study rates, dropout rates, propensity to complete a degree, career opportunities in research, and representation at executive levels in higher education.

Children

Citizenship is derived from one's parents. Children born in the country are registered in the tax authority's population register.

Child abuse was a problem. The national child protection council reported 8,849 cases of abuse of children under the age of 15 during the year, compared with 5,954 in 2008. Police reported 1,911 cases of child rape and 408 cases of sexual abuse of children during the year, compared with 944 reported cases of rape and 955 reported cases of child sexual abuse in 2008.

The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically. Parents, teachers, and other adults are subject to prosecution if they physically punish a child, including slapping or spanking. Children have the right to report such abuses to police. The usual sentence for such an offense is a fine combined with counseling and monitoring by social workers. Authorities may remove children from their homes and place them in foster care.

In July the government amended the penal code to criminalize "contact with children for sexual purposes." The amendment enhances legal protections for children by criminalizing Internet contact intended to lead to sexual assault. The law covers children under 15; penalties range from fines to one year in prison.

The law prohibits the repatriation of foreign children if they lack proper documents to prove their identity and national origin. The migration board turned children arriving in the country alone over to social services in their municipality of residence, where a legal guardian was appointed to assist them. However, Amnesty International estimated that 100 unaccompanied foreign minors disappeared in 2008, most likely to continue their travel to other countries.

The government continued to be active in efforts to prevent child abuse through international organizations, such as the UN Children's Fund. As the presidency country of the EU, the government in July organized a conference on human rights from a children's perspective, focusing particularly on violence against children.

Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons; however, there were reports that persons were trafficked to, from, through, and within the country. Law enforcement officials and analysts estimated the number of trafficked women at 400 to 600 per year, cautioning, however, that it was not possible to obtain precise numbers.

The country is a destination, and, to a lesser extent, a transit country for women trafficked from Romania, Russia, Nigeria, Albania, Tanzania, Thailand, and Estonia for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. Traffickers included members of international organized criminal networks. Police in Stockholm have also noted an increase in female traffickers and pimps. Traffickers typically recruited female victims in their countries of origin to work abroad as cleaners, babysitters, or similar positions. Once in the country, traffickers isolated and intimidated victims, and forced them to work as prostitutes in hotels, restaurants, massage parlors, or private apartments. Some were locked up and their passports stolen by their captors. Male victims were primarily trafficked for forced labor, mostly in the gardening, construction, and forestry sectors, and in some cases in forced begging and petty theft.

The law prohibits the trafficking of persons for sexual purposes; provides sentences of two to 10 years' imprisonment for persons convicted of trafficking; and criminalizes attempting to traffic, conspiracy to traffic, and the failure to report such crimes. Authorities actively prosecuted trafficking cases. During the year police reported 32 cases of trafficking for sexual purposes, compared with 15 cases in 2008. Police also reported 29 cases of labor trafficking and noted a continuing increase in the number of children, mainly from Romania, who were smuggled to beg in the street and commit petty crimes. In January courts convicted four citizens of Moldova, Ukraine, and Sweden for trafficking a handicapped Ukrainian man and forcing him to beg. This was the first successful conviction of labor trafficking in the country.

To prosecute traffickers, authorities continued to primarily use laws against procurement and an offense called "placing in distress," which can apply in cases where traffickers lure women from other countries under false pretenses. The laws on procurement and trafficking complement each other; however, the antitrafficking law requires that prosecutors prove traffickers used "improper means." Judges commonly ruled that improper means were absent in cases involving victims who consented to being trafficked. Although consent is irrelevant under the antitrafficking law, in practice, judicial interpretation of the improper means criterion made it difficult to obtain convictions. During the year, 91 cases of procurement were reported, many involving trafficking victims, compared with 51 in 2008.

The country actively participated in a Nordic-Baltic task force against human trafficking. In October, on its own initiative and as the EU president, the government hosted a two-day trafficking in persons conference.

The government allocated funds to domestic and international nongovernmental organizations for use in providing shelter and rehabilitation assistance to trafficking victims. The law provides that trafficking victims who cooperate with police investigations can receive temporary residence permits for at least six months and have access to the full range of social benefits. Victims who do not cooperate with police investigations are ineligible for residence permits and were promptly deported.

The government provided 213 million kronor (approximately \$30 million) to implement 36 measures under its 2008-10 action plan to combat prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes.

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 employers from discriminating against persons with disabilities in hiring decisions and prohibits universities from discriminating against students with disabilities in making admissions decisions. No other specific law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. The discrimination ombudsman is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

The law on discrimination does not cover accessibility. Regulations for new buildings require full accessibility. Similar requirements exist for some, but not all, public facilities; many buildings and some means of public transportation remained inaccessible.

The number of reports of discrimination against persons with disabilities increased during the year. There were 896 reports of governmental discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services; most of the cases involved lack of access to public buildings. Difficulty in accessing apartments, restaurants, and bars generated the most frequent reports of societal discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Approximately half of the cases submitted to the disability ombudsman under the Disability Act were handled by mediation procedures rather than through formal court hearings.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

More than a million persons in the country were foreign born, with the largest groups originating from Finland, the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Iran. According to figures from Statistics Sweden, approximately 102,000 persons immigrated to the country during the year.

During the year the media and the National Crime Prevention Council reported that individuals associated with openly Nazi organizations and the People's Front Party committed numerous discriminatory acts involving violence and harassment aimed at immigrants, minorities, Muslims, and Jews. The reports included cases of assault, hate speech, unauthorized demonstrations, illegal distribution of posters, illegal possession of weapons, and disorderly conduct.

In October the chancellor of justice decided to prosecute a man for incitement to racial hatred for distributing stickers that stated "Swedish women are being raped. What are you doing about it?" and portrayed a rapist of foreign origin with a rope around his neck.

The media also reported an increase in Nazi-related threats and harassment at schools against both teachers and students with immigrant backgrounds.

Police registered reports of xenophobic crimes, some of which were related to neo-Nazi or white-power ideology. Police investigated and the district attorney prosecuted race-related crimes. Official estimates placed the number of active neo-Nazis and white supremacists at approximately 1,500, and an increase in female participants was noted. Neo-Nazi groups operated legally, but courts have held that it is illegal to wear xenophobic symbols or racist paraphernalia or to display signs and banners with inflammatory symbols at rallies, since the law prohibits incitement of hatred against ethnic groups.

The discrimination ombudsman received 737 reports in 2008, the most recent year for which data was available.

The government estimated the population of Roma to be 40,000 to 60,000. There is a special delegation for Romani issues consisting of representatives of Romani origin, experts on Romani problems, and representatives from Romani associations. The delegation worked to improve the situation of Roma in society and addressed such problems as social, political, and economic discrimination. During the year Roma filed a few complaints of discrimination related to housing and employment. On November 18, the court decided that a storeowner in Orebro should pay 20,000 kronor (\$2,790) to four Romani women for denying them access to his clothing store.

The law recognizes Sami (formerly known as Lapps), Swedish Finns, Tornedal-Finns, Roma, and Jews as national minorities. The government supported and protected minority languages by law.

Indigenous People

The approximately 20,000 Sami in the country were represented by a 31-member Sami-elected administrative authority called the Sami parliament. Sami are not represented as a group in the country's parliament but as full citizens; Sami have the right to vote in the country's elections and to participate in the government, including the country's parliament, if elected or appointed. The Sami parliament acts as an advisory body to the government and has limited decision-making powers in matters related to preserving the Sami culture, language, and schooling. The national parliament and government regulations govern the Sami body's operations.

Longstanding tensions between Sami and the government over land and natural resources persisted, as did tensions between Sami and private landowners over reindeer grazing rights. Certain Sami have grazing and fishing rights, depending on their tribal history. Sami continued to press the government for exclusive access to grazing and fishing,

although the Sami parliament focused more on the preservation of the Sami culture than on the exploitation of natural resources.

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

During the year there were isolated incidents of societal violence and discrimination against homosexual conduct. There were reports that individuals associated with the National Socialist Front Party made threats against the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights (RFSL). In 2008, the most recent year for which data was available, the discrimination ombudsman registered 47 reported cases, the same number as in 2007, while the ombudsman's office initiated six new discrimination investigations in 2008, compared with eight in 2007.

The RFSL is the leading nonprofit organization working with and for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons (LGBT). It is nonpartisan and religiously unaffiliated. Approximately 20 additional LGBT organizations were active in the country, including the Association for Christian Homosexual, Bisexual, and Transsexual (HBT) persons, United HBT students, Stockholm Pride, Amnesty International's HBT group, the Association for Gay Police Officers, the Association for HBT Doctors and Nurses, and the HBT Association for Employees in the Swedish Armed Forces.

In July the annual weeklong Gay Pride Festival took place. A government working group promotes equal rights for LGBT persons.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

There were no reports of discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Section 7 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law entitles all workers, including armed forces and the police, to form and join independent unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements, and workers exercised this right in practice. An estimated 80 percent of the 4.5 million-person workforce belonged to trade unions. The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference, and the government protected this right in practice.

The law also provides for the right to strike as well as for employers to organize and conduct lockouts; workers and employers exercised these rights in practice. Public sector employees enjoy the right to strike, subject to limitations in the collective agreements protecting the public's immediate health and security.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law provides for collective bargaining, and workers exercised this right in practice. Approximately 80 percent of the workforce was covered by collective bargaining agreements. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination, and there were few reports that it occurred during the year.

There are no special laws or exemptions from regular labor laws in the country's foreign trade zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that such practices occurred. Women were subjected to forced sexual exploitation. Young men and children who were 15 and younger were found in situations of forced labor, often on construction sites, and in some cases forced to beg or commit petty theft.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

There are laws and policies (including those on acceptable working conditions) to protect children from exploitation in the workplace, and the government effectively implemented these laws and policies in practice. The law permits full-time employment from the age of 16 under the supervision of local authorities. Employees under the age of 18 may work only during the daytime and under supervision. Children as young as 13 may work part-time or in light work with parental permission. Union representatives, police, and public prosecutors effectively enforced these restrictions.

Children continued to be trafficked for forced begging and petty theft.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no national minimum wage law. Wages are set by annual collective bargaining agreements. Nonunion establishments generally observed these contracts as well. Substantial benefits (for example, childcare) provided by social welfare entitlement programs assured even the lowest-paid workers and their families a decent standard of living.

In August approximately 200 seasonal Thai berry pickers, who had worked weeks for an estimated 10 to 15 kronor (approximately \$1.40 to \$2.10) per hour but could not afford to return to Thailand, called a strike in the northern part of the country to demand better wages and working conditions. Neither employers nor government officials took action on their complaints. After days of protests, the Thai ambassador in Sweden promised that his government would help the strikers return home. By the end of the year, all the Thai workers had returned home with assistance from the Thai embassy and the city of Lulea.

The legal standard workweek is 40 hours or less. Both the law and collective bargaining agreements regulate overtime and rest periods. The maximum allowable overtime per year is 200 hours. The amount of overtime compensation was normally regulated by the collective agreement; it varied by workplace and could also depend on whether the overtime occurred during the regular workweek, during a weekend, or on a bank holiday. Payment for overtime could take the form of money or time. The law requires a minimum period of 36 consecutive hours of rest, preferably on weekends, during a period of seven days. The law also provides employees with a minimum of five weeks' paid annual leave. The government effectively enforced these standards.

The work environment authority, a government-appointed board, issued occupational health and safety regulations and trained union stewards and safety ombudsmen. Government inspectors monitored them. Safety ombudsmen have the authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and call in an inspector. These rules were effectively enforced. In law and practice, workers can remove themselves from situations that endangered their health or safety without jeopardizing their employment.