

SWEDEN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kingdom of Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a freely elected multiparty parliamentary form of government. Legislative authority rests in the unicameral parliament (Riksdag). National elections in September 2010 were considered free and fair. Voters reelected the center-right coalition led by the Moderate Party as a minority government with Fredrik Reinfeldt as the prime minister. The king is the largely symbolic head of state. The prime minister is the head of government and exercises executive authority. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The main human rights abuses reported during the year included societal discrimination and some incidents of violence against members of ethnic and religious minorities, and abuse of women and children. While the criminal justice system operated effectively, authorities subjected a high percentage of pretrial detainees to extended periods in isolation and limited their access to visitors, mail, and exercise.

Other reported problems included use of excessive force by police, forced deportation of Iraqis and others to areas deemed unsafe, the trafficking of women and children, discrimination against persons with disabilities, and wage abuse of mainly foreign seasonal berry pickers.

Authorities generally prosecuted officials who committed abuses in the security services or elsewhere in the government.

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 and law prohibit such practices; however, there were reports that police used excessive force.

The national prosecutor's office for police cases received 5,373 reports of misconduct during the year. The reports covered all police employees, both officers and civilians, and involved incidents that occurred both on active service and outside of work. The majority of the incidents took place while the police employee was on duty, and of these 17 percent involved accusations that on-duty officers had used more violence than the situation required.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions generally met international standards, and the government permitted visits by independent human rights observers.

Prisoners had access to potable water. There were no specific prison ombudsmen, but prisoner complaints were sent to and handled by the justice ombudsman. Authorities used alternatives to sentencing for nonviolent offenders, such as intensive supervision with electronic monitoring, conditional sentence, probation, and community service. During the year the government took a number of measures to improve prison conditions, including measures to decrease the rate of recidivism and a national effort to reduce the number of career criminals.

During the year up to November 30, seven persons committed suicide while in prison or a detention center.

According to the Prison and Probation Service, prison and detention centers were meant to hold a maximum of 6,957 prisoners and detainees. On November 1, the total number of prisoners and detainees was 6,771. In October 2010, the latest date for which data was available, there were 180 juvenile and 288 female prisoners.

Restrictive conditions for prisoners held in pretrial custody remained a problem. A new Act on Treatment of Persons Arrested or Remanded in Custody that went into force on April 1 includes the possibility of appealing a decision on specific restrictions to the Court of Appeals and ultimately to the Supreme Court.

According to the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, in July 2010 approximately 45 percent of pretrial detainees were subjected to extended isolation or to restrictions on mail delivery or exercise. Authorities stated they took this step when detainees' contact with people outside the detention center could risk destroying evidence or changing witnesses' statements, thereby imperiling an ongoing investigation.

Prisoners and detainees not under restrictions had reasonable access to visitors. All were permitted religious observance, and could submit complaints to several judicial authorities without censorship. Authorities investigated credible allegations of inhumane conditions.

The justice ombudsman, who worked independently from the government, could serve on behalf of prisoners and detainees to consider such matters as alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders to alleviate overcrowding; addressing the status and circumstances of confinement of juvenile offenders; and improving pretrial detention, bail, and recordkeeping procedures to ensure that prisoners do not serve beyond the maximum sentence for the charged offense. In July the justice ombudsman set up a new unit to fulfill better its role as the National Preventive Mechanism as called for by the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture. The justice ombudsman conducted five prison inspections during the year.

The government permitted monitoring by independent, nongovernmental observers. The national Red Cross and church associations may also visit prisoners, but may not monitor or inspect the prisons.

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, subordinate to the Ministry of Defense, are responsible for external security. The Ministry of 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, acts as the government's ombudsman in the supervision of the police. 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 it suspects that the Security Service has collected and used personal data wrongfully.

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 also 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 an 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.

Although there is no system of bail, courts routinely released defendants pending trial unless they were considered dangerous or there was a risk that the suspect would 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 was influenced by the type of

crime the suspect was accused of committing. Sometimes a suspect was not allowed any contact with family members if police believed it could jeopardize an investigation.

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. 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, may 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. Defendants can confront or question witnesses against them and/or present witnesses and evidence on their behalf and defendants and their attorneys have access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases. If convicted, defendants have the right of appeal.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Regional Human Rights Court Decisions

The country is a party to the European Convention on Human Rights and subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters. Human rights cases are tried in the general court system. Citizens can appeal cases involving

possible violations of the European Convention on Human Rights by the state to the ECHR.

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.

The National Defense Radio Establishment (FRA) may monitor international communications traffic with the prior approval of a special court. Under the law only government ministries and the armed forces may commission surveillance from the FRA. In 2010 courts issued 3,349 permits for wiretapping and camera surveillance, an increase of 51 percent from 2009. The courts denied 36 permits.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

Status of Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and 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. Penalties for hate speech range from fines to a maximum of four years in prison.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or credible reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chat rooms. Individuals and groups could engage in expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail.

In 2010 the European Commission filed a complaint against the government for not implementing a directive requiring communications providers to retain data specified in the directive for a period of between six months and two years. The center-right governing coalition agreed to retain the data for six months, but on

March 16 parliament decided to postpone the implementation of the directive for at least 12 months.

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

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt.

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

The constitution and law provide 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.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The country's laws provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: In accordance with EU law, the government denied asylum to persons who had transited other EU countries or countries with which it maintained reciprocal return agreements before arriving in Sweden. It deported such persons to those countries.

Nonrefoulement: During the year the government forcibly repatriated 638 Iraqis, most frequently to Baghdad, pursuant to a repatriation agreement with Iraq. The

UN, through the UNHCR, and nongovernmental organizations such as Amnesty International criticized the government and the migration minister for the forced repatriations. Amnesty International also expressed concern over an increased rate of rejection of Uighur asylum seekers, mainly from China's Xinjiang Province. Asylum seekers can appeal rulings of the Migration Board to two special migration appeals courts. Unsuccessful asylum-seekers can and did appeal their cases to the ECHR.

Durable Solutions: The government authorized financial repatriation support for asylum seekers denied residence in the country in the amount of 30,000 kronor (\$4,360) per adult and 15,000 kronor (\$2,180) per child, with a maximum of 75,000 kronor (\$10,900) per family. During the year the government provided repatriation support to 923 persons, most of them of Iraqi origin. Beginning December 1, the government no longer authorized repatriation support for persons returning to Kosovo.

Temporary Protection: During the year the Migration Board provided temporary protection to approximately 75 persons who did not qualify as refugees.

Stateless Persons

Citizenship is derived from one's parents. According to UNHCR data there were 9,344 stateless persons in the country in January. The large number related to the influx of immigrants and the birth to stateless parents of children who remain stateless until either one parent acquires citizenship or a special application for citizenship for stateless children under the age of five is submitted and approved. The majority of stateless persons came from the Middle East (the Occupied Territories, 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. Gaining citizenship generally requires 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, 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

Recent Elections: National elections held in September 2010 were considered free and fair.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Following the September 2010 elections there were 157 women among the 349 parliamentarians. There were 12 women in the 24-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 the number of immigrant parliamentarians increased in the September 2010 elections.

Section 4. Official Corruption and Government Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. A special unit in the prosecutor's office worked on cases involving corruption and initiated 26 investigations during the year, resulting in prosecutions of 35 persons. Public officials and political parties are subject to financial disclosure laws.

On June 21, authorities prosecuted a civil servant and an elected official for accepting payments from one of the companies involved in constructing a stadium. Their trial continued at year's end.

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. The public had access to a mechanism to appeal such a withholding of information.

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. Government officials were often cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: 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. The ombudsmen enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government or party interference. They had adequate resources and generally were considered effective. The children's ombudsman published a number of reports and publications for children and those working to protect children's rights. The discrimination ombudsman published material throughout the year to prevent discrimination. On February 17, a government statement clarified the mission of the discrimination ombudsman and reduced the processing time for reported cases.

Government officials often were cooperative and responsive to the views of the ombudsmen.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

While the constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, age, disability, language, social status, or sexual orientation, the government did not always effectively enforce these prohibitions.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: 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 with the victim. Penalties range from two to 10 years in prison. The National Council for Crime Prevention (NCCP) reported 5,960 rapes during 2010, compared with 5,937 in 2009.

The NCCP reported approximately 27,300 cases of assault of women during 2010, the latest year for which data was available. Authorities apprehended and prosecuted abusers in most cases.

The law provides victims with protection from contact with their abusers. When necessary, authorities helped victims to protect their identities or to obtain new identities and homes. According to official statistics, approximately 12,000 persons, mostly women, were in these programs at the end of the year. 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.

According to official figures for 2010, 27 percent of girls and women with a non-Swedish background, or approximately 100,000 persons in total, faced unreasonable restrictions from home that could be seen as honor-related. Honor-related violence exclusively involved immigrants from Muslim countries; police concentrated on educating police officers and prosecutors to increase their awareness of the problem and to improve its detection and prevention. In 2010 county administration boards used a grant of 36 million kronor (\$5.2 million) from the Ministry for Integration and Gender Equality to work against honor-related restrictions. On July 28, the government, through the Ministry for Education and Research, announced a 9.6-million-kronor (\$1.4 million) addition to the grant. At year's end there were no reports of the results of these programs.

Sexual Harassment: 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 harassment.

Reproductive Rights: 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, prenatal care, maternal health services including skilled attendance during childbirth, essential obstetric and postpartum care, and family planning practices.

Discrimination: Women have the same legal rights as men in the judicial system, including rights under family law and property law. 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 approximately 86 percent of men's.

The discrimination ombudsman investigated complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. Complaints could be filed also with the courts or with the employer. Labor unions generally mediated in cases filed with the employer. There were 61 discrimination complaints related to parental leave during the year.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived from one's parents. Children born in the country, regardless of their parents' citizenship and status in the country, are registered in the tax authority's population register.

Child Abuse: Child abuse was a problem. The NCCP reported 11,600 cases of abuse of children under the age of 15 during 2010, an increase of 4 percent compared to 2009. The NCCP reported 2,620 cases of rape of children under the age of 18 in 2010 compared with 1,911 reported cases in 2009.

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.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law criminalizes "contact with children under 15 for sexual purposes," including Internet contact intended to lead to sexual assault. Penalties range from fines to one year in prison. The minimum age for consensual sex is 15. The law prohibits child pornography; penalties range from fines to six years in prison.

Displaced Children: 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, which appointed a legal guardian to assist them.

Institutionalized Children: On February 10, a government report recommended compensation for a number of individuals who were subjects of severe abuse while in foster care from the 1920s to the 1980s. The investigation recommended high-

level political apologies at a ceremony, the possibility to claim financial compensation, and measures to prevent similar abuse in the future. The issue was controversial among politicians and victims, but a ceremony was held on November 21, and eligible individuals will be able to apply for 250,000 kronor (\$36,300) in financial compensation.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See country-specific information at http://travel.state.gov/abduction/country/country_3781.html.

Anti-Semitism

Leaders of the Jewish community estimated there were 20,000 Jews in the country. While the number of reported anti-Semitic crimes decreased from 250 to 161 from 2009 to 2010, government officials recognized that anti-Semitism was a problem in Sweden, especially in the city of Malmo. Anti-Semitic incidents included threats, verbal abuse, physical violence, vandalism, graffiti, and harassment in schools. These incidents were often associated with events in and actions of the Israeli government, and Swedish Jews were at times blamed for Israeli policies.

In December 2010 the Simon Wiesenthal Center issued a travel warning for Jews traveling in southern Sweden, because Jews in Malmo were “subject to anti-Semitic taunts and harassment.” It also cited “the outrageous remarks of Malmo mayor Ilmar Reepalu, who blamed the Jewish community for failing to denounce Israel.” In March the organization discussed the situation with local government officials and police in Malmo, but the discussions produced no results by year’s end.

In August, at the government’s request, the state-run Living History Forum published a report that found racist and xenophobic views increasingly were propagated over the Internet and in school textbooks. The report, compiled from previously collected research ranging back over a decade, also found that Jews and Muslims faced discrimination for outwardly professing their faith, and conspiracy theories targeted Jews for alleged attempts at global and financial domination.

As a response to the number of anti-Semitic incidents, a group of young Muslims in Malmo started, on their own initiative, a group called “Young Muslims against Anti-Semitism.” The group has been touring schools in Muslim suburbs to address the issue. The leader of the group has been included on the National Raoul

Wallenberg Committee that will highlight the centennial of the birth of Wallenberg in 2012. Representatives from the national unit to train police officers to detect hate crimes visited high schools to raise awareness of such crimes and to encourage more victims to report abuses. Information for victims of hate crimes was available in several languages, and interpreters were provided to facilitate reporting. Police hate-crime units existed throughout the country.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits employers from discriminating against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in hiring decisions and prohibits universities from discriminating against students with disabilities in making admission 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, and similar requirements exist for some, but not all, public facilities. However, many buildings and some means of public transportation remained inaccessible.

The number of reports of discrimination against persons with disabilities increased during the year. During the year there were 563 reports of governmental discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services. Most other cases involved lack of access to buildings used by the public, such as apartments, restaurants, and bars. Many cases were handled through mediation procedures rather than formal court hearings.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

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

Societal discrimination and violence against Arab and Somali immigrants and Roma continued to be a significant problem during the year.

Police registered reports of xenophobic crimes, some of which were related to neo-Nazi or white-power ideology. Police investigated and the district attorney's office prosecuted race-related crimes. Official estimates placed the number of active neo-Nazis and white supremacists at 1,500. 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.

It was frequently difficult to determine whether hate crimes had ethnic or religious motives, but abuses directed at members of ethnic minorities from Muslim-majority countries officially were reported as being "anti-Islamic." Anti-Islamic behavior was aimed at both Arab and Somali immigrants. The NCCP hate crime report for 2010 counted 272 reported anti-Islamic hate crimes, or 49 percent of the total antireligious hate crimes. In 2009, 194 of the hate crimes reported were anti-Islamic crimes (33 percent of religion-related hate crimes), down from 272 in 2008.

The most frequent anti-Islamic crimes were crimes against persons, with 148 reported incidents in 2010, and 80 reported cases of agitation against an ethnic group. According to the report, 3 percent of anti-Islamic crimes were ideologically motivated.

The discrimination ombudsman received 694 complaints regarding ethnic discrimination during the year.

The government estimated the Romani population at 50,000 persons. In 2010 a special delegation for Romani problems reported that a majority of Roma lived as outcasts, unemployment reached 80 percent, elementary education was rare, and a Rom's average life expectancy was significantly lower than the country's average. In 2010, 150 reported hate crimes were identified as anti-Romani. On September 9, the government announced a 46-million-kronor (\$6.7 million) supplement to the 2012 budget aimed at improving the situation of Roma over a four-year period.

During the year the discrimination ombudsman handled five mediation and court cases involving Roma. The most common complaint was against landlords who refused to rent apartments to Roma. Conciliation with financial compensation to the Roma was the most common outcome.

Indigenous People

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.

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 persons perceived to be gay. For 2010 the NCCP reported 801 hate crimes based on sexual orientation or gender identity: 770 concerning gay, bisexual, or heterosexual persons; and 31 on the basis of gender identity.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

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

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law entitles all workers, including members of the armed forces and 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 75 percent of the five-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.

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 it occurred during the year.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, including by children, and the government effectively enforced these laws. However, there were reports that children were in some cases forced to beg or commit petty theft. There were also reports of forced labor in agriculture, construction, and domestic households.

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

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 perform light work with parental permission. The government, union representatives, police, and public prosecutors effectively implemented these laws and policies in practice and had adequate resources.

Children trafficked both internally and from outside the country continued to be subjected to forced begging and petty theft.

d. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no national minimum wage law. Wages were set by annual collective bargaining agreements. Nonunion establishments generally observed these contracts as well.

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. Compensation for overtime could take the form of money or time off. 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 whom government inspectors monitored. Safety ombudsmen have the authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and call in an inspector. These rules were effectively enforced.

Seasonal berry pickers, mainly from Asia, faced difficulties. By regulation, employers--whether foreign or domestic--must offer conditions of employment on par with the country's collective agreements, and the work must be on such a scale that the workers earn a minimum wage of 16,372 kronor (\$2,377) a month. However, several problems occurred during the year, mostly due to the failure of foreign companies that provided foreign workers to Swedish companies to respect the conditions of employment. Foreign companies and labor recruiters that brought workers to Sweden for the berry harvest sometimes subjected the workers to harsh conditions of work, including seizing passports, withholding pay, and providing poor living and working conditions. In April the Migration Board decided that a foreign company providing berry pickers to Swedish companies must have a branch registered in Sweden to guarantee the conditions of employment. The foreign labor broker must also show how it expects to pay workers in case of, for example, a bad berry season.

During the year there were 57 workplace fatalities, compared to 54 in 2010.