

MOLDOVA 2012 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all references in this report exclude the secessionist region of Transnistria.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Moldova is a republic with a form of parliamentary democracy. The constitution provides for a multiparty democracy with legislative and executive branches, as well as an independent judiciary and a clear separation of powers. Legislative authority is vested in the unicameral parliament. The Alliance for European Integration (AIE) coalition retained its parliamentary majority in the 2010 elections, which international observers stated met most Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe commitments. After more than two years without a president, parliament elected a president on March 16. The opposition Party of Communists (PCRM) called the election illegal and did not recognize the new head of the state. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

The most significant human rights problem in the country during the year was government corruption, which undermined the credibility and effectiveness of the police and the judiciary as well as respect for the rule of law. Allegations of police torture and mistreatment of persons in detention remained a second major area of concern. The government made only limited progress in holding officials accountable for killings and other abuses committed by government security forces during the 2009 crackdown on postelection demonstrations.

Other significant problems included harsh and overcrowded conditions in prisons; arbitrary detention by police; restrictions on the freedom of assembly and speech by local authorities; closure of an opposition broadcaster; violence against women; trafficking in persons; discrimination against Roma; harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals; limited enforcement of workers' rights; and child labor.

While authorities investigated reports of official abuse in the security services and elsewhere, officials accused of human rights violations, complicity in trafficking, or corruption were rarely successfully prosecuted and punished. Impunity was a major problem.

In 1990 separatists declared a “Transdniester Moldovan Republic” (Transnistria) in the area along the eastern border with Ukraine. A 1992 ceasefire agreement established a peacekeeping force of Moldovan, Russian, and Transnistrian units. The central government did not exercise authority in the region, and Transnistrian authorities governed through parallel administrative structures. Transnistrian authorities previously restricted political activity and interfered with the ability of Moldovan citizens living in Transnistria to vote in Moldovan elections. Torture, arbitrary arrests, and unlawful detentions were regularly reported. In December 2011 Transnistria held an “election” that resulted in a new “president,” Yevgeny Shevchuk. The human rights situation in Transnistria did not change significantly after the “election” of the new administration in Tiraspol.

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 during the year.

On the morning of January 1, a Russian peacekeeper shot in the back and killed an 18-year-old man near the Vadul-lui-Voda checkpoint when the victim drove through a peacekeeping post without stopping. The peacekeeper was transferred to Russia before authorities completed the investigation of the incident. In December the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the Bryansk Military Court had found the Russian peacekeeper not guilty. The Moldovan Prosecutor General’s Office, which continued its investigation of the case, made many unsuccessful requests for information and evidence from Russian authorities.

The government made little progress during the year in holding officials accountable for the security force crackdown on postelection demonstrations in 2009 that resulted in three deaths. Ion Perju, a police officer accused of killing protestor Valeriu Boboc, remained free while under investigation for murder.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances during the year.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

While the law prohibits such practices, police reportedly used cruel and degrading arrest and interrogation methods, and guards beat prison inmates.

Abuse by police remained a serious problem, especially outside the capital. Despite the adoption of an antitorture action plan and reform of the law enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Internal Affairs failed to address some weaknesses of the system, including inconsistent application of procedures designed to prevent abuse, reluctance to punish perpetrators, and a short statute of limitations for disciplinary sanctions. Internal complaints and investigation procedures in the penitentiary system were weak, and detainees reportedly had very restricted access to complaint procedures in practice. A torture assessment report on Moldova by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights in Austria released during the year noted that the situation regarding torture had somewhat improved regarding the most serious cases, in part due to growing public awareness and the government's zero-tolerance policy.

The antitorture ombudsman made 200 preventive and monitoring visits to penitentiaries, psychiatric institutions, and the national army during the first nine months of the year. The ombudsman uncovered 82 violations of the right to physical and psychological integrity, a decrease of 146 cases compared with the same period in 2011. The ombudsman alerted the Prosecutor General's Office and the military courts to two cases of mistreatment in Penitentiary No. 13, and criminal investigations were initiated. The ombudsman noted that public servants often exceeded their authority and unlawfully used physical violence or psychological pressure on detained persons.

Impunity for torture and inhuman or degrading treatment remained a norm during the year. Antitorture prosecutors registered 485 complaints of torture in the first six months of the year, an increase of 1.25 percent over the same period in 2011. Prosecutors initiated 69 criminal investigations and sent 24 criminal cases to the courts. The head antitorture prosecutor stated that he believed the increase in the number of reported cases reflected more transparency on the part of law enforcement, stronger reporting requirements for medical personnel, better awareness among citizens, and greater trust in the antitorture mechanisms, rather than an increase in the number of incidents. Police were most often accused of mistreatment. According to the Prosecutor General's Office, 54 percent of registered cases allegedly took place in police stations.

Incidents of torture that went to court continued to be downgraded to lesser offenses, such as abuse of power, for which the penalties are lower and the statute

of limitations is only three months. This allowed judges to issue suspended sentences based on the “good character” of the offending police officers or dismiss cases if the statute of limitations had expired.

Authorities made limited progress on the investigation of torture cases related to the 2009 election. On February 2, the shift head of the police department where the most torture allegedly took place was fined 10,000 lei (\$828) for allowing the torture of young men detained after the protests. On April 10, the head of the criminal police of the Central Chisinau District Police Department received a two-year suspended sentence for applying torture. Both officers were prohibited from holding public office for two years. In May four police officers received five-year suspended sentences and probation for three years. The four were banned from holding positions in the Ministry of Internal Affairs for three years. In December antitorture prosecutors sent to court another case against two police officers who allegedly tortured a victim in the aftermath of the 2009 protests. Separately, a government committee responsible for identifying and paying restitution to victims of the 2009 events paid damages totaling 632,000 lei (\$52,300) to 116 claimants.

On August 29, the government amended the criminal code to strengthen the punishment for torture. Persons found guilty of torturing minors, pregnant women, persons with disabilities, or committing acts of torture that lead to death or suicide, can be sentenced to up to 15 years in prison without the possibility of amnesty. A deliberate act by a public official that leads to physical or psychological suffering is punishable with imprisonment of two to six years, or a fine of 7,500 to 9,900 lei (\$620 to \$820), and a ban on holding public office. Amendments to the Criminal Code adopted by parliament in December increased the penalty for torture from five to 10 years in prison. Suspended sentences for perpetrators accused of torture are no longer allowed.

A law adopted during the year introduced chemical castration as a complementary criminal sanction for certain sexual crimes. Under the law, courts should usually apply castration automatically and without regard to the consent of the convicted person. On December 24, a court applied this penalty for the first time, ordering a man serving a 19-year prison sentence for raping his eight-year-old stepdaughter to be chemically castrated three months before his sentence expires.

According to the Legal Resources Center of Moldova, authorities failed to investigate mistreatment cases properly, and the sanctions imposed for mistreatment were too mild. Of 12 convictions for mistreatment in the first half of the year, judges issued only suspended sentences or fines. No offenders served

prison time. An Amnesty International report made public in June noted that torture cases were still prevalent in the country and that in many instances law enforcement representatives were directly involved or tried to cover them up.

Torture and inhuman treatment continued to be a problem in Transnistrian penitentiaries during the reporting period, according to the human rights nongovernmental organization (NGO) Promo-LEX. Antonina Petis reported that her son Mihai Petis was detained in inhumane conditions in Penitentiary No. 1 in Hlinaya and was often subject to torture. During one visit prison guards beat him for touching his mother's hand. In January, Promo-LEX filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The case was pending before the court.

According to Promo-LEX, the forms of torture most frequently applied in Transnistrian penitentiaries were stretching extremities, injuring fingers, electric shocks, pricking fingers with a needle, hitting inmates with hard objects, simulated shooting, hitting the legs of inmates with rubber batons, and holding inmates in incommunicado detention. Psychological torture included blackmailing inmates with threats of raping their wives and daughters and threatening inmates with detention in cells with inmates with infectious diseases.

Reports of hazing and abuse of conscripts in the Transnistrian "army" continued.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Conditions in most prisons, including those in Transnistria, remained harsh, while conditions somewhat improved in pretrial detention facilities aside from those in Transnistria.

Physical Conditions: As of October the total number of prisoners and pretrial detainees was 6,693, with 4,127 inmates in prisons and 2,566 individuals in pretrial detention centers. There were 10 juveniles serving terms in prison. There were 269 women held at the Rusca penitentiary for women. The target maximum capacity was 5,283 for prisons and 2,265 for pretrial detention centers.

Representatives from the government's Center for Human Rights visited penitentiaries throughout the year within the framework of the national preventive mechanism against torture and found similar deficiencies as in previous years, including overcrowding in unventilated cells, lack of proper sanitary facilities, and lack of natural light. A January visit by the human rights ombudsman to

Penitentiary No. 13 in Chisinau found that detention conditions in the cells in the basement did not meet national and international detention standards: cells were overcrowded, unhygienic, dirty, and cold, and detainees were not provided with potable drinking water or permanent access to water to maintain their personal hygiene.

According to the ombudsman's 2011 report on the national antitorture mechanism, pretrial facilities, located mostly in the basements of police stations, generally lacked access to natural light, and artificial light was described as mediocre or poor. In some facilities ventilation systems were nonexistent. A number of pretrial facilities also lacked toilets and sewage systems and, in many cases, reliable sources of potable water. Inmates at the Chisinau General Police Station complained of a high degree of parasite infestation. According to the ombudsman, sleeping conditions were inadequate, with detainees provided insufficient or dirty linens. The government did not fulfill its pledge to close the isolation cells in Penitentiary No. 13, which a UNICEF ambassador identified as particularly inhumane during an inspection in 2010.

The lack of psychologists in penitentiaries remained a problem during the year. During the year each psychologist employed in the penitentiary system oversaw between 400 and 450 inmates. Five detainees committed suicide during the year, and a few cases of self-mutilation were reported as well.

According to government regulations, individuals suspected of suffering from tuberculosis are to be separated from the other detainees. However, persons with various diseases were often collocated with persons with an unconfirmed diagnosis of tuberculosis, potentially exposing them to infection.

Police mistreatment of detainees remained a major problem in Transnistria. According to Promo-LEX, the detention facilities in the Transnistria region did not conform to international norms and did not meet minimum requirements for long-term detention. Of the 2,819 detainees in Transnistria, 165 were women, 83 were minors, 70 were infected with tuberculosis, 167 detainees were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, and 671 persons were detained in pretrial detention facilities. Unofficial sources estimated a higher number of detainees. The cells were overcrowded, with one bed for every three inmates, requiring them to take turns sleeping. Inmates used a bucket in the corner of the cell in lieu of a lavatory. Detainees from Prison No. 1 in Hlinaya complained to Promo-LEX that contaminated water led to toothaches, stomachaches, and severe skin problems and

that regular medical care was lacking. The mortality rate was high, especially among tuberculosis-infected inmates.

Administration: The main alternative sentence used in the country is a conditional suspension of the sentence, the equivalent of probation. This sentence is available for juveniles and adults alike, on the condition that the crime was not serious and the offender had no prior convictions. Probation is for a fixed term of between one and five years. In many cases public officials convicted of various offenses received suspended sentences. Other alternative sentences include community service and fines. Community service may not be imposed on convicted juveniles below age 16.

During the year the parliamentary ombudsman intensified preventive visits to police stations and other institutions subordinate to the Ministries of Interior, Defense, Justice, and Health to monitor the situation in these institutions regarding the torture of inmates and patients. During the year the ombudsman made 234 monitoring and preventive visits. Based on the visits, the ombudsman issued 33 notices with recommendations, 13 requests to initiate criminal or disciplinary proceedings, and two proposals to amend legislation. As a result authorities initiated three criminal cases and one disciplinary action. The ombudsman visited nine psychiatric hospitals and eight boarding schools for children with mental disabilities, and initiated a study of the situation in mental health institutions in the country.

Prisoners and detainees were generally permitted religious observance, under a religious assistance program for penitentiaries conducted by the Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the Moldovan Orthodox Church.

According to the law detainees have the right to one short-term visit (from one to four hours) a month and long-term visits (from 12 hours to three days) four times a year. Prisoners in the initial period of their sentences and those serving life sentences do not have the right to long-term visits. Detainees and their relatives reported a burdensome process for obtaining visit permits, which in many cases impeded such visits. The facilities for prison visits are rudimentary, with most having a partition between the visitor and the detainee.

Detainees generally had the right to submit complaints to judicial authorities. However, detainees reported censorship and punishment in the form of physical violence or abuse by prison personnel or other inmates before or after filing complaints.

Reliable information on the administration of prisons in the Transnistria region was generally not available.

Monitoring: The government permitted independent monitoring of prison conditions by local and international human rights observers, including the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), and prison officials generally allowed observers to interview inmates in private.

Although Transnistrian authorities generally did not allow visits to detention facilities, the UN senior expert on human rights in Transnistria was allowed to visit penitentiaries and talk to inmates during his fact-finding visits to the Transnistria region in May, September, and November.

Improvements: With financial support from the Council of Europe and the EU, authorities carried out a reconstruction project to repair the country's 38 pretrial detention facilities and install video surveillance equipment to prevent torture. On February 9, authorities opened the first renovated pretrial detention unit conforming to international standards.

There were no improvements reported in the Transnistria region.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, but there were cases when authorities failed to observe these prohibitions.

According to Promo-LEX police on the right bank of the Nistru River routinely detained persons who were wanted by the unrecognized Transnistrian authorities and transferred them to law enforcement agencies on the left bank without legal due process. Moldovan courts previously ruled that the 1999 agreement establishing such cooperation was unconstitutional, but the practice continued informally.

In Transnistria there were reports that authorities engaged in the arbitrary arrest and detention of individuals with impunity. Transnistrian authorities detained people on fabricated charges to extort bribes for their freedom.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The national police force is the primary law enforcement body. It is subdivided into regional and city police commissariats which are subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The ministry continued reforms to combat abuse and corruption, including requiring medical examinations of detainees at the beginning of their detention, and equipping 12 police cars with GPS and video monitoring equipment.

The number of violations of human rights and integrity norms committed by employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs increased in the first six months of the year, compared with the same period in 2011. Prosecutors initiated 162 criminal cases against law enforcement employees, including 38 cases involving alleged abuse of power, 19 for improper use of force, 23 for torture, and one for forcing testimony. The Investigation and Internal Security Division of the ministry reported 29 instances of passive corruption and 13 of influence peddling in the first six months of the year.

In the second half of the year, the prime minister replaced the minister of interior, a step which was accompanied by the replacement of several subdivision heads, including the head of traffic police, the head of border police, the director of the Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons, and the director of the Migration and Asylum Bureau. The new leaders of these bodies were given mandates to implement various reforms intended to improve standards. The Center for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption was reformed into the National Anticorruption Center, an independent institution under parliament's purview.

The Division to Combat Torture in the Prosecutor General's Office handled cases of alleged torture by security forces. Under the system four prosecutors conducted criminal investigations of torture cases at the national level.

Police torture and other forms of mistreatment, particularly during police interrogation, remained a serious problem. Antitorture prosecutors faced a shortage of resources, being unable to call on either consultants or a specialized corps of independent operational support staff. In addition, the prosecution services they worked for were generally materially dependent on the police, which put them in a difficult position when it came to questioning the conduct of police officers.

The ombudsman's report on the national antitorture mechanism stated that authorities with the power to investigate allegations of police abuse at times failed to do so in timely fashion.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention

The law allows judges to issue arrest warrants based on evidence from prosecutors. Authorities must promptly inform detainees of the reasons for their arrest and describe the charges against them. Suspects may be detained without charge for 72 hours.

Once charged, a detainee may be released pending trial. The law provides for bail, but it was generally not utilized, due to a lack of practical mechanisms of implementation.

Detainees have the right to a defense attorney, but at times this right was restricted. Authorities generally did not grant detainees access to a lawyer until 24 hours after being detained. Detainees were often informed of the charges against them without a lawyer present. The government required the local bar association to provide representation to indigent defendants, but government reimbursements to lawyers for legal fees were delayed. Consequently, indigent defendants often did not have adequate counsel.

In a report released on January 12, the CPT noted that individuals in pretrial detention were at times denied their right to a telephone call. While authorities asserted that this was done to prevent them from intimidating victims or witnesses, the practice was arbitrary and without justification or limits. The CPT also noted that in some cases pretrial detainees were denied the right to family visits.

Pretrial Detention: The law permits pretrial detention for up to 30 days. The courts may extend pretrial detention upon a request from prosecutors submitted at the end of each 30-day period, for up to 12 months, depending on the severity of the charges. Pretrial detention lasting several months was common.

In Transnistria detentions cannot exceed 18 months during pretrial criminal investigations and six months during the trial period. In practice these limits were not observed. During the year 671 persons were officially detained in pretrial detention units in Transnistria. The Transnistrian detention system also includes temporary pretrial detention units subordinated to the local “interior ministry.” The number of detainees in these facilities was unknown. Promo-LEX reported that many detainees were held for more than six months without a court hearing.

Amnesty: The government generally granted amnesty to individuals sentenced to less than four years in prison; as a result, such persons often served no time for their offenses. The president received 145 amnesty requests during the year and granted amnesty to four detainees, including one woman.

On November 4, Transnistrian “leader” Yevgeny Shevchuk signed a decree releasing Moldovan police officer Alexandru Ursu, who had been detained in Tiraspol since 2007 under charges of “illegally acquiring” an apartment in Bender. The pardon decree was the result of numerous requests from the Moldovan government and international community. Despite the pardon, Ursu was not allowed to leave his place of residence and faced a possible 12-year prison term for failure to appear in court for the retrial of the case in which he was pardoned.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary; however, there were reported instances of government officials failing to respect judicial independence in practice. Official pressure on judges and corruption remained serious problems. There continued to be credible reports that local prosecutors and judges sought bribes in return for reducing charges or sentences.

The 2012 EU progress report on Moldova noted that judicial practice did not keep up with recent legislative improvements, and found limited progress in fighting corruption, despite the adoption of the national security strategy and the national anticorruption strategy in 2011.

The country has a judicial code of ethics as well as inspector judges responsible for investigating and reporting cases of judicial misconduct or ethical breaches to the Supreme Council of Magistrates. During the year the disciplinary board of the Supreme Council of Magistrates failed to prosecute judges accused by the Prosecutor General’s Office or the minister of justice of corruption, unethical conduct, disciplinary violations, and other offenses. During the year the board reviewed 41 complaints against judges, and issued eight warnings and six reprimands. The board rejected all nine complaints filed by the Prosecutor General’s Office against 24 judges. It also rejected eight complaints filed by the minister of justice as ungrounded under the law.

According to the 2012 Freedom House report *Nations in Transit*, a high level of corruption and political influence in the justice system persisted, and judicial reform progressed slowly. Prosecutors have discretion to close cases before they

reach trial for lack of sufficient evidence, but the injured party may appeal this decision to an investigative judge. This discretion gave prosecutors considerable influence over the judicial process, and NGOs asserted that political influence continued to play a role in some prosecutions.

In February parliament passed a national action plan to implement the framework national strategy on justice sector reform that it adopted in 2011. This comprehensive justice sector reform initiative was intended to increase society's trust in the judiciary by strengthening the judicial system and combating corruption. As part of the reform strategy, on July 5 parliament passed amendments to the organization of the judiciary. The amendments *inter alia* remove immunity from judges being investigated on charges of corruption and influence peddling. In addition, if a judge is suspected of corruption, abuse of power, nepotism, or misappropriation of property, prosecutors do not need the concurrence of the Superior Council of Magistrates to begin an investigation. The amendments also created a system for evaluating judicial performance to provide a mechanism for dismissing corrupt judges. The judiciary strongly objected to the amendments, and the chairman of the Supreme Court of Justice publicly questioned the constitutionality of the law.

Military courts have jurisdiction over crimes committed by active duty, reserve, and retired military personnel. Military courts may also try civilians for crimes committed against military personnel. On February 9, the Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional a 2011 law that abolished specialized courts, including economic and military courts, due to their inefficiency and endemic corruption. Parliament reinvested the military courts with full powers on March 6. The economic courts were reformed and their competence was reduced.

Trial Procedures

The law provides that defendants in criminal cases are presumed innocent; however, in practice, this presumption had little effect. On some occasions, judges' remarks jeopardized the presumption of innocence. NGOs expressed concern that the practice of keeping defendants in handcuffs and metal cages during court proceedings went beyond what was necessary to secure public order and failed to ensure the presumption of innocence. As part of the justice sector reform, a number of courts were renovated, and their metal cages were removed during the year. However, older courthouses still had cages.

Cases are presented to a judge or to a panel of judges. Defendants have the right to a lawyer, to attend proceedings, to confront witnesses, and to present evidence. The law requires the local bar association to provide an attorney to indigent defendants. The practice of appointing temporary defense lawyers without allowing them to prepare adequately was common and infringed upon the right to legal assistance. Prosecutors occasionally used bureaucratic maneuvers to restrict lawyers' access to clients, but they generally allowed defense attorneys access to the evidence. The law provides a right to appeal convictions to a higher court.

During the year there were cases reported of Transnistrian authorities disregarding trial procedures and defendants in Transnistria being denied a fair trial.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

According to Promo-LEX, on October 9, a Tiraspol court sentenced Alexandru Coliban to two-and-a-half years in prison for libel against Transnistrian leader Yevgeny Shevchuk and for impeding the free use of the electoral right in Transnistria. As a campaign worker during Transnistria's 2011 election, Coliban recruited students to distribute election materials criticizing Shevchuk and promoting another candidate.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The law allows citizens to seek damages in civil courts for human rights violations. Under the constitution the government is liable when authorities violate a person's rights by administrative means, fail to reply in a timely manner to an application for relief, or commit misconduct during prosecution. Judgments awarded in such cases were often small and not enforced. Once all avenues for a remedy in the country's courts were exhausted, individuals could appeal cases involving the government's alleged violation of rights provided under the European Convention on Human Rights to the ECHR.

While the government declared a zero-tolerance policy toward torture, and law enforcement agencies were more transparent in dealing with such cases, torture victims frequently lacked access to effective judicial remedies, especially in cases involving mistreatment in penal institutions.

A mediation law establishes an alternative mechanism for voluntarily resolving civil and criminal cases and sets forth rules for professional mediators. However, the country lacked an implementation mechanism.

Regional Human Rights Court Decisions

As of December there were 3,750 pending cases against the country in the ECHR. Most complaints referred to torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, nonexecution of judgments, violation of property rights, and the right to a fair trial. During the year the court issued 25 decisions against the government and awarded 640,556 euros (\$846,000) to individuals for violation of their rights. The government generally complied with ECHR orders promptly. The government has paid an estimated 13 million euros (\$17 million) for all the cases it lost at the ECHR to date.

In December the ECHR ordered the government to pay 14,000 euros (\$18,000) after a doctor removed a patient's ovaries and fallopian tubes without her permission during a Caesarian birth. In another case the ECHR ordered the government to pay 12,000 euros (\$16,000) in moral damage to Zailan Gasanov, who was tortured while in police custody following an arrest in 2007.

Property Restitution

While the law provides for the restitution of property and compensation for victims of political repression, the government often failed to provide funds to the commissions established to receive petitions. Applicants must prove a direct causal connection between political repression and the seizure of their properties to receive restitution.

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

In contrast with previous years, there were no reports of government interference with privacy, family, home, or correspondence.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech and press; however, these rights were not always respected. Individuals could criticize the government publicly and privately without reprisal.

In Transnistria, authorities limited freedom of speech and press, with alternative viewpoints subject to censorship. It was difficult to register, maintain, and finance independent newspapers, radio stations, or television stations in Transnistria, although several continued to exist. Most newspapers from the rest of Moldova did not circulate widely in Transnistria, although they were available in Tiraspol.

Freedom of Press: The law prohibits the editing and publication of literature that contains “denial and defamation of the state and the people; calls for war or aggression; appeals to ethnic, racial, or religious hatred; [or] incitement of discrimination, territorial separatism, or public violence.”

While the print media expressed diverse political views and commentary, a number of newspapers were owned or subsidized by political figures and expressed well defined political views. The government owned the Moldpress News Agency, and local and city governments subsidized approximately 23 newspapers, and in most cases influenced their reporting. Political parties and professional organizations also published newspapers.

The role of online media increased considerably over the year, providing various perspectives on political, economic, and social developments. The number of online visitors to news portals exceeded the number of subscribers to major newspapers with national coverage.

In Transnistria, both of the region’s major newspapers, *Pridnestrovie* and *Dnestrovskaya Pravda*, were official publications of the separatist administration. Separatist authorities harassed other small, independent newspapers for publishing reports critical of the regime.

Transnistria’s largest commercial entity, Sheriff Enterprises, owned several broadcast networks, including the TSV television station and the INTER-FM radio station. The company also effectively controlled the opposition Obnovlenie (Renewal) Party, which held a majority of seats in the region’s “legislature.” Transnistrian authorities operated the television station TV PMR. With the change of administration in the region, many private media outlets expressed alternative views on social and economic policy and criticized the “government.” However, the Transnistrian press practiced self-censorship and avoided subjects questioning the Transnistrian goal of “independence” or criticizing the pro-Russian “foreign policy.”

In August cable operator InterDnestrCom, based in Transnistria, expanded its offering to include the Moldovan stations Moldova 1 and Publika TV in its schedule. Transnistrian authorities complained that their broadcasters lacked similar access to non-Transnistrian audiences in Moldova and terminated the Publika TV and Moldova 1 broadcasts in November and December, respectively.

Violence and Harassment: In contrast to 2011, there were no serious cases of the media being blocked or restricted from covering events held by political parties and other public institutions.

On April 5, the Audiovisual Coordinating Council (ACC) revoked the broadcast license of the leading pro-opposition broadcaster, NIT, for not ensuring pluralism of opinions and thus violating the audiovisual code. NIT stopped broadcasting on April 6. NGOs and international organizations criticized the revocation of NIT's license, noting that the sanction was disproportionate and eliminated a key opposition viewpoint. NIT immediately challenged the ACC's decision in court and later alleged the court case was intentionally delayed for political reasons. Five court hearings were held during the year, and the Court of Appeals postponed the case until after the end of the year.

Censorship or Content Restriction: In many cases journalists practiced self-censorship to avoid conflicts with the sponsors or owners of their media outlets. In the Transnistria region, journalists avoided criticizing the separatist government's goal of independence or its "foreign policy" to avoid government reprisals.

Libel Laws/National Security: Some newspapers practiced self-censorship and avoided controversial issues due to concern that government officials and other public figures could use civil defamation laws to retaliate against critical news reports.

In April 2011 the minister of transportation sued the Unimedia news portal and the *Timpul* newspaper after they published a press release from Moldavian Airlines accusing the minister of involvement in various fraudulent schemes. The case was still pending at the end of the year.

In 2011 a Chisinau court fined the Romanian-language regional newspaper *Ziarul de Garda* 500,000 lei (approximately \$41,400) for defamation in the case of two prosecutors named in an article about judicial corruption. The court of appeals affirmed the ruling but reduced the fine to 20,000 lei (\$1,655). On July 11, the

Supreme Court of Justice overruled the lower courts' decisions and acquitted *Ziarul de Garda* of defamation.

Publishing Restrictions: In Transnistria authorities controlled all printing houses and at times threatened to stop the printing of independent newspapers, including one based in Bender and another in the northern city of Ribnita.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or credible reports that the government monitored e-mail or chat rooms without appropriate legal authority. According to statistics published by the International Telecommunication Union, approximately 38 percent of the population used the Internet in 2011, the most recent year for which statistics were available.

There were no reports of Transnistrian authorities' restricting access to e-mail or chat rooms.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic or cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

While the law provides for freedom of assembly, at times authorities limited this right in practice.

On February 23, the Balti municipal council banned LGBT "propaganda" and rallies. Seven other localities adopted similar decisions in February and March.

During the year there were 9,429 public assemblies in Chisinau. The pro-Romanian movement Action 2012 organized marches in favor of unification with Romania in Cahul on July 22 and in Balti on August 5. Leftist counterprotesters forcibly disrupted the rallies, leading organizers to complain that police had failed to protect their right to peaceful assembly. The Prosecutor General's Office initiated 16 criminal cases as a result of the march in Balti and issued fines in 154 cases. The chairman of the Social Democratic Party, which supported the counterprotesters' march in Balti, was also under criminal investigation. Action

2012 successfully held a similar march peacefully in Chisinau on September 16 under massive police protection.

In the Transnistria region the law permits public assemblies but imposes prohibitions, including against spontaneous assemblies, assemblies in certain public places, and the use of sound amplifying equipment. Public assemblies were limited to a narrow range of activities. In 2011 there were 60 assemblies in the Transnistria region, mostly related to commemoration of military events or the electoral campaign in the region.

Freedom of Association

The constitution provides for freedom of association and states that citizens are free to form parties and other social and political organizations. However, the constitution prohibits organizations “engaged in fighting against political pluralism, the principles of the rule of law, or the sovereignty and independence or territorial integrity” of the country.

In Transnistria authorities severely restricted freedom of association. Separatist authorities granted the legal right of association only to those they recognized as citizens of Transnistria. All nongovernmental activities had to be coordinated with local authorities. Groups that did not comply faced harassment, including visits from security officials. Organizations favoring reintegration with the rest of Moldova were strictly prohibited.

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 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 internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

The Bureau for Migration and Asylum under the Ministry of Internal Affairs manages refugee and asylum problems.

Transnistrian authorities at times restricted travel of Transnistrian residents and other Moldovans to and from the separatist region. Transnistrian authorities often stopped and searched vehicles traveling between the region and the area controlled by the central government.

Short-term visitors to Transnistria from government-controlled areas were permitted to remain for 10 hours. A longer stay required an official letter of invitation and registration at a local passport office. Transnistrian authorities generally allowed Western diplomats stationed in Chisinau entry into the region for routine visits if the diplomats provided notification of the visits in advance.

Emigration and Repatriation: Although citizens generally were able to depart from and return to the country freely, there were some limitations on emigration. Before individuals are allowed to emigrate, the law requires that they settle all outstanding financial obligations with other persons or legal entities. This requirement was not strictly enforced in practice. The law also provides that close relatives who are financially dependent on a potential emigrant must give their concurrence before the emigrant is allowed to depart the country. This law was also not enforced in practice.

In December 2011 the government adopted a national strategy in the area of migration and asylum for 2011-20, in line with the EU-Moldovan action plan. The strategy provides for better border management, promotes a model of circular migration, and facilitates readmission of illegal Moldovan migrants from EU countries.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The country's laws provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government established a system for providing protection to refugees. However, refugee recognition was a slow and burdensome process. In 2009-11 the government recognized only four persons as refugees.

During the year the number of asylum claims doubled in the country, mainly due to an influx of claimants from Syria, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. The UNHCR provided logistical, housing, and financial support to refugees. The Bureau of Migration and Asylum received 153 asylum requests during the year. Of this

number, 60 percent were from citizens from Syria, followed by Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Turkey, and Israel. During the year 27 persons were recognized as refugees, and 49 asylum requests were denied. The other 78 requests were processed and the requestors are on a waiting list. There were 154 refugees and 82 asylum seekers in the country.

Refugee Abuse: Asylum seekers reported instances of discrimination, xenophobia, and occasional physical assaults. Security service staff sometimes interfered in the asylum process.

Employment: According to the UNHCR, asylum seekers and refugees have the legal right to work in the country. However, there were many bureaucratic impediments for refugees and asylum seekers seeking employment.

Stateless Persons

Citizenship may be acquired by birth in the country, inheritance from parents, adoption, recovery, or naturalization; or on the basis of certain international agreements. The law grants citizenship to persons who resided in the historical regions of Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina, the Herta region, and the territory of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic prior to June 1940 as well as their descendants. Parliament adopted statelessness determination procedures in the Law on the Regime of Foreigners in 2011. The amendments entered into effect in February. Stateless persons and refugees can gain nationality through naturalization.

There were 2,031 stateless persons registered in the country, most of them residing in the Transnistria region. The largest numbers of stateless persons were ethnic Ukrainians, Russians, Romanians, and Turks. The country issues travel documents for stateless persons.

While the law allows a stateless person who has resided legally in the country for eight years to seek citizenship, the UNHCR recommended that the government reduce the residency requirement to three or four years. Residence permits for a period of up to one year are issued to stateless persons temporarily residing in the country at a cost of approximately 640 lei (\$53).

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

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

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: According to international observers, parliamentary elections in 2010 met most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments. On March 16, parliament ended more than two years of political stalemate by electing a president. The PCRM boycotted the presidential election and did not recognize the new head of state as a legitimate authority.

In September the autonomous region of Gagauzia held two rounds of elections for its 35-seat People's Assembly (local legislature). The NGO Pilgrim-Demo, which monitored the election, noted minor problems at the polls, including violation of the secrecy of vote, overcrowded polling stations, campaign materials in the proximity of polling stations, and police on polling station premises. There were some problems with voter lists, including missing names and deceased persons on the lists, but no evidence of widespread multiple voting or legitimate voters being denied the right to cast ballots. After the results were validated, a court suspended the mandate of one deputy in what some alleged was a political move to intimidate the other deputies during the People's Assembly's leadership selection.

Participation of Women and Minorities: There were 20 women in the 101-seat parliament. Members of ethnic Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Azeri, Jewish, and Gagauz communities had representation in parliament alongside members of the majority Moldovan/ethnic Romanian community. Only one woman was elected to the Gagauz People's Assembly.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

Corruption remained a major problem for the country. While the law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, the government did not implement these laws effectively. Government interference and corruption with the application of laws and regulations impaired the impartiality of the courts. Police corruption remained a serious problem.

Corruption reportedly took place at all levels of government, from low-level functionaries to government ministers. According to the 2012 Freedom House report on Moldova, *Nations in Transit*, corruption remained a systemic problem

deeply embedded in the country's public institutions. An October survey commissioned by Transparency International Moldova found that the judiciary, health-care, and education sectors were highly corrupt. While ample anticorruption legislation existed and the government adopted a new anticorruption strategy in 2011, implementation remained weak and enforcement was inconsistent. An AIE leader revealed the extent of the politicization of justice when he disclosed that the AIE's coalition agreement had a secret annex that divided the leadership positions in judicial and police institutions among the coalition partners.

A report by the Center to Combat Economic Crimes and Corruption (CCECC) indicated that, during the first four months of the year, persons holding public office committed 102 alleged corruption offenses. The sums allegedly extorted were higher than in previous years, ranging from 110,000 lei (\$9,100) to 450,000 euros (\$594,000). The CCECC pursued court cases against a wide range of officials, including a former minister of information development, the head of the State Tax Inspectorate, 22 heads of educational institutions, a judge, 57 police officers, 10 Customs Service officers, the chief of the Penitentiary Service, and 32 mayors. None of the corruption cases involving law-enforcement officers resulted in prison sentences; in most cases, judges issued a suspended sentence and fine. Corruption allegations involving judges did not go to court due to their immunity. The CCECC was reorganized under the 2011 national anticorruption strategy into the National Anticorruption Center, an independent institution under parliamentary purview. The National Anticorruption Center sent 240 corruption cases to court during the year. The cases were initiated against a number of division and subdivision heads, high-level officials from the tax authority, and traffic police. Approximately 20 lawyers were caught facilitating corruption, and 13 persons were sentenced to prison terms. Starting October 1, the responsibility to combat economic crimes was transferred from the National Anticorruption Center to the police.

The Fraud Investigation Department (FID) in the Ministry of Internal Affairs has anticorruption responsibilities. The FID investigates serious economic crimes with major social impact, criminal schemes that lead to acts of corruption, and other corruption-related offenses. During the year the FID registered 60 new criminal corruption cases, six of which were closed. The department sent 53 cases to the prosecutors, and 45 cases were sent to court.

In February parliament created the National Integrity Commission--an independent body tasked with auditing the income statements and conflicts of interest of public

officials. The commission has a five-year mandate and includes three members appointed by the government, one member proposed by the opposition, and one member representing civil society. On October 25, parliament approved the candidacy of the new head of the commission. Leading NGOs stated that the procedure to appoint the head of the new commission was strongly politicized and expressed doubts about the institution's ability to promote integrity and prevent corruption, because all but one of its members had political ties. At year's end the commission was not operational.

On July 16, searches of the residences of several customs officers serving at the Costesti-Stinca border crossing uncovered a total of 110,000 euros (\$145,000) of unexplained funds and various goods illegally in the possession of two customs officers and one border police officer. Several other customs officers were under investigation for facilitating smuggling.

During the first nine months of the year, four prosecutors were indicted for corruption and dismissed. In one case a prosecutor from Glodeni region extorted 5,000 euros (\$6,600) for influencing a judge to make a favorable decision for the accused in a rape case.

While the law provides free public access to official information, the government did not fully implement the law. Court decisions ordering the release of information were not implemented fully or in a timely manner. The law provides an appropriately narrow list of grounds for nondisclosure, including cases when the information constitutes a state secret, a commercial secret, personally identifiable data, operative criminal investigation data, or results of scientific and technical research. According to the law authorities have 15 days to present the requested information. This timeline can be extended by five days in cases when the request refers to a large volume of data or when additional consultations are necessary for the release of the information. Depending on the requested information, institutions establish processing fees that cover copying, translation, and delivery costs. Requesters can challenge denials of access to information through legal means. Criminal and administrative sanctions for noncompliance are established by courts of law.

A 2011 monitoring report by the NGO Access-Info indicated that, 12 years after the adoption of the Law on Access to Information, there were still shortcomings in its implementation. Problems with access to information and transparency of the decision-making process were most pronounced at the regional (raion) council level and local mayoralities, where authorities were reluctant to provide information

to NGOs and the media. There were few penalties for restricting access to information.

During the year the government's e-government center launched a number of projects to provide easy public access to government data. Some of the projects were aimed at providing easier access to persons with disabilities.

Members of the National Council for Participation held regular meetings and offered recommendations on various government decisions which were rarely taken into account.

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 somewhat cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The law provides for four parliamentary ombudsmen who make up the independent Moldovan Human Rights Center (MHRC). Parliament appoints the ombudsmen to examine claims of human rights violations, advise parliament on human rights problems, submit legislation to the Constitutional Court for review, and oversee MHRC operations. MHRC personnel provided training for lawyers and journalists, visited prisons and psychiatric hospitals, made recommendations on legislation, and organized roundtable discussions. Human rights NGO leaders noted that the MHRC needed to be reformed in order to be more effective. Parliament also had a separate standing committee for Human Rights and Interethnic Relations.

During the first nine months of the year, the MHRC received 1,202 complaints of human rights abuses, including 359 that concerned free access to justice, 82 involving violations of personal security and dignity, 33 regarding the right to free access to information, 101 concerning the right to social assistance and protection, 76 involving the right to private property, 70 involving interference with the right to family life and the right to health, and 30 involving the right to work. Fewer complaints concerned personal freedom, education, citizenship matters, freedom of movement, and electoral rights.

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

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, ethnicity, or social status; however, the government did not always enforce these prohibitions effectively.

On May 25, parliament adopted the Law on Ensuring Equality, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of 11 characteristics, including sex, race, religion, and disability, but only prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the area of employment. On December 20, parliament established a council to prevent discrimination and ensure equality in implementing the new law. NGOs complained that the council would be ineffective because it lacked the power to issue binding decisions or sanctions.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape or forcible sexual assault and establishes penalties ranging from three years to life in prison. The law also criminalizes spousal rape.

Rape remained a problem, and there were no specific government rape prevention activities. During the first six months of the year, prosecutors initiated 160 criminal cases of rape, representing a 19-percent decline in cases from 2011. Of these, 33 cases were dismissed and 52 forwarded to courts for trial. NGOs maintained that many rapes remained unreported.

The law defines domestic violence as a criminal offense, provides for the punishment of perpetrators, defines mechanisms for obtaining restraining orders against abusive individuals, and extends protection to unmarried individuals and children of unmarried individuals. The maximum punishment for family violence offenses is 15 years' imprisonment.

The law provides that an abuser may be excluded from lodgings shared with the victim, regardless of who owns the property. The law also provides for psychiatric evaluation and counseling, forbids abusers from approaching victims either at home or at a place of business, and restricts child visitation rights pending a criminal investigation. Courts may apply such protective measures for a period of three months and can extend them upon the victim's request or following repeated acts of violence.

Progress in protecting women and children against domestic violence was slow. According to various NGOs and UNICEF, the issuance of protective orders and the effectiveness of their implementation depended heavily on the attitude of authorities. There were numerous reports that police officers were not diligent in ensuring either proper protection of victims or proper execution of the measures prescribed by protective orders. According to NGOs, authorities were excessively reliant on NGOs to publicize available remedies and assist victims in requesting protection. However, the situation was slowly improving with the timely issuance of an increased number of protective orders. NGOs expressed concern that authorities were insufficiently proactive in combating indifferent attitudes towards domestic violence among police, prosecutors, and social workers.

NGOs reported cases of authorities failing to provide protection for abuse victims and even going as far as helping the aggressor obtain a protective order against the victim. NGOs alleged that authorities did this deliberately in some cases to discredit the victim and shield authorities if the victim appealed to the ECHR.

Authorities repeatedly refused to protect a woman, the victim of long-term domestic violence with well documented injuries, from her violent husband, even after he punched her in the face in the presence of a police officer. A judge threatened to punish her if she continued applying for protective orders, and a social worker advised her “to start treating her husband right if she knew what was good for her and her family.” An NGO involved with the case alleged that police officers instructed her abuser on how to injure himself and obtain a medical certificate of his injuries in order to acquire a protective order of his own and portray the victim as a violent person. Authorities questioned the woman’s minor son in the presence of the aggressor and demanded the boy give testimony in the case. At the time of the report, the woman and her husband each had protective orders against the other, but continued to live in the same house, since the case was pending before the ECHR.

The law provides for cooperation between government and civil society organizations, establishes victim protection as a human rights principle, and allows third parties to file complaints on behalf of victims.

A National Bureau of Statistics report during the year--based on a joint UN Women, Embassy of Sweden, UN Development Program, and UN Population Fund study-- described domestic violence as widespread. The study found that 63.4 percent of women ages 15 and older experienced some form of domestic abuse in their lifetime, including 40 percent who had been physically abused.

Rural women experienced violence in significantly higher proportions than urban women, and younger women (under the age of 30) experienced more emotional and sexual violence than older women.

Victims of domestic violence generally suffered in silence, since the problem received little recognition from government or society as a whole. Surveys indicated that only 11.2 percent of domestic violence victims sought medical assistance, only 12.2 percent reported the abuse to police, 6.3 percent pursued claims through the justice system, and 5.1 percent reported abuse to other municipal authorities. NGOs asserted that one reason women rarely reported domestic violence stemmed from unsuccessful previous attempts to seek protection and justice. Such attempts often failed due to unresponsive officials and judgmental attitudes from police, prosecutors, judges, and social workers. Punishment of convicted abusers was often insufficient, commonly consisting of fines and brief detentions, and failed to prevent repeated abuse. In one case an abuser was sentenced to 12 years in prison for attempted murder only after he tried to set his victim on fire, despite having abused her for several years without meaningful intervention by authorities.

After their release from detention, abusers commonly returned to their homes and continued the abuse. Fines often had the effect of significantly reducing overall household income, further harming the wives and children of abusers. Victims of domestic violence were also reluctant to come forward because of frequent economic dependence on their abusers, particularly if the family had children.

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 394 cases of violent crimes against family and children were reported in the first six months of the year. Women's groups asserted that incidents of spousal abuse were significantly underreported.

The government supported educational efforts, usually undertaken with foreign assistance, to increase public awareness of domestic violence and to instruct the public and law enforcement officials how to address the problem. Private organizations operated services for abused spouses, including a hotline for battered women. Access to such assistance remained difficult for some.

The NGO La Strada operated a hotline to report domestic violence, offered victims psychological and legal aid, and provided victims with options for follow-up assistance. Between October 2011 and July, the hotline received 540 calls related to domestic violence, 387 from victims seeking assistance and the rest from neighbors, relatives, community groups, and professionals. The hotline also

reported 17 calls from abusers. In 18 cases the abuser was an active duty or retired police officer. NGOs alleged that these cases were the hardest to resolve due to authorities' reluctance to investigate and punish police officers. NGOs report that many victims of trafficking are first subjected to domestic violence.

In Transnistria the law does not prohibit violence against women, and the extent of domestic violence was difficult to estimate. While information on the phenomenon is scarce, a 2011 study indicated that 35.7 percent of women in Transnistria experienced physical domestic violence, 22 percent were beaten by their current husband or partner, 10.7 percent were beaten publicly, and 5.2 percent were sexually abused by their partner.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment remained a common problem. The law provides criminal penalties for sexual harassment ranging from a fine to a maximum of two years' imprisonment. The law prohibits sexual advances that affect a person's dignity or create an unpleasant, hostile, degrading, or humiliating environment in a workplace or educational institution. In July the head of the State Hydrometeorological Service, Ilie Boian, was videotaped sexually harassing an employee. He was dismissed, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs filed two criminal charges of sexual harassment against him.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals could decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children and had the information and means to do so free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. The government adopted laws and implemented policies to ensure free obstetric and postpartum care to all citizens. Mandatory government medical insurance covered all expenses related to pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care. During pregnancy the government provided essential medicines free of charge. Most medical institutions, both state and private, had free booklets and leaflets about family planning and contraception. The NGO Moldovan Institute for Human Rights (IDOM) reported instances of discrimination against HIV-positive women, as well as the disclosure of their status by medical personnel.

There were no reports of Romani women being denied obstetrical, childbirth, or postpartum care. However, many Romani women did not take advantage of free government-administered medical care during pregnancy.

Discrimination: The law provides that women enjoy the same legal status as men under family law, labor law, property law, and inheritance law; and in the judicial

system. The National Bureau of Statistics reported that a higher proportion of women than men were employed.

In some cases, especially in rural areas, women encountered attitudes and stereotypes that perpetuated the subordinate position of women in the family and in society.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship may be acquired by birth in the country, inheritance from parents, adoption, recovery, or naturalization; or on the basis of certain international agreements. Registration of birth is free of charge for all citizens. Civil registration offices in maternity hospitals issued birth certificates before the mother and newborn were discharged from the hospital. Registration offices issue birth certificates for all births, including home births. NGOs noted the lack of registration certificates for a number of children, especially in the rural areas, including in Romani families. According to the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection, and Family, it was the parents' responsibility to register their children's births. Due to registration shortfalls, it was estimated that more than 1,000 children were without identification documents.

Education: While primary education was free and compulsory until the ninth grade, many inadequately funded schools, particularly in rural areas, charged parents for school supplies and textbooks. Although not illegal, such fees contradicted the government's policies and resulted in some parents keeping their children home. Government and local authorities provided 300 lei (\$25) for school supplies annually to children from vulnerable families.

The law requires immunization of children before preschool enrollment. More than 1,000 children could not attend preschool because their parents refused to have them immunized. According to the ombudsperson for children's rights, the law limits children's access to preschool education.

Child Abuse: The law prohibits child neglect and specific forms of abuse, such as forced begging; however, child abuse was believed to be widespread. During the year law enforcement agencies opened 394 cases of crimes against family and children, compared with 255 cases opened in 2011. The cases during the year included 10 cases of trafficking of children, compared with 12 cases in 2011, and seven cases of illegally taking a child out of country, compared with six cases in 2011. The Prosecutor General's Office opened 12 criminal cases on sexual

exploitation of children during the year. A special unit for minors and human rights was responsible for ensuring that cases involving child victims or child offenders were handled with specialized expertise and attention. According to UNICEF, however, the section faced organizational difficulties, since its investigations and prosecutions often overlapped with those of other sections, thus creating conflicts of competencies.

According to La Strada, law enforcement officials asked the NGO to assist on all cases where a minor was the victim. La Strada provided psychological assistance to 100 minors, five boys and 95 girls, and conducted professional interviews with 17 boys and 25 girls as victims in continuing criminal cases of sexual abuse or trafficking.

According to the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection, and Family, inadequate victim services, a lack of reliable methods to track cases, and insufficient legal mechanisms to prevent such abuse or to provide special protection to victims hampered efforts to protect children from abuse. According to the ministry, more than 25 percent of minors reported being beaten by their parents, and 15 percent said they lacked food and care. Approximately 10 percent of parents admitted to abusing their children emotionally or physically.

Child Marriage: The legal minimum age for marriage is 16 for women and 18 for men. There were no official statistics regarding child marriages, but they were believed to be rare, including in the Romani community.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The Prosecutor General's Office was responsible for investigating and prosecuting child sexual abuse cases. Commercial sex with minors is punished as statutory rape. The minimum age for consensual sex is 16. The law prohibits the production, distribution, broadcasting, import, export, sale, exchange, use, or possession of child pornography, and violators face one to three years' imprisonment.

During the year there were reported cases of prostitution of children and child sex tourism. During the year the trial continued for the leaders of an international pedophile ring uncovered in Chisinau in 2011. Other members of the criminal group as well as clients were arrested throughout 2011 and 2012. Additional persons, both clients and recruiters, were apprehended based on the testimonies of the convicted pedophiles and child victims. According to La Strada, authorities handled the case well, and the victims were not forced to confront their abusers

directly or subjected to repeated interrogation and were allowed to be accompanied by a psychologist in court.

Due to inadequate laws dealing with cybercrimes, crimes such as the grooming of a child for future exploitation or bullying via the Internet were not properly investigated or prosecuted, leaving children exposed to cyberabuse that at times led to abuse in the real world. The Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons established a cybercrime unit specifically for the investigation of sexual exploitation of children via the Internet. NGOs reported good cooperation with the unit and police openness to joint investigations, although the center's resources and capacity were limited. The unit investigated several cases of online sexual exploitation, grooming, and child pornography uncovered through proactive investigation techniques.

Institutionalized Children: Conditions for children in orphanages and other institutions generally remained very poor. Major problems included inadequate food, "warehousing" of children, lack of heat in winter, and disease. NGOs estimated that approximately 25 percent of the children in orphanages had one or two living parents but were abandoned when their parents left the country in search of employment. Children abandoned by parents often lived in poverty and were particularly vulnerable to trafficking and labor exploitation. UNICEF estimated that 50 percent of the children who were institutionalized had disabilities.

Various government ministries ran orphanages and boarding schools. The Ministry of Labor, Social Protection, and Family maintained two boarding schools for 675 children with disabilities and three asylums providing temporary (up to one year) shelter, counseling, and other assistance to up to 110 children from socially vulnerable families. The Ministry of Education oversaw 53 boarding schools with 5,813 students. The ministry reported that 35 percent of these children were orphans or abandoned; the other 65 percent came from socially vulnerable families whose parents could not maintain basic living conditions.

During the year the Ministry of Education announced that the number of children in residential institutions dropped by 54 percent since 2007, following implementation of a national action plan to reform the residential care system for children. Most of the children returned to their biological families or were adopted. There was little progress in deinstitutionalizing children with disabilities and children under the age of three. The National Program on the Development of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova for 2011-20 places inclusive education as a top priority and provides for closure or reorganization of 23

residential institutions (including boarding schools) by 2015. The program aims to integrate 1,235 children from boarding schools into families or place them in family-type homes. During the year the Ministry of Education closed six residential institutions.

During the first six months of the year, the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection, and Family oversaw 164 foster families who cared for 239 children and 80 family-type boarding schools with 342 children.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

Anti-Semitism

The Jewish community numbered between 15,000 and 25,000 persons, including 2,000 living in Transnistria. Transnistrian media reported a possible act of vandalism against a Jewish monument in Bender. Between September 15 and 17, unknown individuals removed the nameplate and some of the tiles leading up to the monument to Jewish Holocaust victims in Bender. The Jewish community also warned of a neo-Nazi group engaged in anti-Semitic fascist propaganda in Transnistria. The group posted a picture on a social media Web site showing a monument to Holocaust victims desecrated with Nazi swastikas and the text “Congratulations on the Holocaust.” Transnistrian authorities were investigating the case.

In December, Chisinau municipal authorities again did not allow the Jewish community to display publicly a Hanukkah menorah in a location requested by the Jewish community. In 2009 a Christian Orthodox group removed the menorah that had been installed in the city center with official permission and made anti-Semitic statements. In 2011, when the mayor suggested the menorah be installed near the monument of the 1941 ghetto, the Jewish community felt affronted.

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 discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, access to public facilities, health care, or the provision of other government services, but the law was rarely enforced.

In March parliament passed the Law on Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and ensure nondiscrimination in employment, education, health care, and public life. The law prohibits construction companies from designing or constructing buildings without special access for persons with disabilities and requires transportation companies to equip their vehicles to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The law also requires that land, railroad, and air transportation authorities ensure access for persons with disabilities and adapt public spaces and transportation to provide access for persons in wheelchairs. The airport administration must provide an escort for persons with disabilities. The provisions of the law are in line with EU standards; however, authorities have not yet elaborated the details of their implementation.

The country had approximately 180,000 persons with disabilities, including 14,034 children, a large number of whom often faced discrimination, social exclusion, poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to public services. According to the Ministry of Education, most of the 4,400 children in residential institutions were children with disabilities. The Ministry of Health reported that 27 percent of them were children with congenital diseases, 26 percent had mental disorders, and 20 percent had nervous system diseases.

While children with disabilities are entitled to home schooling provided by the government, Amnesty International reported that the law was often ignored or implemented to minimal effect, particularly in rural areas. In many cases, children with disabilities, even those whose disabilities would not prevent them from attending school, declined schooling to avoid discrimination. Some children with disabilities attended regular schools, while others were placed in boarding schools, including “special” boarding schools, or were home schooled. The reform of the residential system aims at integrating as many children with disabilities as possible into regular schools.

In Transnistria children with disabilities rarely attended school and lacked access to specialized resources.

Official regulations mandate access to buildings for persons with disabilities, and most government buildings provided such access. While many newly built or reconstructed private buildings were accessible, older buildings often were not. Throughout the year persons with limited mobility complained about the lack of access ways to public transportation and public institutions, and the lack of designated parking places. Even in cases where institutions had ramps, they often did not fit a standard wheelchair, or were too steep or slippery. Most of the access ramps at street crossings did not correspond to the required standards for access in a wheelchair. The government provided few resources to train those with disabilities. The Social Assistance Division in the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection, and Family and the National Labor Force Agency were responsible for protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities. During the year the National Labor Force Agency budgeted resources for 43 new employees, who were to provide information, guidance, and counseling to persons with disabilities.

During the year the network of social services was expanded to include specialized services, such as social assistance, support, and counseling to foster the beneficiaries' social inclusion; 155 persons with disabilities benefited from the service, which was available in seven districts and two municipalities.

There were 9,500 persons nationwide with visual impairments, of whom 3,500 were fully blind. Ballots were not available in Braille, but the Central Electoral Commission started a pilot project to provide ballots in Braille for visually impaired voters in the next parliamentary elections. During the 2010 parliamentary election, authorities tested a new method of direct, secret voting for persons with visual impairments at one Chisinau polling station.

Although the law provides for equal employment opportunities and prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities (with the exception of jobs requiring specific health standards), many employers either failed to accommodate or avoided employing such persons. The new Law on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities requires that 5 percent of the workforce in companies with 20 or more employees must be persons with disabilities. It also provides that persons with disabilities are entitled to two months of paid annual leave and a six-hour workday. During the year the pensions for persons with disabilities were increased by 9.6 percent.

Transnistrian "legislation" provides for protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the areas of education, health care, and employment. Reliable

information regarding the treatment of persons with disabilities in Transnistria was lacking.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Roma continued to be one of the most vulnerable minority groups in the country and were often subject to social marginalization and societal discrimination. Roma had lower levels of education, more limited access to health care, and higher rates of unemployment than the general population.

While the 2004 census counted 12,271 Roma in the country, Romani NGOs estimated the actual number to be as high as 250,000, including 100,000 persons of voting age. NGOs asserted that government census forms allowed persons to identify with only one ethnic group and that many Roma declined to identify themselves as such.

The literacy level of Roma was well below the national average. According to official estimates, one in five Roma could not read or write. Romani NGOs estimated that 80 percent of Romani children were illiterate. Approximately 43 percent of Romani children between the ages of seven and 15 did not attend school. The Romani NGO Vocea Romilor reported that more than 2,000 Romani children were unable to attend school due to poverty. The reasons for nonattendance included parents' lack of money to buy clothing and books for school or pay unofficial school fees required for repairs, supplies, and other school expenses, as well as discrimination that Romani children faced at school. According to Romani families, their children were subject to hazing and discrimination from both fellow students and teachers. The government did not provide education in the Romani language. Very few Roma received a secondary education, and only 4 percent of Roma had a higher education degree, compared with 38 percent of non-Roma. An investigative report showed that Romani children were segregated even in schools in areas with a predominantly Romani population. For example, in a city in northern Moldova, Romani children studied separately from non-Romani children. According to the Romani community, this segregation contributed to the isolation and poor academic performance of the Romani children. Authorities lacked an effective mechanism to address vulnerable families whose children did not attend school.

Approximately 60 percent of Romani families lived in rural areas. Living standards were poor in many Romani communities. During the year Amnesty International released a report which estimated that 59 percent of the country's

Roma lived in absolute poverty. More than 80 percent of Romani households did not have access to potable water, a bathroom, or sewage systems, compared with more than 50 percent of non-Romani households.

Other problems facing Roma included denial of emergency health-care services to Roma in secluded settlements, unfair or arbitrary treatment by health practitioners, a gap between Roma and non-Roma in rates of coverage by health insurance, and discrimination against Roma in the job market. The unemployment rate for Roma was 29 percent, compared with 6.7 percent for the non-Romani population. There were no Roma in elected office and an extremely limited number worked in any capacity in public administration.

The Roma action plan adopted by the government in 2011 did not prove effective and was amended in January. The amendment to the plan institutionalized a system of community mediators who act as intermediaries between the Romani community and local public authorities, mediate disputes, and facilitate the community's access to public services. Authorities did not provide adequate funding to implement the action plan, allocating only 66,600 lei (\$5,511) in 2011.

A 2011 UN report on the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination noted that the Roma action plan was primarily a medium for cultural events. Roma policy was supervised by the Bureau on Interethnic Relations, a Soviet-era institution that focused primarily on cultural events, hosting roundtables and conferences but lacking the authority to exercise oversight of ministries with regard to promoting social inclusion.

In Transnistria authorities continued to discriminate against Romanian speakers. While the use of the Latin alphabet is forbidden by the Transnistrian "constitution," and reading or writing in the Latin script is punishable by a fine of approximately 480 lei (\$39.70), the extent of enforcement of this rule was unknown. However, Transnistrian authorities allowed eight Latin-script Romanian-language schools (five high schools and three elementary schools) under the Moldovan Ministry of Education to operate in Transnistria. Approximately 7,700 children in the region attended these eight schools.

On October 19, the ECHR ruled that the forced closure of Latin-script language schools in Transnistria during the 1990s and 2000s was a violation of the right to education under the European Convention on Human Rights. The ECHR held that the violation fell under the jurisdiction of Russia, as the guarantor of Transnistria's separatist regime, and that the government of Moldova was not responsible.

Russia was ordered to pay 6,000 euros (\$7,920) in respect of nonpecuniary damage and 50,000 euros (\$66,000) for costs and expenses to the 120 claimant families.

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

The law prohibits discrimination against LGBT persons only in the area of employment. Governmental and societal discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity continued during the year. During the year a report by the International Lesbian and Gay Association assessed the level of respect of the rights of sexual minorities as very poor due to frequent violations of the rights of LGBT persons.

Beginning with Balti, on February 23, eight localities passed resolutions banning “aggressive propaganda of nontraditional sexual orientations” and “homosexual demonstrations.” Moldovan Orthodox Church representatives welcomed the decision and called on other local councils to adopt such initiatives. One locality reversed its anti-LGBT resolution after receiving notification from the local representative of the State Chancellery that it would be illegal. The State Chancellery did not challenge the resolutions adopted in the other localities. The LGBT rights NGO GENDERDOC-M challenged the Balti decision in court, and the case was pending at year’s end.

On May 25, parliament passed the antidiscrimination Law on Ensuring Equality. The Moldovan Orthodox Church and a number of political parties strongly opposed the law because it included protections for sexual minorities in the area of employment, while human rights activists criticized the law for abandoning broader protections for sexual minorities that had been included in earlier drafts. Amnesty International characterized the law as failing to ensure protection of LGBT individuals against discrimination and not providing a comprehensive legal antidiscrimination framework.

GENDERDOC-M reported several hate crimes during the year. On July 27, a military unit beat two men on a street in Chisinau while insulting them for their sexual orientation, causing minor bodily injuries. Police initially refused to investigate but did so after GENDERDOC-M intervened. Later both men were summoned to the Military Prosecutor’s Office, where the prosecutor reportedly stated that he also would have beaten the men for their sexual orientation if he had been in the soldiers’ shoes.

Civil society organizations reported discriminatory practices, such as regular bans on public LGBT gatherings, regular harassment of LGBT individuals by police and border authorities, the inability of transgender or transsexual persons to change personal documents during or following gender reassignment, and employment discrimination.

In June the ECHR ruled in favor of GENDERDOC-M in a 2005 case where the Chisinau Municipal Council refused to authorize a peaceful rally by GENDERDOC-M in support of antidiscrimination legislation. The ECHR ordered the government to pay 11,000 euros (\$14,500) in damages for violation of Articles 11 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

While authorities allowed individuals to change their names (for example, from a male name to a female name), the government did not allow persons to change the gender listed on their identity cards or passports. A May 29 court of appeals decision gave transgender persons the right to change their gender on their official documents without compulsory gender reassignment surgery, but the court later reversed itself, and the case remained pending. NGOs noted irregularities in the court's procedures and alleged that the reversal was politically motivated. On November 2, the Supreme Court of Justice issued a nonbinding recommendation to lower courts that transgender individuals be permitted to change the gender on their civil documents. On December 17, the Ministry of Health established a commission to determine gender identity and issue certificates that can be used to apply for new documents. According to GENDERDOC-M, there were approximately 30 transgender persons living in the country.

In Transnistria consensual same-sex activity is illegal, and LGBT persons were subject to governmental and societal discrimination.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

Persons living with HIV continued to face frequent societal and official discrimination.

The law prohibits hospitals and other health institutions from denying admission or access to health-care services to persons with HIV or those perceived or suspected to be HIV-infected or from requesting increased fees for services. However, IDOM and UN representatives reported cases of HIV-positive patients being refused appropriate medical treatment and being discriminated against because of their status. In April in the Stigma Index Study approximately 50 percent of

respondents reported that medical staff disclosed their HIV status without their consent.

Two patients were refused, under various pretexts, access to surgical procedures because of their HIV status. In one case, after prolonged referrals from one hospital to another, the patient's health deteriorated so significantly that she could no longer get out of bed and was in constant pain. Several doctors told NGO representatives that no orthopedic surgeon would operate on an HIV-positive patient because of the lack of proper equipment in medical institutions. In the other case doctors canceled previously approved surgery the day before it was scheduled after learning the patient's HIV status. The doctors claimed that the surgery was too risky for the patient but later implied that his HIV status determined their decision.

While various laws enshrine patient confidentiality as an inherent right and prohibit the unauthorized disclosure of personal medical information, NGOs reported numerous cases of an individual's HIV status being disclosed by physicians or nurses. Such instances occurred primarily in rural areas and smaller communities with relatively few patients. No measures were taken to prevent such abuses. Disclosure of a person's HIV status often resulted in the individual's children being ostracized in kindergartens and schools, and employers found reasons for dismissal. Patients whose HIV status was disclosed avoided taking action publicly against medical workers due to fear of further discrimination.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides workers the right to form and join independent unions and conduct their activities without government interference. The law also provides for collective bargaining and the right to organize but forbids police and members of the armed forces from joining unions. The law provides for the right to strike, except for government workers and workers in essential services such as law enforcement. Health-care providers and public utility employees are not allowed to strike during duty hours. Political strikes are prohibited. Compulsory arbitration may be imposed at the request of only one party to a dispute.

The law does not provide effective sanctions for violations of freedom of association or stipulate penalties for violating trade union rights. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination but does not provide for the reinstatement of workers

fired for union activity. According to the National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova (CNSM), prosecutors initiated no cases of criminal investigations for infringement of the right to organize and bargain collectively during the year. According to the CNSM, there was little cooperation between the Prosecutor General's Office and trade unions. The CNSM leadership believed that the Prosecutor General's Office was politically affiliated and was not interested in initiating cases against the business interests of those in power.

The right to bargain collectively and the right to organize were not always respected, and unions could acquire legal status only if they were members of national, sectoral, or intersectoral organizations. According to the CNSM, creation of new unions remained a problem due to employers' resistance. There were 8,000 primary trade union organizations in the country, approximately 50 percent of which had signed contracts with employers as a result of collective bargaining. Labor organizations reported that labor inspectorates and prosecutors' offices failed to monitor and enforce the right to organize effectively. In October the CNSM formed its own labor inspectorate to protect employee rights better. Some employers, such as a sugar factory in Glodeni, refused to negotiate the creation of a trade union organization. Prosecutors may reject appeals by trade unions alleging antiunion behavior, and alleged violations of the trade union law remained unpunished during the year. Workers exercised the right to strike by conducting legal strikes during the year.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, with exceptions. The law and a government decision allow central and local authorities, as well as military bodies, to mobilize the adult population under certain conditions, such as national disasters, and to employ such labor to develop the national economy. The government did not invoke this provision during the year.

Also 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 sets standards for child labor, including the minimum age for employment, hours of work, and working conditions; and prohibits the worst forms of child labor. However, these protections were not effectively enforced, and child

labor was a problem. Parents who owned or worked on farms often sent children to work in fields or to find other work.

According to a 2010 UNICEF study of working children, an estimated 109,000--or 18.3 percent of children--fell into the category of child laborers, 63 percent of whom were between five and 14 years of age, with 91 percent from rural areas. The vast majority of child laborers worked in family businesses or on family farms.

In the past, farms and agricultural cooperatives reportedly signed contracts with school directors to allow students to work during the harvest high season. In August the Ministry of Education adopted a decision prohibiting students from agricultural work during the training/school period.

The minimum age for unrestricted employment is 18. Juveniles between the ages of 16 and 18 are permitted to work under special conditions, including shorter workdays, but are prohibited from night, weekend, or holiday shifts and are not permitted to work overtime. Fifteen-year-old children may work only with written permission from a parent or guardian. During the year authorities registered one case of employment of a child under the age of 15.

Children were reportedly trafficked within and outside the country for labor and begging. The Prosecutor General's Office prosecuted eight cases of trafficking of children for labor exploitation during the year; seven of the cases involved forced labor, while the eighth involved forced begging. Girls were mostly trafficked to Turkey, Russia, Cyprus, and the United Arab Emirates; boys were trafficked to work in the construction, agriculture, and service sectors in Russia and other countries in the region. NGOs suspected that only a small percentage of cases of human trafficking were officially registered and assisted. The actual number of victims was unknown. The law provides for three to 15 years' imprisonment for persons engaging children in the worst forms of child labor; under aggravated circumstances, the sentence could be life imprisonment.

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/tda.htm.

d. Acceptable Conditions of Work

In April the minimum monthly wage in the private sector was set at 1,300 lei (\$108) per month. The amount was established after lengthy negotiations among

the government, unions, and company owners. The minimum monthly wage for the public sector remained 600 lei (\$50) per month. According to official data, the minimum monthly subsistence income level was 1,456 lei (\$120) in the first quarter. The labor code requires equal pay for equal work.

The law sets the maximum workweek at 40 hours with extra compensation for overtime and provides for at least one day off per week. The law prohibits excessive compulsory overtime. Labor inspection office field visits led to the sanctioning of violators when discovered, but deficiencies in staff and funding limited the frequency of such visits. The law gives foreign and migrant workers status equal to domestic workers.

A thriving informal economy accounted for a significant portion of the country's economic activity. Union representatives believed that the informal economy employed approximately 30 to 40 percent of the workforce. Workers in the informal economy did not have the same legal protections as formal employees.

Under the labor code work contracts are required for employment. Registration of contracts with local officials is required, and the copies are sent to the local labor inspectorate. Through June the labor inspection office reported that 399 persons were employed at 97 enterprises without such contracts. There were no reports of such contracts in the agricultural sector, and the central government did not have a mechanism to monitor compliance with the requirement.

The government is required to establish and monitor safety standards in the workplace, and the labor inspection office was responsible for enforcing health and safety standards. During the first nine months of the year, the office performed 4,863 inspections, 2,585 of which were health and safety inspections and 2,278 in the field of labor relations/legislation. The office inspected 4,100 different companies (enterprises, institutions and organizations) employing more than 160,000 persons, including 80,000 women and 107 minors. It documented 60,560 infringements, including 34,818 of health and safety standards and 25,742 of labor legislation.

Poor economic conditions led enterprises to spend less on safety equipment and to give inadequate attention to worker safety. Labor inspection office representatives noted severe financial and legal constraints on inspectors' activities, ranging from a lack of Internet access, training, and fuel for inspectors to a system of incentives that drives employers to pay minimal fines for violations rather than address underlying problems. From January to September, there were 310 labor injuries

reported (including six injuries in 2011 that were reported during the year), of which 124 injuries were examined by labor inspectors and 196 accidents were investigated by special commissions of the respective companies. Labor inspection office inspectors investigated 47 cases involving extremely severe injuries and 18 cases that resulted in deaths. Companies' special commissions investigated 196 cases involving temporary disability; 22 cases were still under investigation, including nine deaths.