

ISRAEL 2015 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Israel is a multiparty parliamentary democracy. Although it has no constitution, the parliament, the unicameral 120-member Knesset, has enacted a series of “Basic Laws” that enumerate fundamental rights. Certain fundamental laws, orders, and regulations legally depend on the existence of a “state of emergency,” which has been in effect since 1948. Under the Basic Laws, the Knesset has the power to dissolve the government and mandate elections. The nationwide Knesset elections in March, considered free and fair, resulted in a coalition government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security services. (An annex to this report covers human rights in the occupied territories. This report deals with human rights in Israel and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.)

During the year according to Israeli Security Agency (ISA, also known as Shabak) statistics, Palestinians committed 47 terror attacks (including stabbings, assaults, shootings, projectile and rocket attacks, and attacks by improvised explosive devices (IED) within the Green Line that led to the deaths of five Israelis and one Eritrean, and two stabbing terror attacks committed by Jewish Israelis within the Green Line and not including Jerusalem. According to the ISA, Hamas, Hezbollah, and other militant groups fired 22 rockets into Israel and in 11 other incidents either planted IEDs or carried out shooting or projectile attacks into Israel and the Golan Heights. Further information on the human rights situation in the occupied territories is in the annex.

The most significant human rights problems were terrorist attacks targeting civilians and politically and religiously motivated societal violence; institutional and societal discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel, many of whom self-identify as Palestinian, including the Bedouin, in particular in access to equal education and employment opportunities; institutional and societal discrimination against Ethiopian Israelis and women; and the treatment of refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants.

Other human rights problems included institutional and societal discrimination against non-Orthodox Jews and intermarried families and labor rights abuses against foreign workers.

The government took some steps to prosecute and punish officials who committed abuses within Israel regardless of rank or seniority. The government proceeded with structural reforms to reduce impunity and increase accountability.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

On January 14, police responding to an incident in Rahat involving illegal drugs shot and killed bystander Sami al-Jaar. On January 18, demonstrations during Jaar's funeral turned into clashes with police. In the course of responding, police used tear gas; protester Sami Ziadneh died following inhalation of the gas. Authorities arrested a police officer in connection with Jaar's death and released him to house arrest following the incidents. In December the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Department for Investigating Police Officers notified the family there was insufficient evidence to indict the officer and offered the family a copy of the investigation material.

On May 5, the MOJ's Department for Investigating Police Officers closed its investigation into the November 2014 killing of Israeli citizen Kheir al-Din Hamdan in Kafr Kana and announced it would not charge any police officers involved in the shooting. Police had stated Hamdan tried to stab an officer during an attempt to arrest Hamdan, but video footage of the event raised questions as to whether police followed proper rules of engagement. The Department for Investigating police Officers concluded the shooting was an act of self-defense; according to the conclusions of its investigation, the deceased approached police officers wielding a knife and endangered the lives of the officers. The police officers attempted to warn and deter the deceased before opening fire, according to the investigation.

On July 30, an ultra-Orthodox Haredi man, Yishai Schlissel, attacked participants at the Jerusalem March for Pride and Tolerance in West Jerusalem, killing 16-year-old Shira Banki and injuring five others. Authorities had released Schlissel from prison weeks earlier after he completed a 10-year prison sentence for attacking a previous gay pride march. On August 23, authorities indicted him for one count of murder and six counts of attempted murder.

The number of terrorist attacks by armed individuals increased during the year, while attacks by rocket and mortar fire decreased. According to the ISA, militant groups launched 22 rockets from the Gaza strip and one rocket from the Sinai. There were 11 other shooting, projectile, and IED attacks from Gaza. According to the government, on January 28, Hezbollah anti-tank fire killed two Israeli soldiers in the Har Dov area along the Lebanese border.

In a wave of violence in October and November, attackers killed three Israelis and one Eritrean national and injured dozens within the Green Line as of November 23. Individual Palestinian attackers targeted civilians in Israel in stabbing and car-ramming attacks in areas including Ra'anana, Beit Shemesh, Tel Aviv, Netanya, Rishon Le-Tzion, Kiryat Gat, Petach Tikva, and West Jerusalem.

For example, on November 19, a Palestinian man who had a legal permit to work in Israel killed two Israelis and injured another in a stabbing attack in southern Tel Aviv. The incident took place in part in an improvised synagogue where some of the victims were praying. Authorities apprehended the attacker. Authorities indicted him in December, and criminal proceedings against him were underway at year's end. There were also two attacks by Arab citizens of Israel against Jewish Israelis. In one of these cases, on October 19, Mohanad al-Okabi, a resident of an unrecognized Bedouin village, stabbed and killed a soldier at Beer Sheva's central bus station. Al-Okabi injured 10 other Israelis with the soldier's firearm before security services shot and killed him. During the incident security forces mistakenly shot an Eritrean resident of Israel; onlookers then attacked him, and he died of his injuries. Minister of the Interior Silvan Shalom announced he would seek the attorney general's concurrence to revoke the citizenship of those who carried out such attacks in accordance with a provision of the citizenship law that allows such a move in the case of "breaches of allegiance."

On November 30, the Jerusalem District Court convicted two Israeli Jewish minors of the July 2014 kidnapping and killing of Mohammad Abu Khdeir. The court found a third accused person, Yosef Ben David, to have committed the killing, but his conviction was pending the court's decision on whether to consider a psychiatric evaluation submitted days before the court was planned to deliver the verdict. Final determination of Ben David's culpability and sentencing was pending at year's end. Ben David and the two minors found to have killed Abu Khdeir confessed to the killing and said that revenge for the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank in June 2014 partially motivated their actions. The government recognized all four killing victims as victims of terror.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

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

The law does not refer to a specific crime of torture but prohibits acts such as assault and pressure by a public official. In 1999 the Supreme Court ruled that although torture and the application of physical or psychological pain were illegal, ISA interrogators might be exempt from criminal prosecution if they used such methods in extraordinary cases determined to involve an imminent threat, the “ticking bomb” scenario. Human rights organizations alleged that interrogation methods permitted by law and actually used by security personnel included beatings and forcing an individual to hold a stress position for long periods, while the government insisted it did not use any interrogation methods prohibited by the UN Convention against Torture. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) continued to criticize other alleged detention practices they termed abusive, including isolation, sleep deprivation, and psychological abuse such as threats to interrogate family members or demolish family homes. Authorities continued to state the ISA held detainees in isolation only in extreme cases and when there was no alternative option and that it did not use isolation as a means of augmenting interrogation, forcing a confession, or as punishment. The government rejected claims that interrogations of minors breached the convention. An independent Inspector for Complaints Against ISA Interrogators in the Ministry of Justice handled complaints of misconduct and abuse in interrogations. An extended temporary law exempts the General Security Services from audio and video recording of interrogations of “security suspects.” The NGO Adalah urged the government to reject extension of this law, emphasizing the recordings could prevent torture and mistreatment of Palestinian detainees.

The Ministry of Justice’s Interrogee Complaints Comptroller took the testimony of detainees whom authorities had interrogated, then instituted a reform that allows representatives of the Public Committee against Torture in Israel (PCATI) to be present in meetings between complainants and the comptroller. The government stated that by year’s end it had resolved the majority of cases filed through 2013, and added that it handled the “overwhelming majority” of cases in less than one year. The State Comptroller’s Office also reviewed ISA interrogations.

The government established the Turkel Commission to implement the findings of the 2010 report of the Public Commission to Examine the Maritime Incident--the interception and capture by the Israeli Navy of ships carrying humanitarian aid bound for Gaza. Following the publication of the Turkel Commission's Second Report in 2013, which examined the country's mechanisms for investigating alleged violations of the laws of war, the government in January 2014 established a team of professionals led by Joseph Ciechanover to recommend practical steps to implement the recommendations of that report.

The Ciechanover report, released in September, found that overall the country's internal mechanisms for investigating and prosecuting alleged war crimes--many initiated following and in response to the Turkel Commission report--were sufficient and unbiased. These included the Fact-Finding Mechanism first used in investigations of Operation Protective Edge, a new complaint mechanism within the Ministry of Justice for allegations of torture, a new operational standing order expanding the reporting duties of military personnel regarding incidents that occur during operational activity, changes to the appointment processes of the military advocate general and the military prosecutor, the formulation of a new directive setting timeframes for deciding on whether to open a criminal investigation, and the relocation of the position of the Interrogee Complaints Comptroller. Additionally, the Ciechanover report recommended increasing and clarifying civilian oversight (via the attorney general) of the military justice system, a reform the government stated it was implementing as of the end of the year.

The civil society group Yesh Din raised concerns that the Turkel and Ciechanover Commissions had created an impression, for the sake of the country's international reputation, that the investigation and examination mechanism was improving, while the actual reforms implemented fell short of that goal. In particular, Yesh Din criticized the Ciechanover Commission for deferring a decision to impose responsibility on military commanders and civilian superiors for offenses committed by their subordinates. The Ciechanover Commission opted instead to recommend that: "[T]he question of the explicit anchoring of the responsibility of military commanders and civilian superiors in Israeli law would continue to be examined by the relevant parties before being decided."

In April social media users circulated a CCTV video showing two police officers in Holon stopping and beating a uniformed Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldier of Ethiopian descent, Demas Fekadeh. On May 4, Police Chief Danino said that he would fire one officer and bar the other, a volunteer, from further service. A month later the attorney general closed criminal investigations against one of the

police officers and against Fekadeh. The state prosecutor and Ministry of Justice investigators determined Fekadeh had initiated the clash with the police officers, who had acted within their authority. Police stated they did not intend to reinstate the officer (see section 6, National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities).

In July, Shin Bet denied that it used violence and threats in questioning the suspects in the June arson of the Church of the Multiplication (also known as the Church of the Loaves and Fishes). The suspects' lawyers alleged that authorities abused and humiliated the arson suspects, including questioning one of them without justification on the Sabbath, although he was religious.

In December the Supreme Court rejected an appeal by prisoners under questioning for alleged involvement in a terror attack in Duma, the West Bank, in July. The prisoners' lawyer had claimed the ISA prevented the prisoners from meeting with a lawyer and alleged ISA interrogators used illegal methods against the prisoners, including physical force and sleep deprivation. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel called on the Ministry of Justice to investigate the allegations.

On November 18, the Jerusalem magistrate's court convicted a police officer in the case of the assault on Tariq Khdeir in July 2014. The court sentenced the police officer to 45 days of community service and four months' imprisonment (suspended for a period of two years). Neither the government nor the defense appealed the sentence.

The government had still not concluded an investigation into the death of Palestinian prisoner Arafat Jaradat, who died in custody at Megiddo Prison in 2013. Autopsy results assessed by Israeli, Palestinian, and Turkish experts (the family independently requested a Turkish expert review) arrived at conflicting conclusions on whether Jaradat died due to natural causes or from actions by security forces. The Central District Prosecution reiterated the findings of the Israeli forensic expert that there was no basis for the claim Jaradat had been tortured.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

The law provides prisoners and detainees the right to conditions that do not harm their health or dignity. Conditions in permanent detention facilities run by the Israel Prison Service (IPS) generally met international standards, according to the International Commission of the Red Cross (ICRC), but in Saharonim Prison and to some extent Holot Detention Center, the ICRC indicated that migrants in

administrative detention (holding suspected criminals indefinitely without presenting charges or going to trial) should be subject to a less restrictive regime. African migrants and asylum seekers detained in Holot complained of severe cold in winter, heat in summer, and poor food quality--claims documented in a July 8 report by the NGO Hotline for Refugees and Migrants. Since March 2014 NGOs have had access to Holot. The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants reported it could access Saharonim by providing authorities with the name and prison identification number of the detainee who had requested their assistance, but it could not move about and engage with individuals in the facility freely. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported it could regularly access Saharonim, Givon, and Holot detention facilities by submitting a request in advance. The ICRC reported that the IPS granted it access to protected persons, including migrants in detention. In an April letter, NGOs Adalah and Physicians for Human Rights-Israel claimed that the IPS violated its commitment to improve conditions of transport of Palestinian "security prisoners" to court and medical appointments. They alleged IPS failed to provide food, water, or access to restroom facilities during transport and artificially extended the time of transfer.

Physical Conditions: As of November 15, according to the government, there were 21,072 prisoners in IPS facilities in Israel and the occupied territories, including 570 minors. Of the total prisoner population, 6,828 were Palestinian, with 5,380 of these characterized as security prisoners or detainees from the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza (including 264 Palestinian minors). These prisoners often faced harsher conditions than those of the general prison population, including increased incidence of administrative detention, restricted family visits, ineligibility for temporary furloughs, and solitary confinement.

In August the Knesset passed a law authorizing force-feeding of hunger striking prisoners under specific conditions; however, the Israel Medical Association declared the legislation unethical, and urged doctors to refuse to implement it. Security prisoners organized several hunger strikes during the year to protest prison conditions and demand the government end administrative detention. In Nafha prison 120 prisoners went on hunger strike from August 5 to 10. Palestinian detainee Khaled Adnan went on a hunger strike for 56 days to protest his yearlong administrative detention. Officials agreed not to renew his administrative detention for an additional six months and released him on July 11. Palestinian administrative detainee Mohammad Allan went on a hunger strike for 66 days, during which authorities transferred him to two hospitals due to deteriorating health. On August 20, the Supreme Court stayed his administrative detention after MRI scans showed Allan had suffered brain damage and ruled he should remain

hospitalized as a regular patient, at which point Allan renounced his hunger strike. Allan remained in an Israeli hospital until September 16. Upon his release from hospital, security forces immediately rearrested him and returned him to administrative detention.

There were no deaths in prisons and detention centers.

NGOs reported lack of access to legal and social services in detention centers for irregular migrants. Social workers provided individual social and supportive treatment, with emphasis on identifying and providing services for trafficking victims, victims of abuse, and victims of sexual violations.

Administration: While authorities generally allowed visits from lawyers and stated that every inmate who requested to meet with an attorney was able to do so this is not always the case. NGOs alleged authorities did not allow Palestinian detainees, including minors, access to a lawyer during their initial arrest. Travel restrictions on entry into the country affected the access of lawyers and other visitors to some Palestinian prisoners.

The law allows prisoners to submit a petition to judicial authorities alleging substandard prison conditions, and the government stated that authorities investigated credible allegations of inhuman conditions, documented such investigations, and released the results publicly, although the ICRC was not aware of instances when the government released the results of such investigations. The state comptroller serves as ombudsman and investigates public complaints against government institutions, including the IPS.

Independent Monitoring: The ICRC regularly monitored IPS facilities, including Holot and Saharonim, for irregular migrants and the two IDF provisional detention centers. The ICRC monitors all facilities in accordance with its standard modalities, except for urgent or isolated cases raised bilaterally with the concerned authorities (that is, relating to the composition of the visiting team and the conditions for interviews without witnesses). PCATI continued to press for structural reforms, including mandatory video recordings of interrogations. The Public Defenders' Office is officially responsible for monitoring and reporting on prison conditions, and it did so during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions for all citizens. Authorities subjected non-Israeli residents of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights to the same laws as Israeli citizens. Noncitizens of Palestinian origin detained on security grounds fell under military jurisdiction even if detained in Israel (see annex). With regard to irregular migrants, the most recent amendment to the Prevention of Infiltration Law, passed in December 2014, allows the government to detain migrants and asylum seekers who arrived after December 2014 for three months in the Saharonim Prison facility “for the purpose of identification and to explore options for relocation of the individual.” The government may then hold them for 12 months in Holot, a remote, semi-open facility run by the IPS. Authorities close Holot from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. and require a daily check-in (see section 2.d.).

Due to an August 11 ruling by the Supreme Court, on August 24 and 25, the government released 1,178 Eritrean and Sudanese migrants from the Holot facility; authorities had held all of them for more than a year without charging them with any offenses. The government barred those freed from Holot from living or working in either Tel Aviv or Eilat, where they would have supportive communities and access to the limited medical facilities and other social services available to the migrant population.

The most recent amendment to the Prevention of Infiltration Law also allows authorities to send those who fail to renew their visas on time to Holot for up to 120 days, but authorities provided most renewal services in Tel Aviv. According to UNHCR the government has begun summoning migrants/asylum seekers who approach a Ministry of Interior office to renew their visa on time to a hearing to determine if they should be detained. If the hearing results in their being assigned to Holot, the individual is provided with two weeks to organize his affairs prior to reporting to Holot. The law prohibits detention based on certain factors including age, health, gender, or other protected status. Authorities can send those who violated rules at Holot to Saharonim Prison. The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants reported that authorities have sent more than half of Holot detainees to Saharonim for up to several months for various infractions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Under the authority of the prime minister, the ISA combats terrorism and espionage in the country and the occupied territories. The national police, including the border police and the immigration police, are under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Security. The IDF is responsible for external security and

has no jurisdiction over citizens. ISA forces operating in the occupied territories fall under the IDF for operations and operational debriefing. The Ciechanover report (see section 1.c.) clarified that the Ministry of Justice and its investigators and the IDF and its investigators would divide investigative and prosecutorial responsibilities in incidents in which police were operating under the authority of the military. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the ISA and police forces, and the government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. The government took steps to investigate allegations of the use of excessive force by police and military. NGOs continued to criticize the low number of indictments issued relative to the number of investigations opened and the high percentage of cases closed due to investigation failures by military police.

The Department for Investigation of Police Officers in the Ministry of Justice is responsible for investigating complaints against ISA bodies, including incidents involving the police and the border police occurring on Israeli territory and Jerusalem and incidents taking place in the occupied territories that do not involve the use of a weapon.

Investigative responsibility for alleged abuses by the IDF, including incidents involving a weapon in which police units were operating under IDF authority in the occupied territories, remain with the Ministry of Defense in the Military Police Criminal Investigations Department.

Human rights NGOs continued to state that existing accountability mechanisms precluded serious internal investigations by the military and were marred by severe structural flaws that rendered them incapable of conducting professional investigations.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Legally, police must have warrants based on sufficient evidence and issued by an authorized official to arrest a suspect. Authorities generally informed such persons promptly of charges against them, with the exception of administrative detainees. The law allows authorities to detain suspects without charge for 24 hours before bringing them before a judge, with limited exceptions allowing for up to 48 hours. Authorities generally respected these rights for persons arrested in the country. There was a functioning bail system, and detainees could appeal decisions denying bail, with the exception of administrative detainees. Authorities allowed detainees to consult with an attorney in a timely manner, including one provided by the

government for the indigent, and to contact family members promptly, with the exception of administrative detainees.

According to the circumstances of each case, such as the severity of the alleged offense, status as a minor, risk of escape, or other factors, authorities either granted or denied bail to noncitizens of Palestinian origin detained for security violations. Authorities held most Palestinian minors (under age 18) arrested in the West Bank and Gaza in prisons in Israel but prosecuted them under the Israeli military law applicable to the occupied territories, which denies many of the rights Israeli law would grant them. Authorities may prosecute persons detained on security grounds criminally or hold them as administrative detainees or illegal combatants, according to one of three legal regimes.

First, under a temporary law on criminal procedures, repeatedly renewed since 2006, the IPS may hold persons suspected of a security offense for 48 hours prior to bringing them before a judge, with limited exceptions allowing the IPS to detain a suspect for up to 96 hours before bringing the suspect before the senior judge of a district court. In security-related cases, authorities may hold a person for up to 35 days without an indictment (versus 30 days for other than security-related cases), and the law allows the court to lengthen the holding of a detainee on security grounds for an initial period of up to 20 days for interrogation without an indictment (versus 15 days for other than security-related cases). Authorities may deny security detainees access to an attorney for up to 21 days.

Second, the Emergency Powers Law allows the Ministry of Defense to detain persons administratively without charge for up to six months, renewable indefinitely. Authorities used administrative detention as an exception when they could not present intelligence sources as evidence for criminal proceedings. Following several arson attacks in Israel and the West Bank during the summer--one of which led to the deaths of three members of the Palestinian Dawabshe family in Duma and another that damaged the Church of the Multiplication in Tabgha--the government announced it would expand administrative detention to Jewish extremists suspected of terrorist activity. Laws allow the government to detain Israeli citizens administratively, but authorities usually exercised this option only for Palestinians. An administrative detainee has the right to appeal any decision to lengthen detention to a military court of appeals and then to the Supreme Court, and detainees routinely did so. The military courts may rely on classified evidence denied to detainees and their lawyers when determining whether to prolong administrative detention. There is no system whereby authorities may clear a defense team member to view classified information used

to justify holding an administrative detainee. According to B'Tselem, at year's end there were 584 administrative detainees in IPS detention centers, a decrease over the previous year, including three women and six minors. The NGO Honenu alleged there were four additional Jewish administrative detainees. Civil society organizations continued to criticize administrative detention as undemocratic.

Third, the Illegal Combatant Law permits authorities to hold a detainee for 14 days before review by a district court judge, deny access to counsel for up to 21 days with the attorney general's approval, and allow indefinite detention subject to twice-yearly district court reviews and appeals to the Supreme Court.

Arbitrary Arrest: There were no credible reports of arbitrary or false arrests, although some detained Jewish youths, alleged to belong to extremist organizations, questioned the validity of their arrest and use of administrative detention, house arrest, and administrative orders banning them from certain areas of the West Bank.

Pretrial Detention: Administrative detention continued to result in lengthy pretrial detention for security detainees who were mostly Palestinian; some, however, were Jewish Israelis or Arab Israelis. Authorities held most detainees for less than one year but held some for more than one year and a small number for more than two years.

Protracted Detention of Rejected Asylum Seekers or Stateless Persons: The Prevention of Infiltration Law defines all irregular border crossers as "infiltrators" and permits authorities to detain irregular migrants, including asylum seekers and their children.

In September 2014 the Supreme Court struck down the section of the Prevention of Infiltration Law that allowed irregular migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, to be detained in the Holot open facility indefinitely. In December 2014 the Knesset passed a third amendment to the Prevention of Infiltration Law, which limited the time in Holot to 20 months. On August 11, the Supreme Court rejected this aspect of the law. The court gave the government six months to determine a more acceptable limit on the time authorities could hold an individual in Holot and temporarily set the limit at one year. This resulted in the release of 1,178 asylum seekers from Holot. The government may still hold irregular migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, in Saharonim Prison for three months on arrival and then move them to Holot for 12 months. The Supreme Court's ruling affirmed the use of the Holot facility to house irregular migrants, albeit for a limited period.

Under the Law of Entry, the Ministry of Interior and police developed an outline of cooperation that allows for detention of irregular migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers living in the community and suspected of criminal activity, based on an administrative order rather than through the legal process.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence. (The annex covers military court trials of Palestinians and others in the occupied territories.)

Trial Procedures

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

Defendants enjoy the rights to a presumption of innocence, to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them, to a fair trial without undue delay, and to adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense. They may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt, and may consult with an attorney, or if indigent, have one provided at public expense. Trials are public except when a court determines a closed trial is required to protect state security, foreign relations, a party's or witness's right to privacy, or a victim of a sexual offense. There are no trials by jury. Defendants have the right to confront witnesses against them, to present witnesses and evidence on their behalf, to access evidence held against them, and to appeal to the Supreme Court. The government/prosecution is under a general obligation following an indictment to provide all evidence to the defense. The government may on security grounds withhold from defense lawyers evidence it gathered but will not use in its case against the accused. The Supreme Court in civilian courts or the Court of Appeals in military courts can scrutinize the decision to withhold such evidence. The rules of evidence in cases of espionage tried in criminal court do not differ from the normal rules of evidence--no use of secret evidence is permissible.

The Ministry of Justice determined the law allows the courts to consider secret evidence in reviewing the cases of Palestinians who were convicted in civilian courts and granted conditional release from prison as part of a prisoner exchange and later re-arrested for violating the terms of their release, because this parole board review is considered procedural. The government formed a special IDF

judicial commission in 2014 to handle cases of Palestinians who violated the conditions of their pardons in the 2011 prisoner exchange for soldier Gilad Schalit. In December 2014 the commission resentenced Palestinians Muhammad Tzalah and Abd Taami to life terms and resentenced Imad Musa to 24 years and eight months. On August 3, a Nazareth court rejected the petition of an additional Palestinian prisoner, Vahiv Ali Abu Roub, who challenged the IDF commission's decision to return him to prison to serve the remaining 23 years of a murder sentence. Roub alleged the government had unfairly targeted him and other Palestinians pardoned in the Schalit prisoner exchange for arrest in Operation Brother's Keeper of 2014. In rejecting his petition, the court cited ISA evidence showing that he took an active part in contributing to the terrorism threat in the West Bank.

Security or military trials are open to the public, but, since authorities conduct them in a military camp, members of the public require an entry permit from the military. Authorities conducted certain trials in a closed setting, not open to the public, for reasons of security or for the protection of the identity of a minor.

Military courts provide some of the procedural rights granted in civilian criminal courts, although their rates of conviction of Palestinians charged with various crimes are much higher--at nearly 90 percent, according to Yesh Din. The evidentiary rules governing trials of Palestinians, and others subject to military law in the occupied territories, are the same as evidentiary rules in criminal cases. According to the Ministry of Justice, the law does not permit convictions based solely on confessions. The government stated that the evidentiary rules applied in military trials were the same as those applied in civilian courts and did not allow presentation of secret evidence not provided to the defendant or their counsel. Counsel may assist the accused in such trials, and a judge may assign counsel to defendants. Indigent detainees do not automatically receive free legal counsel for military trials, but almost all detainees had counsel, even in minor cases. Court indictments were read in Hebrew and, unless the defendant waived this right, in Arabic. Authorities translated all military court indictments into Arabic. At least one interpreter was present for simultaneous interpretation in every military court hearing, unless the defendant waived that right. Defendants may appeal through the Military Court of Appeals and then to the Supreme Court.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of civilian political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

An independent and impartial judiciary adjudicates lawsuits seeking damages for, or cessation of, human rights violations. Administrative remedies exist, and court orders usually were enforced. Legally, Palestinians may file suit to obtain compensation through civil suits in some cases, even when a criminal suit is unsuccessful and the actions against them are considered legal.

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

The law prohibits such actions, and the government generally respected those prohibitions. Separate religious court systems adjudicate matters such as marriage and divorce for the Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Druze communities. Each year an estimated 20,000 civil marriages, marriages of some non-Orthodox Jews, marriages in non-Orthodox ceremonies, marriages of a Jew to a non-Jew, or marriages of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim must take place outside the country to be considered legal, because religious courts refuse to accept these marriages, and the country lacks a civil marriage law. Many Jewish citizens objected to exclusive Orthodox control over aspects of their personal lives. For example, the Orthodox Rabbinate did not consider to be Jewish approximately 322,000 citizens who considered themselves Jewish and who immigrated either as Jews or as family members of Jews; therefore, they may not be married or buried in Jewish cemeteries in the country. The Orthodox Rabbinate had the authority to handle divorces of any Jewish couple regardless of how they were married, and the divorce of any couple wherein one spouse considers him or herself to be Jewish. The government stated that 24 cemeteries in the country served immigrants not considered Jewish by the Orthodox Rabbinate. The estimated 15,000 Messianic Jews, who believe Jesus is the Messiah and consider themselves Jews, also experienced these infringements on their personal lives, since the Orthodox Rabbinate regards them as Jewish apostates. Authorities did not fully implement a law requiring the government to establish civil cemeteries.

The Law of Citizenship and Entry, which is valid through April and renewed annually, prohibits Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza, including those who are spouses of Israeli residents or citizens, from obtaining resident status in Jerusalem or Israel unless the Ministry of Interior makes a special determination, usually on humanitarian grounds. The law allows the entry of spouses of Israelis on a “staying permit” if the male spouse is age 35 or older and the female spouse is age 25 or older. Authorities required East Jerusalem residents who relocated to forfeit their Jerusalem identification cards. The government may revoke the

Jerusalem identification cards of those who have been away from Jerusalem for seven years, and the government may seek to revoke a Palestinian's Jerusalem identification card if the person obtains citizenship or residency in another country. The only way to qualify for Jerusalem residency and an identification card is to derive it from one's parents or through a spouse. There is no immigration process, and one usually may not regain Jerusalem residency if authorities revoke it. (The revocation of identity cards for Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem is addressed in more detail in the annex.)

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law generally provides for freedom of speech, including for members of the press, and the government generally respected these rights. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of speech and of the press.

The law, however, criminalizes calling persons "Nazis" or "fascists." In October a Tel Aviv court fined a social activist 22,500 new Israeli shekels (NIS) (\$5,770), including legal fees, for having committed slander by calling a government employee "Eichmann" and "murderer" in public. The law imposes tort liability on any person who knowingly issues a public call for an economic, cultural, or academic boycott of the State of Israel and the Israeli-controlled occupied territories. Plaintiffs must prove direct economic harm to claim damages under the "anti-boycott" legislation. The law also permits the minister of finance to institute regulations imposing administrative sanctions on those calling for such a boycott, including restrictions on participating in tenders for contracts with the government and denial of government benefits.

Freedom of Speech and Expression: The law prohibits hate speech and content liable to incite to violence or discrimination on grounds of race, origin, religion, nationality, and gender, and the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance prohibits expressing support for illegal or terrorist organizations. On April 15, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of a law giving to a private party the right to seek damages against individuals or entities calling for a boycott of Israel or Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

In cases of speech that constitutes incitement to violence or "hate speech," the law empowers police to limit freedom of expression. Police arrested Bentzi Gopstein,

leader of the antiassimilationist organization Lehava, for stating in a panel discussion with religious students in Jerusalem that he condoned attacks on non-Jewish religious sites, including the June 18 burning of the Church of the Multiplication in Tabgha. A local court sentenced two men to suspended sentences and small fines for inciting to violence against Arab students in Tzfat.

In June, Minister of Education Naftali Bennett removed the play *A Parallel Time* from the list of approved cultural performances for students. The play was based on the story of a Palestinian prisoner convicted of killing an Israeli citizen. Minister of Culture Miri Regev froze the funding of Al-Midan Theater in Haifa, which first sponsored the play. In June, Regev also stated she would seek to halt government funding of Al-Mina bilingual children's theater in Jaffa, following press attention surrounding the decision of actor Norman Issa, Al-Mina's director, not to perform in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. As of October the government has neither restricted funding of Al-Mina, nor has Issa altered his pledge not to perform across the Green Line. The attorney general issued an opinion that the minister of culture cannot make funding of cultural institutions contingent on compliance with partisan political views. Three cities cancelled screenings of the Dutch documentary film *Shivering in Gaza* or required Amnesty International (AI), which was screening the film, to shift locations due to public protest about its content; screenings took place in other areas including Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Yeruham.

Press and Media Freedoms: The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction. On September 3, the Knesset amended the public broadcasting law to prohibit journalists on public broadcasting from airing their own views. Subsequently, the Israel Press Council urged the government to cancel the law, saying it violated free speech, and on September 14, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced he would work to cancel this clause, which he initially supported; further action was pending at year's end.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: All media organizations must submit to military censors any material relating to specific military issues or strategic infrastructure issues, such as oil and water supplies. Organizations may appeal the censor's decisions to the Supreme Court, and the censor may not appeal a court judgment.

News printed or broadcast abroad is subject to security censorship. The government did not fine newspapers or other mass media for violating censorship regulations during the year. The government regularly enacted restrictive orders

on sensitive security information and required foreign correspondents, as well as local media, to abide by these orders. For example, until July the government imposed a comprehensive order prohibiting media outlets from publicizing information on the abduction and detention of two Israeli citizens in Gaza.

Libel/Slander Laws: There were no reports of authorities using laws against slander or libel to restrict public discussion.

National Security: The government used emergency law to outlaw the Northern Islamic Movement, stating that they incited to violence and alleging that it closely collaborated with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. Knesset Member Ahmed Tibi and other Arab Israeli politicians stated, however, that politics appears to have motivated this decision much more than a threat to national security. The government issued cease and desist orders to 17 related organizations.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the internet. The government monitored e-mail and internet chat rooms for security purposes. Internet access was widely available, and approximately 70 percent of the country's inhabitants used it regularly.

On February 25, authorities arrested Sidqi Maqt, a Syrian Druze from Majdal Shams in the Golan Heights, and charged him with espionage, assisting an enemy during wartime, and contact with a foreign agent due to Facebook posts by Maqt that documented Israeli military activity along the Israeli-Syrian border. According to media reporting, Maqt's indictment referenced his posts on his Facebook page as evidence, and it detailed the number of "likes" and "shares" his posts received, claiming that such posts "incited other Facebook users" to share "extremist sentiments" against the country.

On October 22, authorities indicted 19-year-old Anas Khatib from Shefa-Amr for incitement to violence and terrorism because of statements he had posted on his Facebook page, such as, "Jerusalem is Arab," "Long live the intifada," and "I am on the waiting list," the last allegedly implying a desire for martyrdom. On November 25, an Acre court released Khatib to house arrest and banned him from using the internet until authorities completed all legal proceedings against him.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

The law prohibits institutions that receive government funding from engaging in commemoration of the Nakba, or “catastrophe,” referring to the displacement of 80 percent of the Palestinian Arab population during Israel’s 1948 War of Independence.

In March the Supreme Court accepted an appeal of a lower court ruling that permitted the president of Haifa University to impose restrictions on political activity on campus. The court expressed criticism of the university’s policy of limiting public activities and required the university to amend its charter to be in line with principles of free speech.

In April the Supreme Court upheld an IPS policy prohibiting Palestinian prisoners designated as “security prisoners” and held in prisons from obtaining higher education through correspondence courses. The court ruled that the denial of higher education to “security prisoners” did not constitute unacceptable discrimination between security and criminal prisoners, as alleged in a petition by the legal advocacy NGO Adalah, because there were “fundamental differences” between these two prison populations. The court accepted the IPS allegation that terrorist organizations funded the security prisoners’ studies as a reward for past offenses or incentive to continue acting against the state. Adalah stated the decision departed from the court’s jurisprudence upholding a prisoner’s rights except in cases where authorities require restrictions to maintain public order or prison security.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law provides for the freedoms of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights. Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, particularly those focused on human rights problems and critical of the government, asserted that the government sought to intimidate and stop their foreign funding (see section 5).

On April 30, in Jerusalem, and on May 3, in Tel Aviv, thousands of Ethiopian Israelis and their supporters gathered to protest police brutality and discrimination following the publication of a video showing police beating Ethiopian soldier Demas Fekadeh in the Tel Aviv suburb of Holon. The demonstrations at some points resulted in clashes with police. On April 30, demonstrators protesting racism and discrimination against the Ethiopian Israeli community blocked several major traffic arteries in Jerusalem before marching towards the prime minister’s residence, where clashes occurred between participants and security forces. On

May 3, approximately 7,500 demonstrators blocked one of the country's largest highways in both directions at evening rush hour, eventually moving their demonstration to Rabin Square in central Tel Aviv. While the protest was initially largely nonviolent, action by protesters and security forces resulted in violent clashes that lasted past midnight. Some accounts alleged demonstrators--some of whom may have been from outside groups--began pelting police with bottles and other projectiles and attempted to overturn police barricades; others alleged that officers became violent without provocation.

Participants and bystanders commented on widespread police use of sound grenades, skunk water, and water cannons; these crowd-control methods were rarely used within Green Line Israel. Bystanders alleged police also used tear gas against peaceful demonstrators, including former member of Knesset Pnina Tamato-Shata. One reporter wrote a personal account on social media alleging that police, contrary to their accounts, used unprecedented and excessive force. For their part, police contended their officers used "less than reasonable force" throughout the Tel Aviv demonstration. The demonstration resulted in 56 officers and 12 protesters injured; authorities arrested 43 persons.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) claimed that police acted contrary to their regulations when they failed to warn protesters prior to using crowd dispersal measures and that their use did not escalate gradually.

Police set up a committee to investigate the events. Government officials, including the president and prime minister, met with Fekadeh and Ethiopian community representatives in the wake of the demonstrations and pledged that police would conduct a thorough and transparent investigation. The government dropped charges against one of the police officers who apprehended Fekadeh and also against Fekadeh himself, concluding Fekadeh had not initiated the altercation.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

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

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government respected these rights for citizens.

UNHCR and NGOs expressed concern over the government's actions in providing protection and assistance to some refugees, asylum seekers, and other persons of concern, including victims of trafficking, but not to others. UNHCR and NGOs raised specific concerns over the government's use of so-called voluntary return of detained migrants, including those seeking asylum, as well as the government's failure to provide independent individual refugee status determinations (RSD) for the vast majority of migrants of sub-Saharan African origin, including Eritreans and Sudanese. UNHCR and NGOs also raised objections and called for changes to the government's continued use of "anti-infiltrator" laws, which impose long-term detention on all individuals who enter the country irregularly, including asylum seekers and their children. The amended Prevention of Infiltration Law gives authorities the discretion to detain these individuals for three months in prison followed by 20 months in an "open facility." On August 11, the Supreme Court issued a provisional ruling on the Law to Prevent Infiltration that temporarily reduced the maximum time that the government may detain migrants in Holot from 20 to 12 months and requires the government to legislate a more reasonable timeframe for detention within six months of the ruling.

The government reported the arrival of 168 irregular migrants through the end of the year, compared with 21 in 2014.

In mid-November the government reported that it was holding 243 detainees in Saharonim, 17 in Givon, and 1,277 in Holot. On December 29, the newspaper Haaretz reported that Holot was at capacity, housing 3,360 asylum seekers. An amendment to the Prevention of Infiltration Law, passed in 2014, excluded from summoning to Holot all women and children, men who could prove that they have a wife or children in Israel for whom they provide, recognized trafficking victims, persons over age 60, and those whose health could be negatively affected by detention in Holot. In April the government expanded the criteria for summons to Holot; according to UNHCR, torture survivors can now be sent to Holot. As of November 23, the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants was aware of 184 torture survivors that the government had summoned to Holot since the December 2014 amendment. With regard to Saharonim Prison, the law states that all new "infiltrators" are to be detained for three months. As of November 6, because only healthy young men entered the country as irregular migrants, the government detained them in Saharonim.

The Ministry of Interior released some identified victims of torture from the Saharonim facility and granted 25 persons temporary stays of orders to Holot

facility in response to Hotline for Refugees and Migrants petitions. The government asserted that it would not send men who have family living in the country to Holot. Regulatory procedures, however, forced many families to separate because male heads of household did not have proper legal documentation to prove their status as married with dependents and were therefore required to report to Holot. According to NGOs, these documentation problems often resulted when families were forced to flee their countries of origin without important documentation, including marriage certificates. Some migrants and asylum seekers married locally but were hesitant to register their relationship status due to fear of legal repercussions and due to authorities' not recognizing other marriages.

Foreign Travel: Citizens generally were free to travel abroad provided they had no outstanding military obligations and no administrative restrictions. The government may bar citizens from leaving the country based on security considerations. Authorities do not permit any citizen to travel to any state officially at war with Israel without government permission. This restriction includes travel to Syria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. The Supreme Court upheld a 2014 decision by the Nazareth District Court sentencing former member of Knesset Said Naffaa to prison for traveling to Syria with a delegation of Druze leaders. In April 2014 the government detained and interrogated Majd Kayyal for five days after he returned from a trip to Lebanon, releasing him when a polygraph indicated he was innocent of the charge of "contacting a foreign agent."

Adalah alleged that the prohibition on travel to many Arab countries disproportionately discriminated against Arab-Israeli citizens and noted that authorities did not detain Jewish Israelis upon return from similar trips to unauthorized countries. The government required all citizens to have a special permit to enter "Area A" in the West Bank (the area, according to the Interim Agreement, in which the Palestinian Authority exercises civil and security responsibility), although the government allowed Palestinian citizens access without permits. Following a High Court instruction to the government in 2013 to implement new airport procedures, in March 2014 the Israel Airports Authority announced it had implemented new technology to ease screening procedures for Arab-Israeli citizens, eliminating the practice of searching suitcases in the departure hall. In March the Supreme Court rejected a petition by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel requesting the airport to eliminate racial profiling of Arab citizens.

In December 2014 the Supreme Court upheld a policy that did not allow Palestinians from Gaza to enter Israel to access courts for tort damages filed against the security forces, stating that it wanted to “give a chance” to new procedures and guidelines for facilitating entry into the country adopted by the attorney general.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: Since 2008 authorities have given the majority of asylum seekers a “conditional release visa” that requires renewal every one to four months. The government has thus far provided these individuals with a limited form of group protection with freedom of movement, protection against refoulement, and some informal access to the labor market. Access to health care, shelter, and education was available inconsistently. The protection environment, however, significantly deteriorated since the end of 2011 due to adoption of policies and legislation aimed at deterring future asylum seekers by making life difficult for those already in the country. These actions further curtailed the rights of the population and encouraged the departure of those already in the country.

The law provides for granting temporary asylum, and the government has established a system for providing temporary protection for most asylum seekers. The Refugee Status Determination Unit of the Population Immigration and Border Authority (PIBA) handles asylum requests and publicizes information on how to apply in its offices and on its website. The Ministry of Interior’s RSD Unit set up a computer-based appointment system in Arabic and Tigrinya (Eritrean). The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants, the African Refugee Development Center, UNHCR, and the Tel Aviv University Refugee Rights clinic, however, expressed continuing concerns regarding the accessibility, efficiency, and impartiality of the RSD Unit. These concerns applied especially to irregular migrants and asylum seekers who have been in the country for many years and to African migrants from Eritrea and Sudan, in particular. Authorities originally granted this population protected status and barred them from applying for RSD, a policy later changed without notification to much of the population.

RSD recognition rates were very low; the government has not granted any Sudanese asylum seekers refugee status and approved only 0.15 percent of the Eritrean asylum claims it has processed. Similarly, while the government has extended nonremoval and temporary visas to a number of Sudanese from Darfur, it has not adjudicated positively any of the cases in RSD processing during the year. In addition to these low rates, according to international organizations, a lack of

transparency in the documentation and deliberation phases of the government's processes further undermined confidence in the system, affecting views of the legitimacy of the government's regime for asylum seekers.

Through implementation of the "Anti-Infiltrator" laws, the government removed many of the benefits of temporary protection, but as of 2009 has permitted Africans, who were previously protected from deportation, to apply for RSD. Some of these individuals, however, applied through UNHCR upon arrival (and continued to have files with UNHCR that the government has not requested or accepted for transfer). Authorities have not informed others that they are eligible to apply. Still others were discouraged from applying by the government's policy summoning those who have applied to detention in Holot and by the very low rate of acceptance of refugee claims. According to an affidavit provided by Yossi Edelstein, head of the Enforcement Unit of PIBA, in February the RSD Unit was understaffed. This circumstance led to delays in processing refugee applications.

Additionally, UNHCR expressed concern about access to the RSD process for those in the Holot detention facility. It stated that detainees had difficulty accessing the forms to request refugee status and that Ministry of Interior staff did not effectively inform Holot detainees about the process of filing for RSD. During the year the government adopted a practice of requiring long-staying RSD applicants to provide an acceptable justification for not applying for RSD within their first year of residence in the country. UNHCR reported that authorities previously instructed applicants not to apply for RSD because of the temporary protection extended to them at the time. The government then rejected the majority of justification applications from these individuals.

Regarding the 2014 indictment of one Ministry of Interior clerk for accepting a bribe and providing forged documents to an asylum seeker from Sudan, the government stated this was a single individual who acted improperly and whom authorities acted immediately to suspend, reprimand, and eventually indict. The Hotline for Migrant Workers stood by their claim that in 2014 the immigration agency gave asylum seekers passports of other individuals to enable them to leave the country, while the government stated this claim had no basis.

The government stated it had reached agreements with two foreign countries with regard to the relocation of migrants from Sudan and Eritrea, and the attorney general conditioned his approval of the relocation policy on the assurance of certain protections in those countries. According to the government, from 2010 to 2015, a total of 12,300 migrants departed to safe foreign countries or to their

country of origin voluntarily, with no cases of violations of the principle of nonrefoulement. As of November 23, 2,028 migrants exited the country voluntarily during the year, and officials stated the departure rate was 150 per month. According to UNHCR, if returned to their countries of origin, these individuals were likely to face major human rights violations, including the risk of death, torture, and life imprisonment.

Since the December 2014 Supreme Court ruling, the government continued to give Eritreans and Sudanese outside of detention renewable “conditional release” documents, but these must be renewed every one to two months, according to UNHCR and Hotline for Refugees and Migrants. Only three Ministry of Interior offices in the country renew these visas.

Government officials and media outlets continued to refer to asylum seekers as “infiltrators” and characterized them as directly associated with increases in crime, disease, and vagrancy.

Refoulement: The government provided some protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom could be threatened and stated its commitment to the principle of nonrefoulement. UNHCR credited the government in a report during the year for observing the principle of nonrefoulement. UNHCR warned, however, that refoulement could be a concern in view of the government’s policy of forcing migrants either to depart the country or report for lengthy detention in Holot. The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants reported that over the course of the past two years, approximately 9,000 irregular migrants and asylum seekers departed the country through a “voluntary return” program. The government provided most returnees with paid tickets to either Uganda or Rwanda, although their governments did not provide assurances of legal residency or the right to work. The government did not confirm the existence of official agreements with these governments to accept migrants or asylum seekers although Rwandan President Paul Kagame confirmed discussions about formulating an agreement with the country in April, according to *Haaretz*. A Beer Sheva court upheld the legality of the secrecy of these agreements in response to a petition by NGOs. The government provided those departing a stipend paid in dollars of NIS 13,300 (\$3,410), and prior to departure, the Population and Immigration Authority and the Custody Review Tribunal reviewed mandatory recorded video interviews and written statements of those who opted to participate in the voluntary return program to verify they were departing voluntarily.

A coalition of NGO advocates for asylum seekers (including AI, Hotline, and the African Refugee Development Center) questioned the government's policy of sending migrants to a another foreign country. These groups were concerned that the destination countries were not prepared to care for the asylum seekers and considered that, in some cases, this transfer could amount to refoulement. Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other NGOs reported that the voluntary return policy led to many individuals returning to their country of origin via the foreign countries where they did not receive permission to stay upon arrival or where their protection needs were not met. The government insisted those who departed "safe" foreign countries for their countries of origin had permission to stay and work in the foreign countries indefinitely and if they did leave, they did so voluntarily. HRW and the NGO Hotline for Refugees and Migrants documented the treatment of some returnees whom Sudanese and Eritrean authorities arrested upon their return to Sudan and Eritrea and whom those authorities reportedly surveilled, beat, threatened, and in some cases tortured.

On March 31, the government announced a new policy to deport migrants from Eritrea and Sudan by sending them to other countries in Africa. The government explained that this procedure would initially apply to those held in Holot (2,000 at the time) who either never applied for asylum or who had applied and been rejected. By November authorities had notified 43 persons that they must either depart from Israel to a country in Africa or go to prison indefinitely.

NGOs filed a court case questioning the safety of this policy, and the Supreme Court decided that for the duration of the court case, those migrants affected could remain outside of jail. On November 9, the Beer Sheva District Court ruled against the migrants and NGO petition, stating that the government may use its process for relocating migrants. The court recommended the government delay actual implementation until a process for monitoring those who travel is established. As of November 23, no migrants were known to have been jailed under this policy.

Refugee Abuse: Communities with a large concentration of African migrants were occasionally targets of violence. The Tel Aviv municipality dedicated a special police unit to combat violence and crime in the migrant community. Additionally, the nature of government policies on the legality of work forced many refugees to work in "unofficial" positions, making them more susceptible to poor treatment and questionable work practices by their employers. Following the 2013 arrest of four persons for attacks that police believed were racially motivated, the courts convicted the suspects in September 2014 of assault and robbery offenses and

issued sentences ranging from nine months of suspended imprisonment to 24 months' imprisonment. The court also fined the perpetrators and ordered them to pay compensation to the victims.

Immediately following the killing of a soldier by an Israeli Bedouin attacker in Beer Sheva on October 19 (see section 1.a.), a security guard shot Eritrean asylum seeker Haptom Zerhom, whom the guard mistakenly believed was a second attacker. A group of onlookers then beat the injured Eritrean man, who later died. Pathologists later confirmed the cause of death was the gunshot wound. Authorities arrested four persons for aggravated assault, including two members of the IPS; authorities released all four on bail and prohibited them from contacting one another. Additionally, authorities summoned two IDF soldiers and a civilian for questioning.

Employment: Recognized refugees received renewable work visas. During the year many asylum seekers who once had B/1 work visas had this status downgraded, and most held a 2A5 visa, which explicitly reads, "This is not a work visa." The government previously allowed asylum seekers to work in the informal sector but not to open their own businesses or to register to pay value-added tax, although the law does not prohibit these activities. The Ministry of Interior conducted media campaigns to warn employers against hiring illegal foreign workers.

Following the release of asylum seekers from the Holot facility on August 24 and 25, the government prohibited them from going to Eilat and Tel Aviv in part to keep them from working there, and municipal officials in other areas stated they would oppose asylum seekers relocating to their communities. Nevertheless, the media reported that companies that provided labor sent representatives to Holot to interview those released for possible employment in hotels at the Dead Sea or elsewhere outside of Tel Aviv and Eilat. Hostility towards asylum seekers lessened with the increase in individual terror attacks in October and November, with at least one municipal official suggesting replacement of Arab workers with asylum seekers.

The government reserves the right to demand unpaid value-added tax and levy substantial fines against business proprietors for operating businesses without a tax exemption. African asylum seekers in the Holot open facility may not work outside the facility, but some worked inside the facility for less than the minimum wage. Some of the facility's services depended on detainee labor.

The law bars migrants from sending money abroad, limits the amount they may take with them when they leave to the minimum wage for the number of months they resided in the country, and defines taking money out of the country as a money-laundering crime.

Access to Basic Services: Access to health care, shelter, and education was available on an inconsistent basis. Recognized refugees received social services, including access to the national health-care system, but the government did not provide asylum seekers with public social benefits such as health insurance. The government stated it provided infirmary services, including laboratory services, medical imaging, and general and mental hospitalization services in the Holot facility for individuals held there, including asylum seekers. UNHCR reported that when accessing health services, translation was often provided by another detainee, compromising confidentiality and potentially affecting the quality of treatment. The government sponsored a mobile clinic, and mother and infant health-care stations in south Tel Aviv, which were accessible to migrants and asylum seekers. The clinic provided health and dental services, sexually transmitted disease evaluation and treatment, and prenatal and infant medical care.

Temporary Protection: The government provided temporary protection primarily to Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers. The Ministry of Interior began processing asylum applications of Eritreans and Sudanese in detention in 2014. The ministry continued to reject the applications of almost all Eritrean detainees, concluding that military desertion provided insufficient grounds for presenting a subjective fear of persecution and disregarding further evidence presented on conditions in Eritrea should individuals return.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The law provides citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections based on universal and equal suffrage, and citizens exercised this ability.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Observers considered parliamentary elections held in March free and fair. In 2014 a change in the law raised the electoral threshold from 2 percent of votes to 3.25 percent of votes, a move some civil society organizations criticized for its limitation on freedom of representation and its potential effect on parties representing the Arab minority. The four Arab-majority parties represented

in the Knesset united into one faction, the Joint List, winning 13 seats and becoming the third-largest faction in Knesset.

On March 17, the evening of the election, Prime Minister Netanyahu used rhetoric intolerant of Arab citizens in an effort to generate votes for his party. He later apologized for his comments.

On March 20, prior to the start of the coalition negotiations, the attorney general issued binding rules to the government to limit the bargaining power of the parties. Under the new guidelines, parties do not enjoy a separate allocation within the government budget. Allocations promised as part of a coalition agreement would be integrated into the budget of the relevant ministry for the activity for which they were destined and would be fully transparent. The Office of the Attorney General published the guidelines as part of the lessons learned from the irregularities in the allocation of budgets stemming from coalition agreements.

Chair of the Central Elections Committee Salim Jubran cautioned the chairpersons of all political parties against issuing calls prohibiting women from standing for election. His statement followed an appeal that cited multiple incidents of threatening speech, including an ultra-Orthodox rabbi who stated that a woman who stood for election would lose her livelihood and have her children expelled from religious schools.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The Basic Laws prohibit the candidacy of any party or individual that denies the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people or the democratic character of the state or that incites racism. Otherwise, political parties operated without restriction or interference. The Northern Islamic Movement continued its practice of prohibiting its members from running for local or national office and boycotting elections.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Women and minorities participated in political life on the same legal basis as men or nonminority citizens. The law provides an additional 15 percent in campaign funding to municipal party lists composed of at least one-third women. Although senior political and social leaders often came from among veterans of the predominantly male officer corps, women participated widely in politics, including in leadership positions up to prime minister. Women faced significant cultural barriers in political parties representing conservative religious movements and the Arab minority, although elections during the year resulted in two female Knesset members represented on the Joint List. Following the parliamentary elections, the 120-member Knesset had 29

female members and 15 Arab members. The 22-member cabinet included three women, and one woman and one Druze were deputy ministers; there were no Arabs. Four members of the 15-member Supreme Court were women, and one was Arab. For the first time, an Arab citizen of Israel, Aida Touma Suliman, chaired a permanent committee in the Knesset, the Committee on the Status of Women.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government implemented these laws effectively. There were reports of government corruption, although impunity was not a problem.

Corruption: The media routinely reported on corruption. The national police, the state comptroller, the attorney general, and the accountant general are responsible for combating official corruption. These entities operated effectively and independently, and authorities sufficiently resourced them. NGOs that focused on anticorruption efforts operated freely without government interference.

The government continued to investigate and prosecute top political figures. In April authorities convicted Rabbi Yeshayahu Pinto of bribing senior police officers in connection with an investigation of alleged fraud by a charitable organization he headed. As part of a plea bargain in which Pinto gave evidence against the head of the National Crime Unit, Police Commander Menashe Arbiv, he received a reduced sentence of one year in jail and a fine of NIS one million (\$256,000). The investigation of Arbiv continued at year's end.

On May 14, the government filed indictments against lawyer Ronel Fisher, retired police superintendent Eran Malka, former Tel Aviv district attorney Ruth Blum-David, and several business figures. Authorities variously charged the accused with taking and giving bribes, fraud and breach of trust, fraudulent receipt of assets in aggravated circumstances, money laundering, or obstruction of justice, each according to his or her role in the corruption affair. Authorities accused attorney Blum-David of obstructing justice in relation to two cases of giving and taking bribes in exchange for privileged information about ongoing criminal investigations, and of receiving assets obtained through crime. Emerging from the indictments were allegations that Fisher had operated a criminal network, reaching law-enforcement bodies. Authorities alleged retired police superintendent Eran Malka, a senior police officer in the Lahav 433 National Fraud Unit, was a key

figure in the ring's obstruction of justice. Further developments in the trial were pending at year's end.

On December 2, a Tel Aviv court indicted former Knesset member and minister for industry, trade, and labor, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, on charges of bribery, fraud, breach of trust, money laundering, and tax evasion.

On May 25, the Jerusalem District Court sentenced former prime minister Ehud Olmert to eight months in prison, following a conviction for fraud and breach of trust in the Talansky "cash envelopes" case. In July, Olmert filed another appeal to the Supreme Court, which again agreed to suspend Olmert's sentence, pending the appeal. On December 29, the Supreme Court ruled on Olmert's appeal of separate charges from 2014 in the "Holyland" affair, accepting his appeal of some charges but maintaining his sentence of 18 months in prison for bribery. Olmert was scheduled to begin serving his sentence in February 2016.

On May 31, a Tel Aviv court sentenced Ramat Hasharon mayor Yitzhak Rochberger to six months of community service and fined him NIS 40,000 (\$10,300) following his conviction for fraud and other crimes of moral turpitude. As part of the sentence, he cannot return to public office for at least seven years. Under the terms of a 2014 plea bargain, in April courts sentenced former Bat Yam mayor Shlomo Lahiani to eight months in jail on three counts of breach of trust.

Financial Disclosure: Senior officials are subject to comprehensive financial disclosure laws, and the Civil Service Commission verifies their disclosures. Authorities do not make information in these disclosures public without the consent of the person who submitted the disclosure. There is no specific criminal sanction for noncompliance.

Public Access to Information: The law requires governmental agencies to make internal regulations, administrative procedures, and directives available to the public. All governmental agencies did not effectively implement the law.

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

Numerous domestic and international human rights groups operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were generally cooperative, responsive to their views, and routinely invited NGOs critical of the government to participate in Knesset

hearings on proposed legislation. Human rights NGOs have standing to petition the Supreme Court directly regarding governmental policies and may appeal individual cases to the Supreme Court. A unit in the Foreign Ministry maintained relations with certain international and domestic NGOs.

Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, particularly those focused on human rights problems and critical of the government, asserted, however, that the government sought to intimidate and stigmatize them for their receipt of foreign funding.

The coalition agreement signed in March between the Likud and Jewish Home parties included a commitment to advance legislation addressing foreign funding of NGOs. NGOs focused on human rights problems and critical of the government said this was an effort to target them as they would be most negatively affected by the legislation. The Ministerial Committee on Legislation in December approved a draft amendment to the law on public disclosure of funding for NGOs, and it was pending a first Knesset reading at year's end.

In June Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely instructed the Israeli embassy in Switzerland to take action to stop the planned Swiss government-sponsored exhibition in Zurich by Breaking the Silence, an advocacy group composed of veterans, on the grounds that it tarnished the image of the country and its military.

In July, Hotovely held a series of private consultations with European foreign ministers, their deputies, and their ambassadors to Israel, during which she accused their governments of providing financial assistance to Israeli and Palestinian NGOs that she claimed were working to “delegitimize Israel under the guise of human rights.” Media reported that Hotovely identified human rights NGOs, including B'Tselem, Breaking the Silence, and the Adalah Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights as among the organizations whose work delegitimized Israel and received support from foreign governments. Hotovely reportedly claimed that if they continued to fund them, the government would pass legislation restricting or taxing donations to Israeli NGOs from foreign states (see section 2.b.).

The Ministry of Interior continued to deny foreign nationals affiliated with certain pro-Palestinian NGOs and solidarity organizations entry into the country. Authorities required some foreign nationals to sign declarations stating their understanding that “all relevant legal actions” would be taken against them, “including deportation and denial of entry into Israel for a period of up to 10 years,” if they traveled through the country to Palestinian Authority-controlled areas without appropriate authorization. The government stated it took this action

on an individual basis, not according to the activities or platform of the NGOs with which these persons were affiliated.

The director general of the National Civil Service ended the participation of the NGOs ACRI and B'Tselem in the national service volunteer program. In 2014 the director general alleged these organizations engaged in defamation and incitement against Israeli soldiers.

The United Nations or Other International Bodies: The government generally cooperated with the United Nations and other international bodies. The government continued its participation in the UN Human Rights Council, including the Universal Periodic Review process, although it did not reverse its 2013 partial suspension of its coordination with UNESCO. Moreover, the government prevented the UN Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on the situation in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 from gaining access to the West Bank.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The state comptroller also served as ombudsman for human rights problems. The ombudsman investigated complaints against statutory bodies that are subject to audit by the state comptroller, including government ministries, local authorities, government enterprises and institutions, government corporations, and their employees. The ombudsman is entitled to use any relevant means of inquiry and has the authority to order any person or body to assist in the inquiry.

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

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, or social status, and the government was generally effective in enforcing these prohibitions. Adalah maintained a database of more than 50 laws it claimed discriminated--either explicitly or in practice--against Arab citizens.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, including spousal rape, is a felony punishable by 16 years in prison, or up to 20 years' imprisonment for rape under aggravated circumstances or if the perpetrator rapes or commits a sexual offense against a relative. The government effectively enforced rape laws. The government reported that in 2014 police opened 219 cases of spousal rape. In the same year,

the government also received 6,333 complaints of sex-related offenses. As of October 12, 732 complaints led to indictments; 1,083 were closed because the offender was unknown; 1,879 were closed for lack of evidence; 533 were closed for lack of public interest; and 2,106 remained open.

The government reported that it opened 17,939 domestic violence cases in 2014, of which women brought 80 percent.

During the year family members killed or were alleged to have killed 10 women in what the government termed “murders due to family disputes” and women’s rights groups termed “femicides.” For example, Tasnim Abu Kweidar, from an unrecognized Bedouin village, was killed in August, and NGOs alleged the details of her killing indicated “family honor” might have been a motive. Arab and Jewish women’s rights groups protested against what they perceived to be police inaction and societal indifference or support for such actions. The government stated that police have developed procedures and trained special investigators to deal with domestic violence, sex offenses, and the violation of protective orders in diverse communities, including the Arab community.

In Lod, a community where domestic violence has been a significant problem, police collaborated with the Ministry of Welfare to develop a response to Arab women at risk. This effort resulted in a reduction in the number of domestic homicides from 10 each year to two. NGOs, including Women Against Violence, Na’am, and The Abraham Fund Initiative, worked within Arab and mixed communities to counter femicide.

The Ministry of Public Security continued to allow armed security guards to take their weapons home at the end of their shifts, a practice reinstated in 2014 after the ministry prohibited it in 2013 when a coalition of NGOs raised concerns about the high rate of spousal killings by security guards using service weapons. Authorities and extended through the end of the year in response to a wave of terrorist attacks. The ministry announced strict regulations governing the storage of weapons at home and in public.

News reports indicated a 47-percent decline in reports to authorities of sex offenses during the year; according to the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, the majority of rape victims did not report the crime to authorities due to social and cultural pressure. Women from certain Orthodox Jewish, Muslim, Bedouin, and Druze communities faced significant social pressure not to report rape or domestic abuse. In collaboration with the chair of the Knesset Committee for the

Advancement of Women and Gender Equality, Aida Touma Suliman, Minister of Religious Affairs David Azulay announced an initiative to train and empower ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) women to talk about problems of sexual abuse and domestic violence within their community. Experts in the field of social work and domestic violence prevention highlighted the reluctance of many Arab women to avail themselves of social services due to societal pressure and personal identification as Palestinians. The government cooperated with The Abraham Fund Initiative on a pilot program to provide training for professionals in the field of domestic violence within the Arab community, bringing law enforcement officers, social workers, NGOs, and religious leaders together to coordinate services for victims of domestic violence.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services operated 14 battered women's shelters and a hotline for reporting abuse. Two of these were dedicated to the assistance of women from the Arab community, and two others were dedicated to caring for a mixed population of Arab and Jewish women. Of 89 centers for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence throughout the country, 22 operated in Arab communities and eight in mixed Arab-Jewish cities. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services assisted women involved in prostitution, including emergency shelters, daytime centers, and therapeutic hostels.

Authorities established a special interministerial board headed by the deputy director general of the Ministry of Public Security to address the continuing problem of domestic violence. In July 2014 the board presented interim findings and recommendations to the Committee for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality in Knesset; final suggestions for implementation were pending as of November 23.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law prohibits FGM/C. There were no reports of FGM/C on women age 18 or older. There were no reports of the practice on girls under age 18.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: On August 20, *Haaretz* reported that the justice minister and the attorney general announced that "steps will be taken to enforce the law against polygamy," working collaboratively with social service providers. Some in the Arab community expressed concern these measures would negatively affect women and children financially and that the effort should focus first on education and on the sharia courts that perform marriages, while others heralded the move.

Cases of domestic homicides of women perpetrated in defense of family honor continued to occur within the Arab community, contributing to a disproportionate number of killings of Arab women (see also section 6, Women, Rape and Domestic Violence).

Police conducted weekly assessments of threatened women to determine the level of threat and required protection and worked with government social welfare institutes and NGOs to safeguard threatened women.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is illegal but remained widespread. The law requires that suspected victims of harassment be informed of their right to assistance. Penalties for sexual harassment depend on the severity of the act and whether blackmail is involved. Police notified all known victims of their right to receive assistance from the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel. The law provides that victims may be informed of the progress on their cases through a computerized system and information call center. The Central Bureau of Statistics conducted a poll for the Ministry of Public Security that indicated 98 percent of sexual harassment victims did not go to the police.

Harassment based on gender segregation continued in some public places, including on public buses. A Beit Shemesh court ruled in favor of and awarded damages of NIS 60,000 (\$15,400) to four local Orthodox women who complained the municipality had not complied with a previous ruling to eliminate signs in public places requesting members of the public to dress modestly.

The Ministry of Transportation and Road Safety operated a 24-hour hotline to report complaints on public transportation, including segregation.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals have the right to decide the number, spacing, and timing of having children; to manage their reproductive health; and to have access to the information and means to do so, free from discrimination, coercion, or violence. Social and religious pressure on women in Haredi communities often led them to seek approval from a rabbi to use contraception.

Discrimination: In the secular criminal and civil courts, women and men enjoy the same rights, but in some matters religious courts--responsible for adjudication of family law, including divorce--limit the rights of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Druze women. Women and men who do not belong to a recognized religious group face additional discrimination. A Jewish woman is allowed to initiate divorce proceedings, but both the husband and wife must give consent to make the

divorce final. Because some men refused to grant divorces, thousands of women could not remarry or give birth to legitimate children. In rare cases this rule happened in reverse, with women refusing to grant men divorces. Rabbinical tribunals sometimes sanctioned a husband who refused to give his wife a divorce, while also declining to grant the divorce without his consent.

A Muslim woman may petition for and receive a divorce through the sharia courts without her husband's consent under certain conditions, and a marriage contract may provide for other circumstances in which she may obtain a divorce without his consent. A Muslim man may divorce his wife without her consent and without petitioning the court. Through ecclesiastical courts, Christians may seek official separations or divorces, depending on their denomination. Druze divorces are performed by an oral declaration of the husband alone and then registered through the Druze religious courts, placing the disproportionate burden on the woman to immediately leave the home with her children. A civil family court or a religious court settles child custody, alimony, and property matters after the divorce, which gives preference to the father unless it can be demonstrated that a child especially "needs" the mother.

Although the law prohibits discrimination based on gender in employment and wages and provides for class action antidiscrimination suits, a wage gap between men and women persisted. According to data published by the Central Bureau of Statistics on March 4, women on average earned 14 percent less per hour than men.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women in the Prime Minister's Office works to mainstream women's participation in the government and private sector, and to combat sexual harassment and domestic violence. The authority requires every city, local council, and government ministry to have an adviser working to advance women's issues. A government resolution requires ministers to appoint women to the directorates of government-owned companies until representation reaches 50 percent; at the end of 2014, women's representation was at 44 percent (see also section 7.d.). The law requires that at least one of two governmental representatives on the Committee for Appointment of Religious Judges be a woman; in July authorities appointed seven men and four women to the committee.

Discrimination in the form of gender segregation continued in some public places, including in public health clinics and at the Western Wall. Negotiations between the government and Reform and Conservative Jewish religious movements to

establish a separate, permanent space for egalitarian prayer at the section of the Western Wall south of the Mughrabi bridge (in addition to the existing gender-segregated prayer areas where regulation prohibits women from leading prayers, singing aloud, or holding or reading from Torah scrolls) remained stalled at year's end. Non-Orthodox and mixed gender groups used a temporary prayer area at the southern section of the wall that was "administered with a pluralistic approach," according to the government, for religious ceremonies such as bar and bat mitzvahs.

In December the Attorney General's Office and three female members of the Knesset urged the rabbi of the Western Wall, Shmuel Rabinovitch, to include women in the official Hanukkah candle-lighting ceremony. Rabinovitch had stated that he had no intention of allowing women to participate in the ceremony. Deputy Attorney General Dina Silber stated that separation of women and men in the public sphere was "unsound and severe discrimination against women for being women."

According to media reports, on December 1, at a conference in Bnei Brak, leading rabbis in the Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox community issued an order to the principals of ultra-Orthodox institutions not to recognize the degrees of women who study in academic institutions. They also banned ultra-Orthodox women from attending colleges and universities, saying a woman's higher pay resulting from higher education was "a danger to the entire structure of the household."

In ultra-Orthodox areas of Jerusalem, vandals damaged images of women participating in bat mitzvah celebrations in advertisements.

During election primaries, some residents of the ultra-Orthodox community in Bnei Brak wanted campaign signs with women's images removed. Police responded that it would be illegal to remove the signs, and they remained. Nevertheless, incidents that excluded women persisted. According to a June media report, authorities did not allow a group of female high school students who trained to be volunteers with Magen David Adom ambulance service to fulfill the duties for which they trained because male ambulance drivers refused to ride with the women.

Children

Birth Registration: Children derive citizenship at birth within or outside of the country if at least one parent is a citizen. Births are supposed to be registered

within 10 days of the delivery, and according to the law, births are only registered in the country if the parents are citizens or permanent residents. Any child born in an Israeli hospital receives an official document from the hospital that affirms his or her birth, the mother's details, and the father's details as based on a joint declaration made by both the father and the mother. The country registers the births of Palestinians in Jerusalem, although Palestinian residents of Jerusalem reported delays in the process.

According to the National Council for the Child, 156,448 children in the country lacked citizenship and its corresponding rights. The council noted this number did not include the children of asylum seekers or irregular migrants. The government confirmed that it does not legally register children born to noncitizens or nonresidents or whose parents stayed in the country illegally, and they are not eligible for the rights provided to a citizen or permanent resident. The figure included children of legal and illegal foreign workers and children of mixed marriages, especially those between Arab-Israelis and Palestinian residents of the occupied territories. The government stated that a child's status derives from a parent's status; if one of the parents is an Israeli citizen and the other is not, the child may be registered as Israeli as long as he or she lives with the parent who is an Israeli citizen or permanent resident.

According to UNHCR the Ministry of Interior issues a Confirmation of Birth document, which is not a birth certificate, for children without legal residency status in the country, including children of asylum seekers and migrant workers and children of international students and others who do not hold Israeli citizenship. At times the government refused to list the father's name or to give the child the father's last name on the Confirmation of Birth document. The Ministry of Interior requires parents without a permit to sign a form declaring they are "present illegally" in the country before issuing this document. A petition to require the government to issue an official birth document listing both parents' names remained pending before the Supreme Court as of November 23. The government stated the sides have come to an agreement that the Ministry of Interior would issue an official document confirming the birth of the child, signed by a government official, which parents could, in turn, use for their overseas needs. The father's details would be included based on a joint declaration of both parents.

Education: Primary and secondary education is free and universal through age 17. The government continued implementing a 2007 law to make education compulsory through grade 12, but for budgetary reasons, a February 2014 decision by the Knesset Education Committee postponed implementation of the

Compulsory Education Law (integrating children ages three to five) until the 2015-16 school year. The government continued to expand free public preschool beginning at or slightly before age three and established new elementary, middle, and high schools. The government did not enforce compulsory education, however, in unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev, and Bedouin children, particularly girls, continued to have the highest illiteracy rate in the country. The government stated, however, that due to the increased proximity and accessibility of new schools and the dedication of additional funds for education of the Bedouin population, attendance rates for Bedouin students rose and dropout rates declined during the year. The government operated separate public schools for Hebrew-speaking children and Arabic-speaking children. For Jewish children there were separate public schools available for religious and secular families. Individual families may choose a school for their children to attend regardless of ethnicity. By law these two school systems receive government funding equivalent to public schools, although they do not consistently teach a basic curriculum, including math, sciences, humanities, and languages.

The government partially funded “recognized but not official schools,” which are required to teach a corresponding percentage of the national curriculum and have greater administrative autonomy than public schools. Some schools in the “recognized but not official” category petitioned the government for reinstatement of prior levels of funding in 2014; the petition was pending a hearing and review by the government at the end of the year. On September 1, schools in the same category belonging to the Secretariat of Christian Schools went on strike to protest what they claimed was unequal government funding as compared to the two politically affiliated ultra-Orthodox school systems. The government stated that it had dedicated additional resources to students living in the country’s periphery and in disadvantaged communities that resulted in the addition of school hours, funding for formal and informal educational programs, and teacher enrichment in these communities.

Medical Care: The government provides preventive health services to minors without civil status who are younger than age six. It also provides services similar to those provided citizen children to noncitizen minors younger than age 18, regardless of their legal status in country, if their parents register them with the “Meuhedet” health-care fund. This arrangement does not include minors whose guardian is a resident of the Palestinian Authority, and it does not cover pre-existing conditions.

Child Abuse: The National Council of the Child received a number of complaints during the year of abuses related to health, availability of welfare services, education, physical and sexual abuse, child pornography, and poor educational environments. In November 2014 the council released the results of a survey of more than 10,000 youths, which showed a significant discrepancy between the number of children and youth who reported some type of abuse through the survey versus the number of reports made to child protection officers. The study revealed that 49 percent of minors in the country (including 68 percent of Arab minors) have been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused, while only 2 percent of the youth population had reported abuse to social workers.

The law requires mandatory reporting of any suspicion of child abuse. It also requires social service employees, medical and education professionals, and other officials to report indications that minors were victims of, engaged in, or coerced into prostitution, sexual offenses, abandonment, neglect, assault, abuse, or human trafficking. The government stated that police immediately attend to each case forwarded to them from the National Council for the Child or any other source. Police maintained that they assign officers with special training in dealing with child abuse without distinction to ethnic or racial background. NGOs, however, expressed concern regarding police negligence in child abuse and domestic violence cases reported in minority communities.

The government provided specialized training to psychologists, offered a free psychological treatment program to treat child victims of sexual offenses, and operated a 24-hour emergency hotline. The Ministry of Education operated a special unit for sexuality and for prevention of abuse of children and youth that assisted the education system in prevention and appropriate intervention in cases of suspected abuse of minors.

According to police in 2012, minors filed two-thirds of the more than 5,000 complaints of sex crimes. The most common offense against minors--more than 50 percent of the cases--was molestation. Approximately one-quarter of those complaints were for rape.

During March and April, six children of migrants/asylum seekers died within five weeks. All six were in the supervision of workers in day care centers that served the migrant community and were known to lack resources. Following the deaths the government announced it would allocate 56 million NIS (\$14.4 million) to establish alternative daycare centers.

Early and Forced Marriage: The law sets the minimum age of marriage at 18, with some exceptions for younger children due to pregnancy and for couples older than 16 if the court permitted it due to unique circumstances.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law prohibits sexual exploitation of a minor and sets a penalty of seven to 20 years in prison for violators, depending on the circumstances. The law prohibits child pornography. The minimum age for consensual sex is 16. Consensual sexual relations with a minor between the ages of 14 and 16 constitute statutory rape punishable by five years' imprisonment.

The government supported a number of programs to combat sexual exploitation of children, including establishing an interministerial research team, preparing educational materials, and conducting numerous training sessions for government and police officials.

According to information gathered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, the rate of incidents of sexual abuse doubled during the year, reportedly due in part to greater identification and reporting. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services operated six centers specializing in care of children and youths who experienced sexual or emotional abuse.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information, see the Department of State's report on compliance at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/legal/compliance.html and country-specific information at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/israel.html.

Anti-Semitism

Jews constituted approximately 80 percent of the population. The government often defined crimes targeting Jews as nationalistic crimes relating to the overall Palestinian-Israeli conflict rather than anti-Semitism.

Trafficking in Persons

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

Persons with Disabilities

The Basic Laws provide a legal framework for prohibiting discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment (including hiring, work environment, and evaluation), education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, and the provision of other government services. The 1998 Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Law augments the Basic Laws and specifically prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities, including with regard to public facilities and services. This legislation mandates access to buildings, transportation, and physical accommodations and services in the workplace, and access to mental health services as part of government-subsidized health insurance. In July 2014 the minister of economy signed an order requiring that 2 percent of the workforce of employers with more than 100 employees be persons with disabilities with the proportion rising to 3 percent beginning in October. According to NGOs, government progress in enforcing these laws was limited. Government agencies for persons with disabilities worked to encourage leadership from within the community of persons with disabilities.

Societal discrimination and lack of accessibility persisted in employment, housing, and education. According to the Commissioner for the Rights of People with Disabilities, although the employment rate of persons with disabilities rose between 2007 and 2012, the rate remained lower than the employment rate for persons without disabilities, and many people with disabilities who are working have part-time, low-wage jobs. The Ministry of the Economy decreed that all sectors should increase their hiring so that persons with disabilities would constitute 3 percent of the workforce by the end of 2017, and the government continues to provide support and education for employers and workers with disabilities to close the gap. According to the commissioner for the rights of people with disabilities, 100 percent of municipal buses and 60 percent of intercity buses were accessible, as of November 23.

The advocacy organization Bizchut reported that Arab citizens with disabilities were employed at roughly half the rate of Jews with disabilities. Shortages of funding for Arab municipalities, including for education, adversely affected Arabs with disabilities.

Access to community-based independent living facilities for persons with disabilities remained limited. According to the disability rights NGO Bizchut, more than 8,000 persons with intellectual disabilities lived in institutions and large hostels while only 1,500 lived in community-based settings. During the year the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services began implementing a pilot program

to move 900 persons with intellectual disabilities from institutions into community-based housing facilities over the next three years.

The law prioritizes access by persons with disabilities to public services, such as eliminating waiting in line as well as providing adapted seating and accessible facilities in public places other than buildings, such as public beaches, municipal parks, swimming pools, and cemeteries. For hearing-impaired persons, the law provides for short-message public-announcement services.

The Commission for Equal Rights of People with Disabilities within the MOJ oversees the implementation of laws protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and worked with government ministries to enact regulations. The Unit for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities in the Labor Market, located within the Ministry of Economy, examined and promoted the employment of persons with disabilities. The unit had three support centers designed to assist employers who wish to hire persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services provides accommodation to persons with intellectual disabilities and/or autism who are either suspects or victims in criminal investigations.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Arab citizens, many of whom self-identify as Palestinian, faced institutional and societal discrimination, particularly in the wake of a wave of terrorist attacks by individuals of Palestinian or Arab descent in September and through the end of the year. There were multiple instances of security services or other citizens racially profiling Arab citizens, as well as instances of revenge attacks directed towards or being carried out against Arabs.

In one case on October 9, a 17-year-old Jewish Israeli stabbed four Arabs in the southern Israeli town of Dimona. When interrogated, he told police that his conviction that “all Arabs are terrorists” motivated him. Authorities charged him with “damage to health under aggravated circumstances,” and a psychiatric evaluation was pending, according to police. Prime Minister Netanyahu condemned the attack.

There were also cases in which security forces or citizens targeted other citizens not carrying out attacks. On October 9, security forces shot an Arab woman from Nazareth between four and six times at an Afula bus station in northern Israel after she reportedly brandished a knife. Police backed away from an initial assessment that she intended to carry out an attack and were investigating whether she was

mentally unstable at the time. On November 5, a Nazareth court released her to house arrest and absolved her of charges related to terror and attempted murder; trial proceedings for a remaining charge of carrying a dangerous weapon were pending at year's end.

In two incidents in January and February, Jewish attackers beat two Druze citizens in incidents the victims claim had nationalist motivations. On January 25, assailants attacked Tommy Hassoun at the Central Bus Station in West Jerusalem after overhearing him speak Arabic; six persons were arrested in connection to the incident. On February 5, Razzi Houseysa was hospitalized with facial wounds after assailants attacked him in Kibbutz Yagur; police briefly detained two men but released them, concluding the altercation was not motivated by nationalism and rejecting Houseysa's claim he was targeted because he spoke Arabic.

In June Druze residents of the Golan Heights, approximately 10 percent of whom hold Israeli citizenship, attacked a military ambulance transporting injured Syrians near Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights because of anger over Syrian attacks on Druze villages across the border. Assailants killed one Syrian man and injured the other. On August 10, authorities charged Amal Abu Salah and Bashira Mahmoud with murder, and authorities arrested 30 other suspects during the investigation. The spiritual leader of the Druze community, Mowafak Tarif, condemned the attacks, as did the prime minister and other senior ministers and government officials.

In July an Israeli television station exposed a policy by some of the Cafe Cafe chain of coffee shops not to employ Arabs by placing calls to the establishments and inquiring whether jobs were available. A labor court fined the Tel Aviv port location of this chain NIS 35,000 (\$9,000). A 2014 survey commissioned by the Economy Ministry's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found 42 percent of employers would prefer not to hire Arab men and 41 percent would prefer not to hire an Arab mother of young children. Of all respondents 46 percent said they were reluctant to work with an Arab man, and 28 percent said the same about working with an Arab woman (see section 7.d.).

In October several municipal school systems, including in Tel Aviv, Rishon Le-Tzion, Hod Hasharon, Rehovot, Givatayim, and Modi'in, ordered their mostly Arab construction, janitorial, and maintenance workers--as well as workers on nearby construction projects--to be absent from school premises when students were present, citing pressure from parents. Media reports and civil society

organizations alleged that in some cases, these orders explicitly targeted Arab Palestinians and Arab citizens of Israel.

“Price tag” attacks (property crimes and violent acts by extremist Jewish individuals and groups) continued throughout the country, targeting Arab (including Christian and Muslim) and some Jewish institutions, with the frequency of attacks spiking in September and through the end of the year. The most common offenses, according to police, were attacks on vehicles, defacement of real estate, harm to Muslim and Christian holy sites, assault, and damage to agricultural lands. For example, on June 18, arsonists burned a large section of the Church of the Multiplication in Tabgha and scrawled on the building’s stone walls sections of the Jewish prayer book that in this context denigrated Christians. The government detained 21 persons in connection with this and similar acts, and some remained under house arrest or administrative detention at the end of the year. In late July the government announced five persons, including one minor, were responsible for the attack and filed indictments against two of them, taking “administrative steps” against the other three. After initially declining to pay for repairs of the church, saying it did not fall under protections against acts of terror, the government agreed to pay 3.9 million NIS (\$1.0 million) to restore the site.

In July the Jerusalem District Court sentenced brothers Shlomo and Nahman Twito, members of the extremist organization Lehava, to two years and two-and-a-half years, respectively, in prison for setting fire to two first-grade classrooms in the Arabic-Hebrew bilingual Max Rayne Hand in Hand school in West Jerusalem in November 2014. In addition to the fire, slogans in Hebrew with racist messages, including “Death to Arabs” and “There is no coexistence with cancer,” were written on the wall. In December the Jerusalem District Court sentenced Yitzhak Gabai to a combined sentence of three years in prison: two years for participating in the November 2014 school attack on the Max Rayne Hand in Hand school, 10 months for social media posts that constituted incitement to violence, and two more months for the possession of a knife.

The courts convicted--and sentenced to prison--three individuals for a 2013 attack on an Arab-Israeli municipal street cleaner in Tel Aviv. Following an August 2014 attack on two Palestinians in Beit Hanina, authorities indicted 10 Jerusalem residents for assault and obstruction of justice.

The law exempts Arab citizens, except for Druze men, from mandatory military service, but a small percentage served voluntarily. Citizens who did not perform military service enjoyed fewer societal and economic benefits and sometime faced

discrimination in hiring. Citizens generally are ineligible to work in companies with defense contracts or in security-related fields if they have not served in the military. Some Druze opposed their inclusion in mandatory military service, and authorities jailed them for refusing to serve. The government managed a National Civil Service program for citizens not drafted for military service, giving Arabs, some ultra-Orthodox Jews, Orthodox Jewish women, and others the opportunity to provide public service in their own communities and thus be eligible for the same financial benefits accorded military veterans. Many in the Arab community opposed the National Civil Service program because it operated under the auspices of government ministries associated with security. There were also multiple instances of ultra-Orthodox communities ostracizing ultra-Orthodox soldiers for serving in the military. In November the Knesset voted to extend deadlines for mandatory conscription of men in the ultra-Orthodox community.

On December 30, the cabinet approved the largest ever (15 billion NIS or \$3.85 billion) plan to increase economic integration and reduction of societal gaps over the coming five years.

In an October 2014 study, the NGO Sikkuy found that the main cause of unequal resources for many Arab local authorities was their low tax base, requiring central government investment in economic and social development. The government initiated and continued several programs to support disadvantaged populations and periphery communities in general and the Arab community in particular.

In August the government and the Joint List, representing the country's Arab-majority parties, agreed on a multi-year plan for economic integration and reduction of societal gaps. The plan includes one-time budgetary supplements to Arab local councils totaling NIS 200 million (\$51 million), with up to an additional NIS 700 million (\$179 million) for which local councils can apply over the next five years. The government employed affirmative action policies for persons of Arab descent, including members of Druze communities, and for non-Arab, Muslim Circassian communities, in the civil service. As of October authorities had designated 1,508 positions for these communities and filled 1,256 of them. The Education Ministry continued implementing a plan to place 500 Arab teachers in positions in predominantly Jewish schools by 2020. The plan offered partial solutions for many Arabs with teaching credentials who could not find work as teachers and for Hebrew-language schools that experienced a shortage of teachers in key subject areas including math, English, and science. As of August there were 186 Arab educators teaching in Jewish schools. The Ministry of Economy

launched an NIS five million (\$1.3 million) pilot program to support social enterprises in employing disadvantaged populations.

Separate school systems within the public and semi-public domains produced a large variance in education quality, with Muslim, Arab, Druze, and Christian students passing the matriculation exam at lower rates than those of their Jewish counterparts. The government noted that the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Education operated programs to provide free matriculation-exam coaching to Arab students. According to the government, the percentage of students in higher education who were Arab (approximately 26 percent) exceeded their share of the population (approximately 20 percent), although according to another statistic from the Council for Higher Education, only 14 percent of university students were Arab. The percentage of master's and doctoral degree students who were Arab was 9 percent and 4.5 percent, respectively, which was significantly lower than the Arab percentage of the country's total population. The government attributed the increase to the opening of higher education institutions in peripheral areas, which made them more accessible to the Arab population. The government operated several scholarship programs specifically targeting the Arab population. Statistics researched by *Haaretz--TheMarker* and the Knesset research center found that Arab students received slightly higher per-capita government support than their non-ultra-Orthodox Jewish peers. Arab and Jewish students who studied in "recognized but not official" schools, to include a majority of Arab Christian students studying in the 47 schools overseen by the Office of Christian Schools, had declines in government funding following a change in Ministry of Education policy in 2013. Two ultra-Orthodox school systems continued to benefit from higher funding percentages than all other school systems.

Approximately 93 percent of land is in the public domain, including approximately 12.5 percent owned by the NGO Jewish National Fund (JNF), whose statutes prohibit sale or lease of land to non-Jews. According to a 2005 attorney general ruling, the government may not discriminate against Arab citizens in marketing and allocating lands it manages, including those of the JNF. As an interim measure, the government agreed to compensate the JNF for any land it leased to an Arab by transferring an equal amount of land from the Israel Lands Administration to the JNF. Legal petitions against the JNF policy of leasing public land only to Jews continued at year's end. The NGO Israel Land Fund continued its program to purchase Arab land throughout the country and market it to Jewish buyers, including in the diaspora. The organization claimed all the land belonged to Jews and described as a "danger" the purchase of Jewish-owned lands by non-Jews.

New construction was illegal in towns that did not have an authorized outline plan for development, which is the legal responsibility of local authorities. Arab communities that still lacked fully approved planning schemes could turn to their municipal authorities to develop them, according to the government. The government stated that as of August, 131 of 133 Arab localities had approved outline plans for development, 84 of which the National Planning Administration furthered. It stated that outline plans advanced by the Ministry of Interior added an average of 70 percent to existing localities' lands and noted that delays in the approval of plans often related to the lack of vital infrastructure such as sewage systems. NGOs serving the Arab population, however, alleged discrimination in planning and zoning rights, noting regional planning and zoning approval committees did not have Arab representation, and planning for their areas was much slower than that for Jewish municipalities, leading to frustrated citizens building or expanding their homes without legal authorization and risking a government-issued demolition order. The government noted that Government Decision 208 in July includes multiple provisions on the subject of housing problems in Arab localities. On March 4, the director general of the Ministry of Interior told a gathering of planning experts that at times the lack of compliance with government regulations prevented timely government approval. For example, Adalah highlighted the extreme delays faced by residents of the Arab village of Kamanneh in the Galilee; despite approval of a master plan for the village in 2013, the Israel Land Authority (ILA) failed to publish 100 tenders for public housing, contributing to the housing crisis, and preventing development. A "Target Price" housing program of the ILA, designed to reduce the cost of housing by as much as a fifth of the national average price, did not include Arab municipalities. Additionally, some communities discriminated against Arabs. Adalah alleged an association that won a tender to market new apartments in the Oranim neighborhood of Ma'a lot-Tarshiha refused to sell them to Arabs.

Arab communities in the country generally faced economic difficulties, and the Bedouin segment of the Arab population continued to be the most disadvantaged. More than half of the estimated 200,000 Bedouin population lived in seven government-planned communities. Approximately 30,000 lived in the 11 recognized villages of the Nave Midbar and Al-Qasum Regional Councils, formerly the Abu Basma Regional Council, and approximately 60,000 Bedouins lived in 35 unrecognized tent or shack villages that did not have water and electricity or educational, health, and welfare services. NGOs, Bedouin leaders, and the government noted that Bedouin towns ranked lowest on the country's standardized socioeconomic scale, with most ranking a one out of 10 and only Rahat, Hura, and Segev Shalom ranking two out of 10.

While 11 of 13 recognized villages had plans that defined the areas of the village, in 10 of these villages, all residences remained unconnected to the electricity grid, there was no connection to the sewage disposal system, there were no paved roads, and only six villages had high schools, according to the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality. Additionally, in 10 of the recognized villages, residents were responsible for providing their own water infrastructure to bring water from a central line to their property.

In the 35 unrecognized villages in the Negev claimed by various Bedouin tribes, the government viewed all buildings as illegal and subject to demolition. In cases of demolitions with no agreement from the residents to relocate, the government levied fines against residents to cover expenses incurred in the course of demolitions. Many Bedouin, whose residences or structures authorities subjected to demolition orders, elected to self-demolish to avoid fines.

The government noted its policy in Bedouin areas was to demolish “new vacant illegal structures” built without permits after 2010 and found in areas it determined to be state land, not belonging to any local authority. The NGO Dukium recorded 1,073 demolitions in 2014, up from 697 in 2013; of this total, Bedouins demolished 718 themselves to avoid fines.

In May, in the latest development in a decade-long legal battle, the Supreme Court ruled that eviction orders issued against residents of the Bedouin unrecognized village Umm al-Hiran was valid and suggested residents be moved to the nearby town of Hurra. The Israeli military regime moved residents of Umm al-Hiran there in 1956. The minority opinion suggested the majority rule “infringes on existing laws.” Adalah filed an extraordinary motion for a second hearing before an expanded panel of judges, which remained pending.

The government maintained a program to encourage Bedouins to relocate from unrecognized villages to established towns by providing low-cost land and compensation for demolition of illegal structures for those willing to move to designated permanent locations. Bedouins often refused to participate in this program because they asserted that they owned the land or the government had given them prior permission to settle in their current locations. The NGO Dukium alleged the seven government-established towns were unable to accommodate their own natural growth. Some residents were caught between court-ordered demolitions and the rejection of their designated relocation sites for reasons of overcrowding. Additionally, many Bedouins complained that moving to

government-planned towns would require them to surrender claims to land they had occupied for several generations and would separate them from their livelihood. Conversely, the government claimed it was difficult and inefficient to provide services to clusters of buildings throughout the Negev that ignored planning procedures. Some Bedouins continued to pursue legal recognition of their 3,200 claims to parcels of land based on practices of land ownership and sales predating 1948, although in all cases, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the government. For example, in May the Supreme Court rejected an appeal filed by the al-Uqbi family to a lower-court decision rejecting its claim to ownership of the land.

In 2014 the prime minister ordered a reorganization of the governmental authority handling Bedouin affairs, placing the authority within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. In June, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Uri Ariel briefly reintroduced the Praver Plan for redistricting areas containing Bedouin villages in the Knesset but then withdrew it. NGOs and Bedouin leaders noted that the implementation of the government plan for developing the Negev, with the resultant home demolitions and planned relocations of some Bedouin communities, continued apace in the absence of specific legislation to address Bedouin land claims. The civil society group The Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality raised concerns that Ariel's policies had exacerbated the gaps between recognized and unrecognized Bedouin villages.

The law bars family reunification when a citizen's spouse is a non-Jewish citizen of Iran, Iraq, Syria, or Lebanon. Citizens may apply for temporary visit permits for Palestinian male spouses age 35 or older or Palestinian female spouses age 25 or older, but they may not receive residency based on their marriage and have no path to citizenship. The government had yet to implement a policy in response to a 2010 Supreme Court recommendation that it provide social services to an estimated 5,000 Palestinian spouses of citizens granted "staying permits" to reside legally in the country.

The government generally prohibited Druze citizens and residents from visiting Syria. The government suspended a program, coordinated with the UN Disengagement Observer Force that enabled Druze residents of the Golan Heights to attend college in Syria and permitted the Druze religious leadership to attend religious meetings in Damascus. The action was the consequence of escalated military and armed group activity on the Syrian side of the border that prompted the temporary closure of the Israel-Syria access point overseen by the UN Disengagement Observer Force. The government continued to allow noncitizen

Druze residents from the Golan Heights to visit holy sites in Syria through the ICRC-managed pilgrimage program, but it had prevented family visitations since 1982. The government facilitated the entry of several hundred Syrian nationals, including Druze, to the country to receive medical treatment.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, based on figures at the end of 2014, an estimated population of 135,500 Ethiopian Jews faced persistent societal discrimination, although officials and citizens quickly and publicly criticized discriminatory acts against them. Following the disappearance of Avera Mengistu, who independently and of his own free will entered Gaza and was believed to have been apprehended by terrorist groups in September 2014, the military initially imposed a gag order on reporting on the case that lasted until July. Family and friends of Mengistu alleged his case received inadequate attention from the government because he was Ethiopian; however, the prime minister subsequently visited the family.

In April, Israeli-Ethiopian citizens protested against what they perceived to be discriminatory treatment in society. The galvanizing event for the protests was the publication of a video from April 26 that showed two police officers in Holon stopping and beating uniformed Ethiopian-Israeli soldier Demas Fekadeh (see section 1.c.). Members of the Ethiopian community emphasized the widespread nature of such discrimination and abuse. Protesters in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv demanded the police officer be arrested and charged; however, as of September 9, such action had not taken place. Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Reuven Rivlin, and many ministers and Knesset members condemned the attack against Fekadeh, praised his call to avoid violence, and promised to work to lessen socioeconomic gaps between sectors of society.

The government maintained several programs to address social, educational, and economic disparities between Ethiopian Israelis and the general population. Those gaps were notable--according to the newspaper *Haaretz--TheMarker*, 52 percent of Ethiopian-Israeli families, including 65 percent of Ethiopian Israeli children, lived below the poverty line, and Ethiopian Israelis registered for welfare at a rate double that of the general population. From 2008-13 the government ran an extended five-year plan "to improve the absorption of Ethiopian Jews," although a 2013 report by the state comptroller said the plan's lack of coordination among government offices inhibited its success. One program operated by the Ministry of Welfare supported Ethiopian integration into the workforce, with education and social support for families and a budget of NIS three million (\$770,000); the

ministry's total budget was expected to reach six billion shekels (\$1.5 billion) for the year.

Isolated reports of discrimination by Ashkenazi Jews of European descent against Sephardic (Mizrachi) Jews of Middle Eastern heritage continued. Organizations representing Mizrachi Jews from various Middle Eastern countries claimed that government negligence in pursuing reparations for property losses for Jews from Arab countries and Iran had exacerbated social stratification along ethnic lines since the establishment of the state and during subsequent waves of (sometimes forced) immigration. Legislation dating to 2010 mandates any peace negotiation in which the country engages will preserve the rights to compensation of Jewish refugees from Arab countries and Iran.

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

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the government generally enforced these laws, although discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity persisted in some parts of society. Oded Frid, executive director of the Aguda, the Israeli national LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex) task force in Tel Aviv, and staff at the Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance, a leading LGBTI organization, said most of the LGBTI community's gains came through the courts, and not through legislation.

In June the National Labor Court issued a decision confirming that the Equal Employment Opportunities Law should prohibit discrimination based on gender identity.

An LGBTI violence-prevention center and hotline reported it received 250 reports of violence and discrimination between August 2013 and August 2014.

In November the Jerusalem District Court upheld a transgender woman's request, stated in her will, to have her remains cremated following her suicide. Cremation is forbidden according to Jewish law, and the woman's ultra-Orthodox family appealed the decision to the Supreme Court, claiming the woman was mentally unstable when she made the decision.

Transgender individuals who wanted sex-reassignment surgery encountered difficulty securing it. On May 5, *Haaretz* reported that a health maintenance organization refused to pay for two transgender individuals' sex-change surgeries.

In March 2014 the Ministry of Health's director general issued a directive stating that sex-reassignment surgery was included in the list of government-subsidized health services provided to all citizens. In spite of this judgment, the patients in question received conflicting information from health-care providers, resulting in significant personal expenses.

On July 30, an ultra-Orthodox Haredi man stabbed six persons at the Jerusalem March for Pride and Tolerance (see section 1.a.). One victim subsequently died from her injuries.

UNHCR expressed continuing concerns for West Bank residents who claimed to be in a life-threatening situation due to their sexual orientation and who requested legal residency status in Israel. There is no mechanism for granting such persons legal status, leaving those who cannot return to the West Bank due to fear of persecution and vulnerability to human traffickers, violence, and exploitation. In 2013 the government established an interministerial team to examine the problem, and the Aguda and the Aid Organization for Refugees, an NGO serving asylum seekers, formed a partnership to work on this problem.

There were reports of discrimination in the workplace against LGBTI persons, despite laws prohibiting such discrimination (see section 7.d.). A study by the LGBTI task force found that employers discriminated against approximately 80 percent of transgender persons, 50 percent of lesbians, and 20 percent of gay men in the hiring process or terminated them once they discovered the employees' sexual orientation or gender identity.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

Individuals and militant or terrorist groups attacked civilians, including 13 stabbing or shooting attacks characterized by authorities as terror attacks by Palestinians, Arab citizens of Israel, and Jewish Israelis. For example, on January 21, Palestinian Hamza Matrouk stabbed and injured 12 Israelis on a public bus in central Tel Aviv. Authorities apprehended him, and on July 20, a Tel Aviv court sentenced him to 28 years in prison.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law protects the right of workers to form and join independent unions, strike, earn the minimum wage and overtime, and bargain collectively. The law specifically prohibits antiunion discrimination. A labor court has discretionary authority to order the reinstatement of a worker fired for union activity. The government respected these rights.

Court rulings and union regulations forbid simultaneous membership in more than one trade union. Members of the General Federation of Labor in Israel (Histadrut) who pay affiliation fees may be elected to the union's leadership bodies regardless of ethnicity, religion, or gender.

Authorities generally respected workers' rights to free association and collective bargaining for citizens, although foreign workers often faced difficulties exercising these rights. Worker organizations were independent of the government and political parties.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

While the law prohibits forced or compulsory labor and criminalizes labor exploitation, the government did not effectively enforce laws concerning minimum employment conditions for foreign workers. Labor laws enacted in 2012 increased penalties for forced labor to NIS 35,000 (\$8,970) and helped investigation procedures.

According to government statistics, there were approximately 75,000 legal foreign workers in the country and almost 15,000 illegal foreign workers. Some workers, particularly foreign workers, experienced conditions of forced labor, including the unlawful withholding of passports, restrictions on freedom of movement, limited ability to change or otherwise choose employers, nonpayment of wages, exceedingly long working hours, threats, sexual assault, and physical intimidation. Foreign agricultural workers, construction workers, and nursing care workers--particularly women--were among the most vulnerable to conditions of forced labor, including in particular nonpayment or withholding of wages.

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

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law provides for the protection of children from exploitation in the workplace and prohibits forced or compulsory labor. Children age 14 and older may be employed during official school holidays in light work that does not harm their health. Children age 15 and older who have completed education through grade nine may be employed as apprentices. Regulations restrict working hours for youths between ages 16 and 18 in all sectors.

The government generally enforced these laws and conducted year-round inspections to identify cases of underage employment, with special emphasis on summer and school vacation periods. During 2014 a number of sanctions were imposed against employers for child labor infractions: authorities issued administrative warnings to 402 employers and levied administrative fines on 18 employers, amounting to NIS 1,414,720 (\$362,749). Additionally, authorities filed five criminal indictments and imposed 65 criminal fines on some of these employers. Employers employed youth mainly in the food-catering sector and the entertainment and hospitality sectors.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The Equal Employment Opportunities Law prohibits an employer from discriminating against employees, contractors, or persons seeking employment on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, personal status, age, race, religion, nationality, country of origin, opinion, political affiliation, and army reserve service. Regulations also prohibit discrimination with regard to working conditions, promotion, professional training, dismissal or severance payments, and retirement benefits or payments.

The law charges the Commission for Equal Employment Opportunities with the implementation and civil enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunities Law. The 26-member commission includes one member each from organizations that promote employment rights for Arab Muslims, Arab Christians, Druze, Circassians, Haredim, immigrants, elderly persons, women, and army veterans. Additionally, the commission must have adequate representation of citizens of Ethiopian descent and persons with disabilities. The government provided no details regarding violations of the law or enforcement activities (see sections 7.b. and 7.e. for treatment of migrant workers).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The minimum wage is set annually on April 1 to equal 47.5 percent of the average income. The national minimum wage was NIS 25 (\$6.41) per hour and was slightly less for youths under age 18, who earned between 70 and 83 percent of the minimum wage. In 2014 authorities opened 844 investigations against employers for violating the minimum wage law on the basis of 350 complaints. As a result of these investigations, authorities issued 767 administrative warnings and imposed 53 financial penalties, totaling NIS 2,641,300 (\$677,260). The law allows a maximum 43-hour workweek at regular pay and provides for paid annual holidays. Premium pay for overtime is set at 125 percent for the first two hours and 150 percent for any hour thereafter up to a limit of 15 hours of overtime per week. In 2013 the Supreme Court ruled that labor law provisions for overtime pay do not apply to migrant workers who work as live-in caregivers for ill or elderly Israelis. An NGO reported the average salary of an Arab man was 43 percent lower than that of a Jewish man, and the salary of an Arab woman was 21 percent less than that of a Jewish woman. According to the government, the poverty income level for 2014 was a monthly income of less than NIS 3,077 (\$789) for individuals, NIS 4,923 (\$1,262) for couples, and NIS 9,230 (\$2,390) for a family of five, respectively.

The Labor Inspection Service, along with union representatives, enforced labor, health, and safety standards in the workplace, although resource constraints limited enforcement capacity. These standards were generally current and appropriate. By law, workers may remove themselves from situations that endanger their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, and the government protected this right. There was little information about protection and enforcement standards in the informal economy.

According to some NGOs, the country failed to enforce its labor laws fully with respect to minimum working conditions for foreign workers, and existing penalties were not sufficient to deter violations. Many foreign workers earned significantly less than the minimum wage. There were numerous documented cases of foreign laborers living in harsh conditions and subjected to debt bondage, but authorities prosecuted few employers.

The country had bilateral work agreements with Bulgaria, Moldova, and Romania to regulate recruitment fees of migrant workers in the construction sector, and it had an agreement with Thailand to regulate recruitment fees for migrant workers in the agricultural sector. The entire recruitment process of foreign workers in these industries was coordinated solely through government offices, which resulted in a

steep decline in recruitment fees paid by migrant workers in the construction and agricultural sectors.

The agreements provide for migrant workers to have information on their labor rights as well as a translated copy of their labor contract before they arrive in the country. As a result of greater awareness of their legal rights and their reduced recruitment debt, more workers were willing to report labor violations to NGOs or to quit their jobs and return home than prior to the agreements. The government created and helped fund a hotline for migrant workers to report violations. In 2014 the Hotline received 1,372 complaints from agricultural and construction workers. Government enforcement bodies investigated all of these complaints.

Research by NGOs into the living and working conditions of foreign construction and agriculture workers continued to reveal violations of their rights. In 2014 the government issued 36 administrative warnings and one financial penalty totaling NIS 35,070 (\$8,992) against construction-sector employers following complaints by foreign workers of labor violations.

Labor violations by employers in the agricultural sector also remained widespread. A 2014 investigation by HRW of 1,010 separate groups of Thai workers in different farming communities found that in all but one employers housed Thai workers in makeshift and inadequate accommodations, and in all communities employers subjected the workers to illegally low wages and longer work hours than lawfully prescribed. In 2014 the government issued 337 administrative warnings and 36 financial penalties amounting to NIS 2,024,450 (\$519,090) against agricultural-sector employers following complaints by foreign workers of labor violations. The breadth of violations by employers and the lack of penalties imposed by the government suggested enforcement of labor laws in these industries was far from adequate despite the bilateral agreements. HRW attributed the government's failure to enforce its own labor laws for Thai migrant workers to a combination of factors: an unnecessary division of regulatory responsibilities, insufficiently resourced enforcement units, failure to complement a reactive complaints mechanism with a proactive regime of random inspections, and failure to impose material sanctions, which the law provides on employers and manpower agents. The number of labor inspectors was not sufficient to enforce the law effectively.

Some employers in the agricultural sector circumvented the bilateral agreement with Thailand by recruiting students from poor countries to take part in agricultural study programs on student visas and then forcing them to work in the agriculture

industry once they arrived in the country. Employers required participants to pay high fees to participate in what they believed were study programs, but authorities did not supervise their working or living conditions since they lacked work permits and were ostensibly in the country for study. A local NGO estimated there were between 4,000 and 5,500 agricultural workers employed in this manner as of August.

In August the country signed a bilateral agreement with Nepal to regulate recruitment to the home-care sector. Since then, employers recruited 50 Nepalese workers under the agreement, which was the first of its kind in the home-care sector. Abuse in the recruitment of home-care workers remained widespread and included excessive recruitment fees and false descriptions of the terms of employment contracts. Live-in arrangements and lack of legal protections and inspections led to many cases of exploitative working conditions for female migrant workers. Local NGOs filed hundreds of complaints on behalf of foreign caregivers, including allegations of underpayment of wages, physical violence, sexual harassment, and unsuitable employment conditions.

THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES 2015 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

(INCLUDING AREAS SUBJECT TO THE JURISDICTION OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Palestinian Authority (PA), according to PA basic law, has an elected president and legislative council. The PA exercised varying degrees of authority in restricted areas of the West Bank due to the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) continuing presence, and none over Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem due to Israel's extension of Israeli law and authority to East Jerusalem in 1967 and an Israeli prohibition on any PA activity anywhere in Jerusalem. The PA only maintains civil and security control in Area A of the West Bank. The PA has only civil control of Area B and joint security control with Israel. The PA has no authority over Israeli residents of the West Bank, Palestinian residents in Area C of the West Bank (over which Israel has security and civil control), or over Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. Although PA laws apply in the Gaza Strip, the PA had little authority in the Gaza Strip, where Hamas exercises de facto control. The PA head of government is Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah. President Mahmoud Abbas, in office since elected to a four-year term in 2005, is also chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and general commander of Fatah. In the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, candidates backed by Hamas won 74 of 132 seats in elections that generally met democratic standards; however, the PLC has not functioned since 2007. In 2007 Hamas staged a violent takeover of PA government installations in the Gaza Strip and has since maintained a de facto government in the territory. Both PA and Israeli civilian authorities maintained effective control over their security forces. Hamas maintained control of security forces in the Gaza Strip.

The most significant human rights abuses were restrictions on civil liberties, particularly by Hamas in Gaza; excessive use of force by Israeli Security Forces (ISF) in a number of their interactions with Palestinian civilians, and arbitrary arrest and associated torture and abuse, often with impunity by multiple actors in the region. Residents of the occupied territories had limited ability to hold governing authorities accountable for such abuses.

Human rights problems in the parts of the West Bank under PA control included abuse and mistreatment of detainees, poor and overcrowded detention facilities, prolonged detention, and infringements on privacy rights. Restrictions on freedom

of speech, press, and assembly continued. There were limits on freedom of association and movement. Corruption, violence against women, and societal discrimination were serious problems. At times, the PA failed to condemn incidents of anti-Semitic expression and embraced as “martyrs” individuals who died while carrying out attacks on Israeli civilians. Abuse of children and discrimination against persons with disabilities also were serious problems. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and HIV/AIDS status persisted. There were some limits on worker rights, and there was forced labor. Child labor, including forced labor, remained a serious problem.

Human rights abuses under Hamas included security forces killing, torturing, arbitrarily detaining, and harassing opponents, including Fatah members, and other Palestinians with impunity. Terrorist organizations and militant factions in the Gaza Strip launched rocket and mortar attacks against civilian targets in Israel, and they did so at or near civilian locations in Gaza. Gaza-based civil rights organizations reported authorities held prisoners in poor conditions in detention facilities in the Gaza Strip, and Hamas publicly executed a number of persons without trial. Hamas also infringed on privacy rights. Hamas restricted the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement of Gaza Strip residents. Discrimination against women and domestic violence were serious problems. Abuse of children and discrimination against persons with disabilities were problems. Hamas frequently promoted anti-Semitism. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and HIV/AIDS status persisted. Restrictions on worker rights continued. Forced labor, including by children, occurred.

Israeli forces killed 149 Palestinians, 77 of whom were attempting to attack Israelis. In a number of these incidents, there were reports of human rights abuses related to actions by Israeli authorities. In addition there were reports of abuse of Palestinian detainees, including children, particularly during arrest and interrogation; austere and overcrowded detention facilities; improper security detention procedures; demolition and confiscation of Palestinian property; limitations on freedom of expression, assembly, and association; and severe restrictions on Palestinians’ internal and external freedom of movement. Violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians continued to be a problem, as did only limited punishment of these acts by Israeli authorities. The IDF and the Egyptian government maintained severe restrictions on movement into and out of the Gaza Strip and largely limited the travel of Palestinians out of Gaza to humanitarian cases and some business travelers.

The PA and Israeli authorities took steps to address impunity or reduce abuses, but there were criticisms they did not adequately pursue investigations and disciplinary actions related to violations. Impunity was a major problem under Hamas.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports that PA security services committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

Palestinian terrorist groups and unaffiliated individuals committed unlawful killings of Israeli civilians and security forces in both Israel and the West Bank. On April 25, a Palestinian stabbed and seriously injured an Israeli border guard in Hebron. Israeli border guards shot and killed the perpetrator.

On June 19, Palestinians shot and killed an Israeli settler and injured another near the West Bank settlement of Dolev. The ISF apprehended the alleged killer, a 30-year-old resident of the Qalandiya Refugee Camp, with four other suspects on July 15.

During a wave of violence that began in early October and continued through year's end, there were many attacks in the West bank by Palestinians against Israeli civilians and security force personnel. On October 1, Hamas militants shot and killed two Israeli civilians, who were driving in their car near the West Bank settlement of Itamar. The ISF subsequently arrested five Palestinians from Nablus affiliated with Hamas in connection with the attack. On November 4, a Palestinian drove his car into and killed an Israeli border police officer and injured at least two other border police officers near Halhoul junction in the Hebron area. The ISF shot and killed the attacker. On November 13, an assailant shot and killed two Israelis and injured at least five others, including children, while the victims were driving near the West Bank settlement of Otniel in the Hebron area. The ISF took a suspect into custody.

There were also attacks on civilians and security force members in Jerusalem throughout the year. On January 8, an unknown assailant stabbed and injured an Israeli man near the Old City's Damascus Gate. On June 21, a Palestinian stabbed and seriously wounded one Israeli border guard and slightly injured another outside the Damascus Gate. Police shot and injured the attacker and placed him in administrative detention. There were multiple attacks by Palestinians on Israelis in

October. For example, on October 3, a Palestinian stabbed and killed two Israelis and injured two others, including a two-year-old boy, in Jerusalem's Old City. Israeli National Police shot and killed the attacker.

There were numerous acts of violence including killings involving Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank (see section 6). For example, on July 31, Israeli settlers threw Molotov cocktails into a home in Douma village, killing an 18-month-old infant and his parents. Another child remained in critical care at year's end. The government arrested suspects in connection with this attack.

During the week of September 8, there were four settler attacks on Palestinians that led to injury or damage to property, including assault on a seven-year-old boy standing on Huwwara main road (Nablus); injury of six Palestinians in Nablus Governorate caused by stones thrown at their vehicles near Duma and Deir Sharaf; and an arson attack on Palestinian-owned agricultural land near Burin (Nablus).

According to local media, Hamas unlawfully executed at least one person in the Gaza Strip for allegedly collaborating with Israel. By law the PA president must ratify each death penalty sentence, but Hamas did not contact the PA regarding this execution due to Hamas' de facto control over the Gaza Strip and disregard for most PA officials. In April, Amnesty International (AI) released a report entitled "*Strangling Necks*": *Abduction, Torture and Summary Killings of Palestinians by Hamas Forces during the 2014 Gaza/Israel Conflict* that alleged that Hamas subjected at least 23 persons to summary extrajudicial executions during the summer 2014 conflict in Gaza.

During the year Israeli forces killed 149 Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem. In some instances there were reports of possible ISF use of excessive force against Palestinian civilians, mostly in the context of the ISF and violent demonstrators coming into contact, and the ISF using live fire and rubber-coated steel bullets. According to the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCI-Palestine), some of those killed in the West Bank and Jerusalem were minors.

From January 1 through October 1, the ISF killed 22 Palestinian civilians during clashes. On July 3, a senior Israeli military officer shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian boy near Qalandiya checkpoint (Jerusalem). According to media reports, the Israeli military claimed that the officer shot the boy while the boy threw rocks at the officer's vehicle. Palestinian sources, however, claimed that security officials shot the boy when he attempted to climb the separation barrier to

reach Jerusalem. On July 23, Israeli soldiers shot and killed Falah Abu Maria in the West Bank Governorate of Ramallah during an arrest raid on his home when he was not the target of the raid.

During the wave of violence from October 1 through year's end, the ISF killed an additional 127 Palestinian civilians, including 77 who were reportedly carrying out or attempting attacks against Israeli civilians or security forces during an uptick in violence between Palestinians and the ISF.

NGOs published multiple reports alleging that Israeli security forces committed unlawful killings. On October 27, AI released a report alleging that Israeli forces carried out a series of unlawful killings of Palestinians using intentional lethal force without justification. AI reported that it had documented at least four incidents in which Israeli forces deliberately shot and killed Palestinians when they posed no imminent threat to life. For example, in one incident in September, the ISF shot and fatally wounded 18-year-old Hadeel al-Hashlamoun after they stopped her at a checkpoint in the Old City in Hebron. According to AI, pictures of the standoff that led to her death and accounts by eyewitnesses that AI interviewed showed that she at no time posed a sufficient threat to the soldiers to justify their use of deliberate lethal force. In November, the ISF shot and killed 28-year-old Abdullah Shalaldah at al-Ahli Hospital in Hebron after they entered the hospital room of his cousin, Azzam Shalaldah, whom security forces intended to arrest on suspicion of stabbing an Israeli on October 15. While the IDF released a statement that Abdullah Shalaldah tried to attack them, witnesses reported to AI that he was unarmed, was standing some distance away, and had not attempted to attack them.

On November 25, the local NGO B'Tselem published the text of a letter it sent to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu demanding a cessation of the use of lethal force against people who either harmed, tried to harm, or were suspected of trying to harm others, once they no longer posed any danger.

In March 2014 Israeli soldiers shot and killed Raed Alaa a-Din Nafea Zeiter, a Palestinian and Jordanian citizen and judge, at the Israeli-controlled Allenby Bridge crossing to Jordan after he argued with a soldier and shoved him. Eyewitness accounts differed regarding the circumstances surrounding the incident. Authorities announced an investigation but reported no progress by year's end.

There were numerous reports of the ISF killing Palestinians during riots, demonstrations, at checkpoints, and during routine operations; in some cases they did not pose a threat to life. In June B'Tselem accused the IDF of excessive use of live fire as a crowd-control measure during Palestinian demonstrations in the West Bank.

In December 2014 Ziyad Abu Ein, a former PA deputy minister, died of a heart attack after reportedly being beaten by Israeli security forces and inhaling tear gas at a demonstration. On January 6, an internal IDF investigation cleared Israeli security officers of any wrongdoing in Abu Ein's death.

In March, the ISF shot and injured 11-year-old Muhammad Hamad in the stomach during a weekly protest march in the West Bank village of Silwad.

In July, the ISF shot and killed 17-year-old Muhammad Sami Ali Kusbah in al-Ram. ISF Binyamin Brigade commander shot him multiple times as he fled, after the boy threw a large rock at the windshield of the brigade commander's military vehicle.

The Military Advocate General (MAG) and Fact-Finding Mechanism headed by Major General Noam Tibon continued to investigate incidents that occurred during hostilities between Israel and Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza in 2014. As of June 11, of 224 cases, the MAG opened 15 criminal cases against Israeli personnel, including one against a senior commander. The MAG stated it continued to receive and consider complaints dating to the hostilities of July and August 2014, with each complaint receiving an initial examination to determine its credibility and nature.

NGOs continued to accuse Israel of using disproportionate force and indiscriminate fire to counter the threat posed by rockets launched from the Gaza Strip, resulting in unnecessary and excessive civilian casualties.

In January B'Tselem released a report entitled *Black Flag: The Legal and Moral Implications of the Policy of Attacking Residential Buildings in the Gaza Strip, Summer 2014* and concluded that the IDF took a broad definition of what constitutes a "military objective," targeting buildings without specific information about the effective contribution they made to military action and the clear advantage gained by destroying them; that IDF violated the "principle of proportionality"; and that, despite touting of its process of warning residents with

phone calls, leaflets, and “knocks on the roof” that they were in imminent danger, these warnings were ineffective in many instances.

Also in January Physicians for Human Rights released a report entitled *No Safe Place* on the impact of hostilities in Gaza in 2014 on the medical infrastructure there. The report asserted that attacks were characterized by heavy and unpredictable bombardments of civilian neighborhoods in a manner that failed to discriminate between legitimate targets and protected populations and caused widespread destruction of homes and civilian property. The report concluded the attacks were unlikely to have been the result of decisions made by individual soldiers or commanders. The report alleged that Israeli warning mechanisms were inadequate and that Israeli forces failed to take the requisite precautions that would effectively enable the safe evacuation of the civilian population, including provision of safe spaces and routes. The report also concluded that authorities often denied coordination of medical evacuation and that there were many reported attacks on medical teams and facilities.

In April DCI-Palestine reported that it had verified the deaths of 547 Palestinian children among those killed in Gaza, 535 of them as a direct result of Israeli attacks during the conflict in Gaza. DCI-Palestine reported that nearly 68 percent of the children killed by Israeli forces were 12 years old or younger. DCI-Palestine alleged that it had found overwhelming and repeated evidence that Israeli forces committed grave violations against children amounting to war crimes. This action included direct targeting of children by Israeli drone-fired missiles and attacks on schools.

The Israeli government periodically launched strikes into the Gaza Strip against specific targets and in response to militant groups’ rockets fired into Israel. IDF ground forces, tanks, ships, aircraft, and remote-controlled weapons fired on Palestinians inside the Gaza Strip. According to B’Tselem these attacks killed Palestinians participating in hostilities, Palestinians not participating in hostilities, and ^{some} Palestinians who were the objects of targeted killing.

There were also multiple reports of Israeli forces killing Palestinians in restricted areas in the Gaza Strip. For example, on October 10, Israeli security forces fired on Palestinian demonstrators approaching the border fence killing seven and injuring 60 others. Israel repeatedly warned Palestinians they were at risk of being shot if they entered a “buffer zone” which extends 328 yards into Gaza territory from the border fence. Israeli forces, however, reportedly regularly enforced the “buffer zone” by firing toward Palestinians approaching at distances further from

the fence. According to Palestinian human rights organizations, attacks on civilians took place up to 1,640 yards inside the border fence. If the “buffer zone” extended this far, it would constitute approximately 17 percent of the total territory of the Gaza Strip.

b. Disappearance

In the West Bank, there were no reports of politically motivated disappearances. In the Gaza Strip, Hamas security operatives carried out extrajudicial detentions based on political affiliation. Information concerning the whereabouts and welfare of those detained was not consistently or reliably available, and Hamas denied many of those detained due process or access to family and legal counsel. There were reports of disappearances of Israeli citizens who crossed into Gaza and reportedly were apprehended by Hamas.

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

The PA basic law prohibits torture or use of force against detainees; however, international human rights groups reported that torture and abuse remained a problem. Despite the commitment by President Abbas to investigate reports of torture in the 2012 Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) report, the PA Ministry of Interior took no action during the year.

Palestinian detainees held by PA security forces registered complaints of abuse and torture with the ICHR. Reported abuses by PA authorities in the West Bank included forcing prisoners, including persons accused of affiliation with Hamas, to sit in a painful position for long periods; beating; punching; flogging; intimidation; and psychological pressure. Independent observers noted that abuse was not systematic or routinely practiced in PA prisons, although some prisoners experienced abuse during arrest or interrogation. The PA Corrections and Rehabilitation Centers Department, under the authority of the Ministry of Interior, continued to maintain a mechanism for reviewing complaints of prisoner abuse in civil prisons but reported no cases of inmate abuse by its staff.

Detainees held by Hamas filed claims of torture and abuse with the ICHR. Other human rights organizations reported that Hamas internal security, the drug unit of the “civil police force,” and “police” detectives tortured detainees. AI reported that in the Gaza Strip, security elements under the Hamas de facto Ministry of Interior tortured and abused security detainees, persons associated with the PA or

the Fatah political party, those held on suspicion of collaboration with Israel, civil society activists, journalists, and those who reportedly engaged in “immoral” activity. Hamas also reportedly employed undercover officers to assault such persons. Palestinian human rights organizations, including the ICHR, contended that torture methods during detention included beating of hands and legs, as well as the use of sticks, insults, humiliation, and sleep deprivation.

Hamas reportedly took little or no action to investigate reports of torture, and reports and documentation of abuses were limited, due to victims’ fear of retribution and lack of access to Gaza Strip prisoners’ rights NGOs or PA officials.

Human rights organizations such as the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), DCI-Palestine, and Military Court Watch (MCW) reported that “physical interrogation methods” permitted by Israeli law and used by Israeli security personnel could amount to torture. The methods included beatings, forcing an individual to hold a stress position for long periods, and painful pressure from shackles or restraints applied to the forearms. Israeli officials stated they did not use techniques that could amount to torture. Israeli and Palestinian NGOs continued to criticize these and other Israeli detention practices they termed abusive, including isolation, sleep deprivation, and psychological abuse, such as threats to interrogate spouses, siblings, or elderly parents or to demolish family homes.

Israeli authorities reportedly used similar tactics on Palestinian minors. DCI-Palestine, Breaking the Silence, and other human rights NGOs claimed Israeli security services continued to abuse, and in some cases torture, to coerce confessions from minors whom they frequently arrested on suspicion of stone throwing. Tactics included beatings, long-term handcuffing, threats, intimidation, and solitary confinement. In September MCW released a *Briefing Note*, covering the period from January to August, which reported that 90 percent of Palestinian children arrested by the IDF were hand-tied, 81 percent were blindfolded, 61 percent were subjected to physical abuse, and 96 percent were denied access to a lawyer prior to questioning. According to MCW for the first five months of the year, the ISF detained per month an average of 167 Palestinian children between the ages 14 and 17.

In July 2014 a video allegedly identified Israeli border police beating 14-year-old Tariq Abu Khdeir while he was handcuffed and possibly unconscious. The court sentenced the border police officer identified as being responsible for the beating to six weeks of community service as punishment in November,

but authorities did not charge a second officer implicated in the beating with any offense.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

The PA Ministry of Health reported prisoners in PA facilities, including in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, suffered from extremely bad conditions.

Prison conditions in the Gaza Strip were reportedly poor, although little information was available.

IDF detention centers for security detainees were less likely than Israeli civilian prisons to meet international standards.

Physical Conditions: Most PA prisons continued to be crowded and lacked ventilation, heating, cooling, and lighting systems conforming to international standards. Most prisons lacked sufficient space for programming, recreation, and medical-care services. Authorities reported no deaths in PA prisons from adverse conditions. Authorities at times held male juveniles with adult male prisoners. Security services used separate detention facilities. Conditions for women were virtually identical to those for men; however, some detention centers for women had limited outdoor recreation space.

Conditions in detention facilities in the Gaza Strip were reportedly below international standards. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that prisoners in Gaza lacked potable water, food, and other basic necessities.

Some Israeli government facilities, such as the Ofer Detention Center, provided living space as small as 15 square feet per detainee. In 2013 B'Tselem reported that since 2009, 64 Palestinian minors had reported “extreme violence,” including sexual assault, by authorities in the Israeli police station in the settlement of Gush Etzion. B'Tselem called for an end to violent interrogations and a thorough investigation of what it described as a “systemic” problem. NGOs stated that authorities appeared to use poor conditions as an interrogation or intimidation method. Prisoners also continued to claim inadequate medical care.

According to NGO sources, Israeli government authorities held 6,967 Palestinians in Israeli prisons at the end of December, 6,066 of whom were Palestinian security prisoners or detainees, and the remainder were Palestinians who entered Israel illegally. B'Tselem reported that at the end of December, Israel held 422 minors in

Israeli prisons as security prisoners or detainees and 10 others who had entered Israel illegally. Twenty-five of the minors were between the ages of 12 and 15.

PCATI, DCI-Palestine, and Breaking the Silence noted that most reports of abuse or poor conditions occurred during arrest and interrogation, generally within the first 48 hours following arrest.

Administration: Recordkeeping by PA authorities in the West Bank was adequate, with the Corrections and Rehabilitation Centers Department storing information on computers, but records were not publicly available. By law any person sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not more than three months may petition the PA public prosecutor to put him to work outside the prison instead of carrying out the sentence of imprisonment, unless the judgment deprives him of that option. Although the law allows for this option, the legal system did not have the capacity to implement such a process. Although ombudsmen cannot serve on behalf of prisoners, the ICHR played an ombudsman role. The PA investigated allegations of mistreatment.

Little information was available about prison administration in the Gaza Strip.

Recordkeeping by Israeli authorities in the West Bank was often only in Hebrew and, therefore, inaccessible to the Palestinian public. There were no reports of improvements in recordkeeping. There was an ombudsman. Detainees under Israeli control could have visitors. Human rights groups reported families of imprisoned Palestinians, particularly Gazans, had only limited ability to visit prisoners.

NGOs claimed there was a systematic failure to investigate abuse claims. In 2013 PCATI reported that, despite more than 776 complaints it filed since 1999, no torture complaint resulted in a criminal investigation, prosecution, or conviction. This circumstance remained a pattern during the year. PCATI reported that the government regularly dismissed complaints of abuse following a primary examination by an Israeli Security Agency (ISA) employee. NGOs reported that investigations into IDF and police abuse were slow and ineffective; they rarely led to prosecutions. ISA facilities were exempt from regular independent inspections.

Independent Monitoring: The PA generally permitted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to detainees and allowed regular inspections of prison conditions in accordance with the ICRC's standard modalities. Preliminary unpublished accounts by human rights groups, humanitarian organizations, and

lawyers indicated that, as in previous years, there were some difficulties in gaining access to specific detainees, depending on which security organization managed the facility.

The ICRC conducted monitoring visits to some prisoners in the Gaza Strip, but Hamas authorities denied its representatives permission to visit high-profile detainees and prisoners.

The Israeli government permitted visits by independent human rights observers. The government permitted the ICRC to monitor prison conditions in accordance with its standard modalities. NGOs sent representatives to meet with prisoners and inspect conditions in prisons, detention centers, and IDF facilities, except ISA detention and interrogation facilities, since security prisoners and facilities remained inaccessible to independent monitors. Human rights groups reported delays and difficulties in gaining access to specific detainees and frequent transfers of detainees without notice.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

Palestinian law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and PA prosecutors generally charged suspects promptly as a requirement to detain them. The PA criminal justice system, however, often did not lead to a prompt and speedy trial. Hamas also alleged that the PA repeatedly detained individuals during the year based solely on their Hamas affiliation, especially during high-profile security sweeps.

Hamas reportedly practiced widespread arbitrary detention in the Gaza Strip, particularly of Fatah members, civil society activists, and others accused of publicly criticizing Hamas.

Israeli law provides safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, but key safeguards do not apply to Palestinian security detainees. Israeli military law subjects Palestinian security detainees to its jurisdiction, which permits eight days' detention prior to appearing before a military court. There is no requirement that a detainee have access to a lawyer until after interrogation, a process that may last weeks. The maximum period for such a detention order, according to military law, is 90 days; however, if deemed necessary by Israeli security forces, authorities can renew detention multiple times. Denial of visits by family, outside medical professionals, or others outside the ISA, the IDF, or the prison service occurred. NGOs reported authorities often held persons undergoing interrogations

incommunicado for several weeks. The Israeli government denied such allegations.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

In West Bank Palestinian population centers, mostly Area A as defined by the Oslo-era agreements, containing 55 percent of the Palestinian population on approximately 18 percent of West Bank land area, the PA has formal responsibility for security and civil control. Since 2002, however, following the outbreak of the Second Intifada, Israeli security forces have regularly conducted security operations in Area A cities, often without coordinating with PA security forces. In Area B territory in the West Bank, which contained 41 percent of the population on approximately 21 percent of the territory, mostly small Palestinian villages and farmland, the PA has civil control, but Israel and the PA maintain joint security control. In Area C, which contains Israeli settlements, military installations, and 4 percent of the Palestinian population in small villages, farmland, and open countryside on approximately 61 percent of the land area, Israel retains full civil and security control.

Six PA security forces operated in the West Bank. Many of the security forces are under the PA Ministry of Interior operational control and follow the prime minister's guidance. The Palestinian Civil Police have primary responsibility for civil and community policing. The National Security Force conducts gendarmerie-style security operations in circumstances that exceed the capabilities of the civil police. The Military Intelligence Agency handles intelligence and criminal matters involving PA security force personnel, including accusations of abuse. The Military Intelligence Agency is responsible for investigations into allegations of abuse and corruption involving PA security forces and can refer cases to court. The General Intelligence Service is responsible for external intelligence gathering and operations; the Preventive Security Organization is responsible for both internal intelligence gathering and investigations related to internal security cases (for example, antiterrorism, weapons violations, and money laundering). The Presidential Guard protects facilities and provides dignitary protection. Generally, Palestinian security forces continued to demonstrate professional performance levels, especially while maintaining order during demonstrations on days of national significance to Palestinians, such as the "Nakba" and "Naksa" days, and throughout the period of heightened tensions and demonstrations in the last quarter of the year. The ICHR continued to report accusations of abuse and torture at the hands of the security forces to the PA.

The PA took significant steps to bring women into police forces in the West Bank to allow police work to cross societal gender barriers. Of 8,020 police officers in the PA Civil Police, 315 were women. Women on the PA police force can search under women's clothing for contraband. In March 2014 the PA Presidential Guard established the Female Special Security Detachment, the first operational element for women in the PA security forces.

The PA continued efforts to prevent security-sector courts from trying civilians. There were some NGO reports, however, of unverified incidents of military courts trying civilians, which they noted made it unclear whether security agencies, rather than the civil police, continued to detain civilians, including journalists.

The PA maintained effective control over the security forces and has mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. On September 18, Palestinian Civil Police and National Security Forces personnel were filmed beating a Palestinian protester while preventing a group of demonstrators from reaching an Israeli checkpoint in the Bethlehem area. The PA conducted an investigation, and the trial phase continued at year's end.

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas forces exercised de facto control. Press and NGO reports suggested Hamas enforced strict control across all sectors of society. Impunity remained a problem in the Gaza Strip. HRW noted that the internal security services in the Gaza Strip prohibited them from visiting detention centers. There were numerous instances when Hamas failed to deter violence, such as rocket attacks into Israel.

Israeli authorities maintained their West Bank security presence through the IDF, ISA, Israeli National Police (INP), and border police. Israeli authorities took some steps to investigate and punish abuse and corruption, but there were reports of failure to take disciplinary action in cases of abuse (see section 1.a.). The IDF continued to open investigations automatically of claims of abuse in military police custody. NGOs stated that automatic investigations applied only to military activity in the West Bank, not to individuals reporting abuse in custody. NGOs reported that impunity among Israeli security forces remained a problem, in part because mechanisms for investigating allegations were not effective. Reports of abuse go to the Attorney General's Office; in 2013 PCATI reported that authorities systematically disregarded abuse allegations.

According to B'Tselem in 2011 Israel began investigating every case in which the IDF killed civilians in the West Bank not taking part in hostilities. According to

B'Tselem, in the first four months of the year, the IDF opened investigations into six incidents and closed multiple cases. Israeli law restricts the ability of Palestinians harmed by the acts of Israeli security forces to seek compensation in Israeli courts.

NGOs criticized Israeli accountability processes and efforts to investigate reports of killing of civilians. For example, nearly three years after Israeli security forces shot and killed 16-year-old Samir Awad in the village of Budrus, the court had not indicted either of the two soldiers involved in the killing. The ISF shot and injured Awad while he was reportedly between fences and was trying to flee. The military said he intended to throw stones at the soldiers. On November 8, Israel's High Court of Justice ruled that the State Attorney's Office must file indictments against two soldiers involved in the killing by the end of December. On December 30, the State Attorney's Office filed an indictment on charges of reckless and negligent use of a firearm.

During the year Israeli officials made no response to reports that AI, B'Tselem, and Yesh Din published in 2014 regarding Israeli soldiers using excessive force and noting structural flaws that precluded professional investigations.

According to Israeli and Palestinian NGO and press reports, the IDF and INP did not respond sufficiently to violence perpetrated against Palestinians by Israeli settlers in the West Bank. The number of settler attacks against Palestinians decreased compared with 2014, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA identified 214 incidents of settler violence as of December 2 (compared with 324 incidents in 2014) that resulted in Palestinian injuries or property damage. The Israeli NGO Yesh Din reported that authorities closed 85 percent of investigative files due to the police investigators' failure to locate suspects or find sufficient evidence to enable an indictment.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) stated Israeli security and justice officials operating in predominantly Palestinian East Jerusalem displayed bias against Palestinian residents in investigating incidents involving Palestinian and Israeli actors. In several cases Palestinian residents in the West Bank sought to press charges against Israeli settlers or their security guards, but many complaints went uninvestigated despite available evidence. In May, Yesh Din released a report entitled *Mock Enforcement* that examined law enforcement treatment of Israeli civilians who reportedly harmed Palestinians in the West Bank. It claimed that law enforcement failures led to meager results in terms of the indictment and conviction of offenders. It contended there was a 1.9 percent probability that a

complaint submitted to Israeli police by a Palestinian would lead to an effective investigation resulting in finding a suspect and followed by indictment, trial, and conviction.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

PA law generally requires a warrant for arrest and provides for prompt judicial determination of the legality of detention, and these provisions were largely--but not uniformly--observed; however, there are exceptions that allow for arrest without a warrant. PA law allows police to hold detainees for 24 hours if there is sufficient evidence to charge a suspect, and for up to 45 days with court approval. It requires that a trial start within six months or authorities must release the detainee. While some PA security forces reportedly detained persons outside of appropriate legal procedures, including without warrants and without bringing them before judicial authorities within the required time, there were no known detentions extending beyond the time limit without trial. Authorities generally informed detainees of the charges against them, albeit sometimes not until interrogation. Bail and conditional release were available at the discretion of judicial authorities. Authorities granted detainees access to a lawyer. Palestinian courts consistently afforded the right to counsel to indigents charged with felony offenses. Indigent defendants charged with misdemeanors, however, often did not receive counsel, although NGO efforts to represent indigent juveniles and adults in misdemeanor cases were at times successful.

In a number of cases, PA Military Intelligence reportedly exceeded its legal authority to investigate other security services' personnel and detained civilians suspected of "security offenses," such as terrorist activities. Hamas continued to charge that the PA detained individuals during the year solely due to their Hamas affiliation, but the PA presented evidence it charged many of these individuals with criminal offenses under civil or military codes.

In the Gaza Strip Hamas reportedly detained a large number of persons during the year, primarily without recourse to legal counsel, judicial review, or bail. HRW reported Hamas internal security arrested individuals without presenting warrants, delayed their transfer to the prosecutor's office (using incommunicado detention), did not inform families of detainees' whereabouts promptly, and denied detainees' access to a lawyer. There also were instances in which authorities retroactively issued arrest warrants and used military warrants to arrest civilians.

Israeli authorities operated under military and civilian legal codes in the occupied territories. Israeli military law applied to Palestinians in the West Bank, while Israeli civil law applied to Israeli settlers. Under Israeli military law, authorities can hold detainees for up to 90 days without access to a lawyer, with an unlimited number of 90-day extensions, and authorities frequently transferred detainees from the West Bank to Israel for detention or interrogation. The Israeli military courts had a conviction rate of more than 99 percent for Palestinians. Authorities informed detainees of the charges against them during detention, but MCW reported authorities did not inform minors and their families at the time of arrest. Israeli authorities stated their policy was to post notification of arrests within 48 hours, but senior officers may delay notification for up to 12 days, effectively holding detainees incommunicado during the interrogation process. A military commander may request that a judge extend this period indefinitely. In accordance with law, Israeli authorities generally provided Palestinians held in Israeli military custody inside Israel access to a lawyer of their choice (and provided lawyers for the indigent), but detainees often obtained lawyers only after initial interrogations, and impediments to movement on West Bank roads or at crossings often made consultation difficult and delayed trials and hearings. According to MCW most detained minors saw their lawyer for the first time when they appeared before a military court. There is no functioning bail system for military courts.

NGOs claimed that, despite changes to the law in 2011 that categorized Palestinians between the ages of 16 and 18 as minors, Israeli authorities frequently failed to inform parents why authorities detained their children or where they took Palestinian minors when arrested. Additionally, this amendment does not apply to detention periods and other provisions of military orders. For example, under the law minors who are 16 and 17 years old have the same detention periods as adults. In 2013 a military order reduced the time that Palestinian children between the ages of 12 and 15 can be detained before appearing before a military court judge, although there was no change for minors ages 16 and 17. MCW reported subsequently these detention times were still at least twice as long as those applied to Israeli minors living in the West Bank. MCW was unaware of a single case in which authorities made available to defense counsel an audiovisual tape of an interrogation involving a minor prior to the first hearing. There is no legal duty to record interrogations involving minors audiovisually. The IDF also entered Palestinian homes at night either to arrest or to take pictures of minors. DCI-Palestine claimed authorities abused minors to coerce confessions (see section 1.c.), and, according to human rights organizations, this treatment could amount to torture in some cases. In the past Israeli officials denied such allegations. Military authorities began providing translations into Arabic of some of the recent changes

to the military laws affecting minors. NGOs reported a significant increase in detentions of minors in the Jerusalem area, particularly detentions authorities never registered in the Israeli prison system.

On April 30, Israeli security services arrested a six-year-old boy and his 12-year-old brother for throwing stones at a bus. Authorities held the six-year-old in a squad car and eventually brought him to the police station, where police released him to his parents at 3:30 a.m. the next day. According to Israeli law, children younger than 12 years old are below the age of criminal responsibility and authorities may not arrest or detain them.

On October 21, the ISF arrested a 10-year-old boy and took him for investigation from his relative's home in the Silwan neighborhood of Jerusalem. Authorities refused to permit his mother to enter the police station when she attempted to visit him. Authorities also arrested the boy's 13-year-old cousin and interrogated him without the presence of a parent. On October 25, authorities took two brothers, ages six and nine, also from Silwan to an Israeli police station and only released them after several hours. Their parents did not accompany them.

In 2013 the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) released its report *Children in Israeli Military Detention: Observations and Recommendations*, which stated that "mistreatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic, and institutionalized." Subsequently, the military prosecutor for Judea and Samaria (West Bank) established a dialogue with UNICEF on children's rights while in military detention and on specific actions authorities can take to improve the protection of these children. Later in 2013 the IDF Central Command for the West Bank implemented a pilot test in the West Bank that replaced the practice of night arrests of children suspected of security offenses with a summons procedure. UNICEF subsequently documented instances nevertheless of summoning of children following the beginning of the pilot program in Jenin and Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah governorates. Some children reportedly received summonses at night, and there were continued reports of mistreatment during the subsequent interrogation process at the military detention center or police station. In June 2014 authorities indefinitely suspended this pilot program.

In June the NGO Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling published a report addressing the effects of ISF night raids on families in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The report found that authorities conducted the raids "in a widespread and systematic manner" and noted that they almost universally led to

“a sense of fear and terror” among residents, especially children. In August and September, INP conducted night raids in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan, placing dozens of residents under detention or summoning them to INP stations as part of security operations following violence at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount and Old City.

In July, HRW released a report claiming that the IDF and other Israeli security services “routinely violated the rights” of Palestinian minors as young as 11 years old. It claimed, “[Israeli] security forces have choked children, thrown stun grenades at them, beaten them in custody, threatened and interrogated them without the presence of parents or lawyers, and failed to let their parents know their whereabouts.”

Israeli authorities continued to “administratively detain” (hold suspected criminals indefinitely without presenting charges or going to trial) some persons on security grounds. A military court must approve the detention order, and detainees may appeal this ruling to the Military Appeals Court and to the Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ). The HCJ, however, has yet to free a Palestinian under administrative detention. Many NGOs called for the immediate end to administrative detention. On July 27, the newspaper *Ha’aretz* reported that authorities held 391 Palestinians in administrative detention more than a year after their arrest; authorities had not officially charged them with any crimes.

The ISA continued its practice of incommunicado detention, including isolation from monitors, legal counsel, and family throughout the duration of interrogation. NGOs reported authorities used isolation to punish detainees or silence politically prominent Palestinian detainees; however, according to the Israeli government, the Israeli Prison Service does not hold detainees in separate detention punitively or to induce confessions. The Israeli government stated it does so only when a detainee threatens himself or others, and authorities have exhausted other options--or in some cases during interrogation to prevent disclosure of information. In such cases the Israeli government maintained the detainee had the right to meet with ICRC representatives, Israeli Prison Service personnel, and medical personnel, if necessary.

Arbitrary Arrest: The ICHR reported that arbitrary arrest by the PA in the West Bank was common, particularly arrests based on political affiliation with Hamas. The organization received complaints of arbitrary arrests based on political affiliation in the West Bank. There were numerous reports PA security forces improperly detained Palestinian journalists. Security officials also arrested and

abused Palestinians who posted criticism of the PA online, including on their Facebook pages.

The ICHR received complaints of arbitrary arrests by Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Many of these arrests and detentions appeared to be politically motivated, targeting political opponents and those suspected of ties to Israel. HRW reported Hamas security forces assaulted and arbitrarily detained civil society activists and peaceful protesters who had called for an end to the Fatah-Hamas split.

Throughout the year there were reports Israeli security forces in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank arbitrarily arrested and detained numerous Palestinian protesters and activists, particularly those participating in demonstrations against the separation barrier or against killings of Palestinians.

Pretrial Detention: It was unclear how long detainees in Hamas custody stayed in pretrial detention or what legal means, if any, Hamas used to detain individuals.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The PA basic law provides for an independent judiciary. The PA generally respected judicial independence and the autonomy of the High Judicial Council and maintained authority over most court operations in the West Bank. PA-affiliated prosecutors and judges stated that IDF prohibitions on movement in the West Bank, including restrictions on the ability to transport detainees and collect witnesses, hampered their ability to dispense justice. Women served as judges in both the criminal and military court systems.

Until 2011 the PA's military court system had jurisdiction over crimes by civilians against state security or against the security forces. After Palestinian NGOs criticized this practice, the PA mandated that civilians appear before civilian courts. PA security services have pressured the PA military justice court personnel to detain civilians charged with state security violations.

The PA civil, magistrate, and religious courts handled civil suits and provided an independent and impartial judiciary in most matters, but there were unconfirmed reports of various political factions attempting to influence judicial decisions. Citizens have the right to file suits against the government but rarely did so. Seldom-used administrative remedies are available in addition to judicial remedies. Authorities did not always execute court orders.

Hamas-appointed prosecutors and judges operated courts in the Gaza Strip, although the PA considered them illegal. No women served as criminal prosecutors in the Gaza Strip.

Gaza Strip residents may file civil suits. Unofficial anecdotal reports claimed Gaza Strip courts operated independently of the Hamas government and were at times impartial. There were reports that enforcement of court orders improved. HRW reported Hamas internal security regularly tried civil cases in military courts.

Israeli law provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected civil court independence. The IDF tried Palestinians accused of security offenses (ranging from rock throwing to membership in a terrorist organization to incitement) in military courts, which some NGOs claimed were inadequate and unfair. Israeli law defines security offenses to include any offense committed under circumstances that might raise a suspicion of harm to Israel's security and which the IDF believes may link to terrorist activity.

Trial Procedures

PA law provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and the right to prompt and detailed information regarding the charges with free interpretation as necessary. Trials are public, except when the court determines PA security, foreign relations, a party's or witness' right to privacy, protection of a victim of a sexual offense, or a so-called honor crime requires privacy security, foreign relations, a party's or witness' right to privacy. There are no juries. The law provides for legal representation, at public expense if necessary, in felony cases, but only during the trial phase. Defendants have the right to be present and to consult with an attorney in a timely manner during the trial, although during the investigation phase, the defendant only has the right to observe. Defendants have the right to adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense. Defendants may review government-held evidence, confront or question witnesses against them or present witnesses and evidence during the trial but not during the investigation phase. Suspects and defendants in the PA justice system have a right to remain silent when interrogated by the prosecutor according to the Palestinian penal procedure law. Defendants also have a legal right to counsel during interrogation and trial. They have the right to appeal. Authorities generally observed these rights.

Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip followed the same criminal procedure law as the PA in the West Bank but implemented the procedures inconsistently.

Israeli authorities tried Israelis living in settlements in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem under Israeli civil law in the nearest Israeli district court. Israeli civil law applied to Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. Israel subjected West Bank Palestinians held by Israeli authorities to trial in Israeli military courts. Military trials of Palestinians and others in the occupied territories provide some, but not all, of the procedural rights granted in criminal courts. The same evidentiary rules used in Israeli criminal cases apply; for example, authorities cannot base convictions solely on confessions. Indigent detainees do not automatically receive free legal counsel for military trials, but almost all detainees had counsel, in part because NGOs represented them. The military courts use Hebrew, but the defendant has the right to simultaneous interpretation at every hearing. Various human rights organizations claimed the availability and quality of Arabic interpretation was insufficient, especially since most interpreters were not professionals. Instead, they were bilingual Israelis performing mandatory military service. Defendants can appeal through the Military Court of Appeals and petition the High Court of Justice. Israeli military courts rarely acquitted Palestinians charged with security offenses, although they occasionally reduced sentences on appeal.

Several NGOs claimed Israeli military courts, which processed thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank during the year, were not equipped to adjudicate each case properly. NGOs and lawyers reported it was better to plead guilty and receive a reduced sentence than to maintain innocence and go through a trial that could last months, if not more than a year. Human rights lawyers also reported the structure of military trials--in military facilities with military officers as judges, prosecutors, and court officials, and with tight security restrictions--limited defendants' rights to public trial and access to counsel.

Authorities continued to use confessions signed by Palestinian minors, written in Hebrew, a language most could not read, as evidence against them in Israeli military courts. NGOs reported that authorities often coerced these confessions during interrogations.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

NGOs reported that arrests on political grounds occurred in the West Bank and Gaza. There was no reliable estimate of the number of political prisoners the PA held during the year.

Hamas detained several hundred persons, allegedly because of their political affiliation, public criticism of Hamas, or collaboration with Israel, and held them for varying periods. Numerous allegations of denial of due process and some executions were associated with these detentions. The ICRC and NGOs had limited access to these prisoners.

The Palestinian NGO Addameer reported that Israel continued to detain PLC members, most of whom had some affiliation with Hamas.

Israeli authorities did not accord administrative detainees an opportunity to refute allegations or access the evidentiary material presented against them in court. Israeli authorities permitted the ICRC access to administrative detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

A citizen can file a suit against the PA, including on matters related to alleged abuses of human rights, but this was uncommon.

Gaza Strip residents may file civil suits, including those related to human rights violations.

Israeli law grants Palestinians the possibility of obtaining compensation in some cases of human rights violations, even when the acts were legal.

Property Restitution

In certain cases the IDF offered opportunities for compensation for demolished or seized homes (see section 1.f.), subject to an appraisal, verification, and appeals process; Palestinians generally refused such offers, citing a desire not to legitimize the confiscation. The Israeli government sometimes charged demolition fees to demolish a home; this policy at times prompted Palestinians to destroy their own homes to avoid the higher costs associated with Israeli demolitions. Palestinians had difficulty verifying land ownership in Israeli courts according to Israeli definitions of land ownership.

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

The PA Penal Procedure Code generally requires the attorney general to issue warrants for entry and searches of private property; however, Palestinian judicial officers may enter houses without a warrant when there are emergency circumstances.

There were no specific reports the PA harassed family members for alleged offenses by an individual, although NGOs reported this tactic was common.

Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip frequently interfered arbitrarily with personal privacy, family, and home, according to reporting from local media and NGO sources. NGOs reported numerous cases of home searches and property seizure without warrants. They targeted journalists, Fatah loyalists, civil society members, youth activists, and those whom Hamas security forces accused of criminal activity. Hamas forces monitored private communications systems, including telephones, e-mail, and social media sites. They demanded passwords and access to personal information and seized personal electronic equipment of detainees. While Hamas membership did not appear to be a prerequisite for obtaining housing, education, or government services, authorities commonly reserved employment in some government positions in Gaza, such as those in the security services, for Hamas members only. In several instances Hamas detained individuals for interrogation and harassment based on the purported actions of their family members, particularly prodemocracy youth activists.

The IDF frequently raided Palestinian homes, including in Area A, most often at night, which it stated was due to operational necessity. Under occupation orders only IDF officers of lieutenant colonel rank and above could authorize entry into Palestinian private homes and institutions in the West Bank without a warrant, based upon military necessity. There were no reported cases of IDF soldiers punished for acting contrary to this requirement.

In the West Bank and Jerusalem, the Israeli Civil Administration (part of Israel's Ministry of Defense), the Jerusalem municipality, and the Ministry of Interior continued to demolish homes, cisterns, and other buildings and property constructed by Palestinians in areas under Israeli civil control on the basis that these buildings lacked Israeli planning licenses. Authorities generally did not offer compensation in these cases. Properties close to the separation barrier, IDF military installations, or firing ranges also remained subject to a heightened threat of demolition or confiscation. NGOs expressed great concern over demolitions in Area C of the West Bank. For example, in August demolitions reached an all-time

high for any month over the past five years. Israeli authorities demolished 131 structures in 34 incidents, which displaced 201 persons.

In July 2014 the Israeli Ministry of Defense's Civil Administration revived a policy of "punitive demolitions," demolishing the home of a suspect in the April killing of an off-duty Israeli police officer in Hebron. With the exception of one such demolition in East Jerusalem in 2009, Israeli authorities had halted punitive demolitions since 2005 following recommendations of a military commission that found the practice did not act as a deterrent.

In response to attacks on Israelis by Palestinians in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Israel, Israeli authorities between October 1 and December 2 partially or fully demolished eight homes of Palestinians who carried out attacks on Israelis in 2014 and during the year. These actions often also rendered dwellings near to demolished homes uninhabitable.

For example, on October 6, Israeli authorities demolished the East Jerusalem home of one of the two perpetrators of the November 2014 Har Nof synagogue attack that killed five persons in Jerusalem. Israeli authorities demolished the home of the second perpetrator on July 8. On December 2, the ISF entered the Shu'fat Refugee Camp in East Jerusalem to demolish the home of a local resident killed after carrying out a vehicle attack in Jerusalem in November 2014 that killed two Israelis and injured 12 others. The ISF injured 43 persons, including at least 13 from the use of rubber-coated bullets, two of whom were UNRWA staff. Some children also suffered from tear gas inhalation. The ISF also detained approximately 1,500 schoolchildren in their schools for about five hours during the operation's duration. On December 3, the ISF carried out an overnight demolition of the Nablus apartment of one of the gunman allegedly involved in the murder of two persons near Itamar settlement on October 1.

Palestinians and human rights NGOs reported the IDF was largely unresponsive to Israeli settlers' actions against Palestinians in the West Bank, including demolition of property (see section 6, National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities).

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The PA basic law provides every person the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and expression, orally, in writing, or through any other form. PA laws

do not specifically provide for freedom of press. PA security forces in the West Bank and members of the Hamas security apparatus in the Gaza Strip continued to restrict freedom of speech and press over the last year--most notably through harassment, intimidation, and arrest.

Israeli law provides for certain protections to Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. Israeli authorities, however, continued to restrict press coverage and place limits on certain forms of expression in the Palestinian Occupied Territories--particularly by restricting Palestinian journalists' rights of movement and through violence, arrests, and intimidation.

Freedom of Speech and Expression: Although no PA law prohibits criticism of the government, there were media reports PA authorities arrested some journalists and bloggers who either criticized or covered events that criticized the PA and PA officials. Additionally, there were several complaints during the year that the PA prevented journalists from covering events in the West Bank biased toward Hamas.

In the Gaza Strip, individuals publicly criticizing Hamas authorities risked reprisal by Hamas, including arrest, interrogation, seizure of property, and harassment. Civil society and youth activists, social media advocates, journalists, and individuals associated with political factions accused of criticizing Hamas in public fora, such as on the internet, faced punitive measures, including raids on their facilities and residences, arbitrary detention, and denial of permission to travel outside Gaza.

In Jerusalem, Israeli authorities punished displays of Palestinian political symbols and public expressions of anti-Israeli sentiment with fines or imprisonment. Israeli authorities, however, did not always enforce these restrictions. Israeli security officials regularly prohibited or interrupted meetings or conferences held in Jerusalem affiliated with the PLO or the PA, or with PA officials in attendance. They also restricted coverage of incidents that might reflect badly on Israeli policies.

For instance, on August 26, authorities fined two Palestinian journalists, Palestinian Public Broadcasting Corporation cameraman Ali Yasin and Russia Today television cameraman Mohamed Esho, for refusing to leave the scene when ordered to do so by Israeli police outside of al-Aqsa Mosque gates. Yassin stated that as he and his fellow journalists covered Israeli police actions to prevent Muslim worshipers from entering al-Aqsa Mosque, a police officer approached them and asked for their identification cards. Subsequently, he cited them with a

fine of 475 shekels (about \$121) for “obstruction of movement.” After the intervention of the Jerusalem Municipality Media Department, authorities cancelled the fines.

Many Palestinian journalists working in East Jerusalem or throughout Israel contended that Israeli forces were complicit in permitting extremist Israelis to attack or intimidate Palestinian journalists. For example, on August 16, Jewish Israeli extremists attacked Palestinian Public Broadcasting Corporation correspondent Christine Rinawi and other journalists in front of the Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon in southern Israel, while they covered news related to the deteriorating health of Palestinian prisoner Mohammed Allan. According to the Palestinian journalists on the scene, the Israeli police did nothing to stop the settlers’ attacks.

Press and Media Freedoms: Across the occupied territories, independent media operated with restrictions. The PA Ministry of Information requested that Israeli reporters covering events in the West Bank register with the ministry. According to the PA deputy minister of information, the ministry provides permits to Israeli journalists only if they do not live in an illegal settlement. While officially the PA was open to Israeli reporters covering events in the West Bank, Palestinian journalists reportedly pressured Israeli journalists not to attend PA events.

The PA took steps to permit Hamas publications in the West Bank, but it also imposed restrictions on a Hamas television outlet. In May 2014 the PA lifted a West Bank distribution ban on the pro-Hamas *Filistin* and *al-Risala* newspapers. Israeli authorities, however, forced the Ramallah-based printing house to stop printing and distributing these pro-Hamas newspapers in the West Bank. Until November 30, authorities reportedly permitted pro-Hamas al-Aqsa television to work in the West Bank, albeit only by contracting through West Bank communications companies. Subsequently, PA security services circulated instructions to Palestinian communications companies to stop providing all services to al-Aqsa television.

During the 2014 Gaza conflict, Hamas reportedly harassed journalists--including several from Western outlets--to prevent them from reporting on the hostilities in a way that would reflect unfavorably on Hamas or possibly divulge sensitive information.

Hamas modestly loosened some restrictions on PA-affiliated publications in the Gaza Strip, although significant restrictions remained. In May 2014 Hamas lifted

its ban on three West Bank-based newspapers--*al-Quds*, *al-Ayyam*, and *al-Hayat al-Jadida*. Hamas authorities permitted broadcast within Gaza of reporting and interviews featuring PA officials. Hamas allowed, with some restrictions, the operation of non-Hamas-affiliated broadcast media in the Gaza Strip. For instance, the PA-supported Palestine TV reportedly operated in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas also sought to restrict the movement of journalists in Gaza--both at crossing points and within the area. On February 3, Hamas security forces in Gaza prevented the chief editor of *Siyasat* magazine and commentator, Atef Abu Seif, from leaving the Gaza Strip to travel to Morocco.

Within areas of the West Bank where Israel controls access, Palestinian journalists complained the Israeli authorities restricted their freedom of movement and ability to cover stories. The IDF does not recognize any Palestinian press credentials or credentials from the International Federation of Journalists. Few Palestinians held Israeli press credentials following the Israeli revocation of the vast majority of their credentials during the Second Intifada, which began in 2000.

Israel does not issue journalists permits to travel into Jerusalem or west of the separation barrier. Palestinian journalists who are able to obtain permits on other grounds, as well as Palestinian Jerusalemite journalists, reported incidents of harassment, racism, and occasional violence when seeking to cover news in Jerusalem, especially in the Old City and its vicinity. For example, on June 21, Israeli authorities prevented Tahsin al-Astal, the deputy head of the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate and the Gaza editor of *al-Hayat al-Jadida* daily, from entering the West Bank to participate in the General Secretariat meeting of the syndicate in Ramallah.

Palestinian journalists reportedly also faced discrimination, harassment, and violence in Jerusalem. On August 4, cameraman Abdul Karim Darwish of al-Bashir ProMedia was covering the arrest of five security guards of al-Aqsa Mosque when Israeli police seized his camera, detained him, and interrogated him at a police station in Jerusalem. Subsequently, authorities released him without charge.

Violence and Harassment: There were numerous reports that PA security forces harassed, detained (occasionally with violence), prosecuted, and fined journalists during the year. Moreover, PA security forces also at times reportedly demanded deletion of footage showing security personnel. For example, on July 8, the Palestinian Intelligence Service arrested and detained Ro'ya Media cameraman

Amr Halayqa for five days, during which officials interrogated him and another journalist, Haitham Warasneh. Authorities accused them of inciting against the PA. They appeared before a judge, who, after verifying their credentials as journalists, released them.

Some Palestinian journalists claimed the PA obstructed the activities of media organizations with Hamas sympathies and limited media coverage critical of the PA. For instance, on March 17, the Palestinian Intelligence Service arrested Radi Karamah, presenter at Radio Alhuriya, after raiding his house. Authorities interrogated him and charged him with “libel and defamation” against the Palestinian president and senior officials. Karamah said the interrogators insulted him and yelled at him that his reporting should be “patriotic” and free of any criticism of the president. He added that authorities told him not to cover anti-PA activities and subsequently released him.

On November 5, the PA ordered the closure of the Ramallah office of Qatar-funded *al-Araby al-Jadid* newspaper, accusing the paper of lacking proper licensing requirements and for publishing malicious news about the PA security services.

The PA had an inconsistent record of protecting Israeli and international journalists from harassment by Palestinian civilians or their own personnel.

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas at times arrested, harassed, and pressured journalists, sometimes using violence. Reportedly, Hamas summoned and detained journalists for questioning to intimidate them. Hamas also constrained journalists’ freedom of movement during the year, attempting to ban access to some official buildings as well as to several prodemocracy protests.

For example, on April 29, Hamas security officers attacked journalists covering a peaceful rally calling for an end to the internal division. Security officers badly beat the journalists, and detained a number of them briefly. The Foreign Press Association reported other Hamas tactics to harass or restrict journalists, including efforts to establish “vetting procedures” that would effectively blacklist certain reporters or sending a series of intimidating text messages to journalists.

Throughout the year there were dozens of reported Israeli actions that prevented Palestinian journalists from covering news stories in the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem. These actions included harassment by Israeli soldiers and acts of violence against journalists. On May 2, the IDF suppressed a peaceful march

organized by the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate for World Press Freedom Day. Israeli security forces fired rubber bullets and tear gas at the participating journalists, injuring several journalists including the head of the syndicate, Abdelnasser Najjar.

Palestinian journalists also claimed that Israeli security forces detained Palestinian journalists and forced them to delete images and videos under threat of violence or arrested/administrative detention. For instance, on August 28, at a demonstration in Bil'in village near Ramallah, IDF soldiers detained Hamza Yaseen, a volunteer photographer with B'Tselem. Reportedly soldiers beat him and deleted the images in his camera's memory before smashing the camera. Authorities then arrested him and transferred him to the Benyamin police center before releasing him after midnight.

From October through November, there were many reports of Palestinian journalists injured by rubber-coated steel bullets/live fire or tear gas while covering demonstrations and clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli security forces. On October 30, IDF soldiers physically attacked several journalists trying to cover clashes between Palestinian stone throwers and the IDF near Beit El at the outskirts of Ramallah. Israeli soldiers kicked and pepper sprayed a number of cameramen and photographers as they covered the clashes. Israeli soldiers also assaulted and pepper sprayed Palestinian paramedics, who rushed to the scene to assist the injured reporters.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: The PA prohibits calls for violence, displays of arms, and racist slogans in PA-funded and controlled official media. There were no confirmed reports of any legal action against, or prosecution of, any person publishing items counter to these PA rules. Media throughout the occupied territories reported practicing self-censorship.

In Gaza civil society organizations reported Hamas censored television programs and written content, such as newspapers and books.

While Israeli authorities retain the right to review and approve in advance the printing of all Jerusalem-based Arabic publications for material perceived as a security threat, anecdotal evidence suggested Israeli authorities did not actively review the Jerusalem-based *al-Quds* newspaper or other Jerusalem-based Arabic publications. Jerusalem-based publications reported that, based on previous experiences with Israeli censorship, they learned what was acceptable and self-censored publications accordingly.

The Israeli government closed or threatened to close a number of West Bank radio broadcasters, primarily under allegations of incitement to violence against Israeli citizens. In November the Israeli government shut three radio stations in Hebron and confiscated broadcasting equipment. On November 3, the IDF closed Fatah-affiliated Hurriyah Radio; on November 21, the IDF shut al-Khalil Radio; and on November 28, the IDF raided and closed Dream Radio. The IDF threatened two other Palestinian radio stations with closure for alleged incitement to violence. On November 27, al-Nas Radio, one of the two leading stations in Jenin, north of the West Bank, received an IDF warning letter to cease and desist incitement to violence. The previous day, on November 26, a Hebron-based independent Radio One FM received the same IDF letter.

Additionally, on August 27, the IDF threatened to shut the Alreef radio station near Hebron alleging the station's broadcast interfered with Ben Gurion Airport's operations, although the station has been broadcasting since 2007. According to the station manager, Mahmoud Diab, he received a call from an Israeli intelligence officer three months before this incident in which the intelligence officer accused the station of incitement against Israelis. Despite the military order, the station continued to broadcast.

Over the past two years, Palestinian local broadcaster Wattan TV faced additional setbacks in its legal efforts to retrieve its foreign-funded equipment confiscated in 2012 by the IDF from its Ramallah Studio (in Area A of the West Bank). In June 2014 the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected Wattan's petition challenging the confiscation of its equipment, following several hearings during which authorities did not allow Wattan's lawyers, for security reasons, to view the evidence the IDF presented against Wattan. While attorneys for Wattan TV contended they proved the broadcasts posed no threat to communications in Israel (such as airport communications), they complained about an opaque legal process that allowed the government to withhold testimony from the parties to the case based on security concerns. The case remained pending at year's end.

Libel/Slander Laws: There were some accusations of slander or libel against journalists in the West Bank as well as suppression of journalists on national security grounds. For example, on August 5, the PA Preventive Security Service arrested freelance journalist and editor of *Quds News Network* Yousef Shalabi from Tulkarem. Authorities interrogated him about charges of "inciting sectarian strife" in his reporting. He spent a night in jail before a court date was set for October 6.

In Gaza there were reports, specifically during the Gaza conflict of 2014, that Hamas used security justifications or slander or libel laws to censor public criticism. For instance, on August 5, the Hamas public prosecutor summoned Mushera al-Haj, a journalist for *Bawabet Alhadaf* electronic newspaper, regarding a Facebook comment criticizing the Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip, after the death of a child at the al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. Authorities accused her of libel and defamation for her posting. After refusing to apologize, al-Haj said authorities arrested her and took her to al-Ansar Prison. Officials subsequently released her.

There were some reports Israeli authorities used security justifications or slander or libel laws to censor public criticism.

Internet Freedom

While there were no PA restrictions on access to the internet, there were reports that the PA actively monitored e-mail and social media, pressuring and harassing activists and journalists. There were multiple instances when the PA arrested or detained Palestinians because of their posts on social media. For example, on July 21, the Military Intelligence Service in Tulkarem summoned the editor at al-Fajr al-Jadid TV, Sami al-Sai, for his posting on Facebook about security officers selling gasoline coupons, which were for official use only. During his interrogation authorities asked him to provide the names of his sources, including the officer who allegedly sold those coupons. Authorities subsequently released him without charge.

Palestinian civil society organizations and social media practitioners stated Hamas authorities monitored the internet activities of Gaza Strip residents and took action to intimidate or harass them. For instance, on July 8, Hamas's Internal Security in Gaza interrogated freelance journalist and media student Tareq al-Farra about his writings on Facebook. Authorities summoned al-Farra to Internal Security headquarters in Khan Younis, blindfolded him, and placed him in a detention room where they instructed him to remain standing. Authorities then interrogated him about his writings and postings on Facebook in which he criticized the Hamas government's decision to close the Jawwal telecom company. Authorities then forced him to surrender his password to his Facebook page and to write an apology on his Facebook account. Authorities released him but instructed him not to change his Facebook password.

Israeli authorities did not restrict access to the internet. They did monitor Palestinians' online activities, however, and arrested a number of Palestinians for incitement, including for posts on social media. For example, media reported that Jerusalem District Police arrested Jerusalem-based, Arab-Israeli attorney Tareq Barghout on suspicion of publishing material that incited violence on Facebook. Barghout was the defense attorney in a high-profile stabbing case.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

In the West Bank, the PA did not restrict academic freedom, and there were no known reports of PA censorship of school curricula, plays, films, or exhibits in the West Bank. Palestinian law provides for academic freedom, but individuals or officials from academic institutions reportedly self-censored curricula. There were no reports the PA officially interfered with education during the year. While there was no overt threat to academic freedom, faculty members knew there were security elements present on university campuses among the student body and faculty, which may have led to self-censorship.

Public and UNRWA schools in Gaza followed the same curriculum as West Bank schools. Palestinians in Gaza reported that generally there was limited interference by Hamas--the de facto authority in Gaza--at the primary, secondary, or university levels. In Gaza public schools, Hamas reportedly interfered in teaching methodologies or curriculum deemed to violate Islamic identity, the religion, or "traditions," as defined by the de facto Hamas authority. Hamas interfered if there were reports of classes or activities that mixed genders. UNRWA reported no such Hamas interference in its Gaza schools.

Hamas authorities sought to disrupt some educational, cultural, and international exchange programs. They routinely required Palestinians to obtain exit permits prior to departing Gaza. Students participating in certain cultural and education programs (including programs sponsored by foreign governments and international organizations) can face questioning from de facto Hamas authorities, for example, on the purpose and duration of travel and the process for coordinating the visas. These authorities can and did deny exit for travelers, whether through the Rafah or Erez crossings.

Hamas authorities also interfered in local cultural programs. There were continued reports the de facto government suppressed cultural expression that might offend local religious and cultural values and identity.

Armed conflict in the Gaza Strip resulted in damage to schools, which at times restricted access to education by Palestinian residents. For example, at least 90 schools in the Gaza Strip were destroyed during engagements between Israeli government forces and Hamas militants during Operation Protective Edge. In addition some persons displaced by the conflict sheltered in school buildings. The start of the 2014-15 school year was delayed as a result. Further, Israeli restrictions on movement adversely affected academic institutions and access to education in the West Bank, because Israeli checkpoints, although they decreased in number, created difficulties for students and faculty commuting to schools and university campuses. In numerous instances students and educators reported being late or missing days of classes due to significant delays at checkpoints (see section 2.d.). Additionally, Palestinian students and educators reported harassment and physical assault by Israeli settlers when going to school in areas such as Hebron, Nablus, Salfeet, and Qalqilya. Local press reports cited instances of students incarcerated by Israeli authorities for taking part in demonstrations deemed unlawful and for allegedly throwing stones at Israeli soldiers.

Palestinian government officials and Palestinian university officials accused the ISF of attacking several university campuses, especially in areas close to Israeli settlements. In particular, officials from the al-Quds University Abu Dis campus accused Israeli soldiers of harassing Palestinian university students on campus and attempting to provoke them into confrontations. In August the university's Abu Dis campus issued a press release accusing Israeli forces of throwing tear-gas grenades into the campus and igniting a fire on university grounds. On November 9, al-Quds University administrators invited diplomatic staff from international missions in Jerusalem and the West Bank to survey damage to the campus grounds caused by two ISF attacks that took place on October 28 and November 2. University surveillance cameras showed the ISF entering the university campus shooting rubber-coated bullets and live fire, sound grenades, and tear gas without any apparent immediate threat, causing dozens of injuries. Additionally, the Palestine Technical University--Khadoori in Tulkarem--which is also the site of an active Israeli military facility, was the site of clashes between students and Israeli soldiers. From December 16 to 20, the IDF injured 87 students at the university by using live fire, rubber bullets, and tear gas to disperse demonstrations on campus.

During the year the Israeli Supreme Court continued to uphold with few exceptions the 2000 Israeli ban on students from the Gaza Strip attending West Bank universities. Students in the Gaza Strip generally did not apply to West Bank universities because they understood Israeli authorities would deny permit requests. During the year Israeli authorities several times prevented students at

schools adjacent to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif from reaching their classrooms.

Israeli travel restrictions also prevented students in the West Bank and Gaza from participating in cultural programming within the Palestinian Territories and study programs abroad. In some instances Israeli officials denied Palestinian travel permits, thus preventing transit to Jerusalem for visa interviews or to cross the Allenby Bridge to Jordan. In other cases delays in permit approvals by Israeli officials caused Palestinians to miss the travel dates for their exchange programs abroad or to miss cultural programming in Jerusalem or the West Bank. In some instances students were asked to submit to security interviews prior to receiving permits. In the past two years, Israeli authorities detained some students indefinitely without charge following their security interview--which caused some students to refuse to attend security interviews due to fear of detention, which made them unable to obtain a travel permit.

The travel challenges were particularly acute for Palestinians from Gaza, since Israeli authorities often denied travel permits through Erez. In these instances Palestinians from Gaza could elect to travel through the Rafah crossing, but Egyptian authorities have closed Rafah, opening the crossing only for special categories of travelers for 12 days during the year. With the increase in commercial activity between Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel, Israeli border officials increased the detention and interrogation of Palestinians from Gaza traveling with business permits.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

Palestinian law permits public meetings, processions, and assemblies within legal limits. It requires permits for rallies, demonstrations, and large cultural events, and the PA rarely denied them. Both the PA and Hamas security forces, however, selectively dispersed protests and demonstrations during the year.

According to a Hamas decree, any public assembly or celebration in the Gaza Strip requires prior permission, in contradiction of the PA basic law. Hamas generally did not permit Fatah members to hold rallies. Activists reported Hamas officials harassed women in public and impeded their ability to assemble peacefully.

Hamas officials also attempted to impede potential criticism of Hamas policies by imposing arbitrary demands for the approval of meetings on political or social topics.

ACRI continued to report arbitrary restrictions on the freedom of assembly in Jerusalem, including the use of unlawful arrests to intimidate demonstrators.

The IDF continued to use a 1967 military order that effectively prohibited Palestinian demonstrations and limited freedom of speech in the West Bank. The order stipulates that a “political” gathering of 10 or more persons requires a permit from the regional commander of military forces--which the commander rarely granted. The penalty for a breach of the order is 10 years’ imprisonment or a heavy fine.

Various NGOs noted the IDF did not respect freedom of assembly and often responded to demonstrators aggressively. Israeli security forces sometimes used force, including live fire, against Palestinians and others involved in demonstrations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, resulting in the deaths of Palestinian civilians (see section 1.a.). The IDF used force particularly against weekly protests in or near Israeli settlements located in Area C. The IDF responded to protests with military crowd-control techniques or force, using tear gas and stun grenades to push back protesters, which NGOs alleged often amounted to using nonlethal force in a lethal manner.

The IDF Central Command declared areas of the West Bank to be “closed military zones” and maintained the same designation for areas adjacent to the separation barrier in the villages of Bil’in and Ni’lin every Friday during the hours in which Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists regularly demonstrated. There were frequent skirmishes between the protesters and IDF personnel. IDF and Israeli police personnel stationed on the far side of the barrier during weekly protests in those villages responded to rock throwing with tear gas, stun grenades, skunk water, sound bombs, and rubber-coated bullets. On October 31, doctors at a Bethlehem hospital pronounced eight-month-old Muhammad Faysal Thawabta dead after he inhaled tear gas during clashes in the Beit Fajjar village, south of Bethlehem. An IDF spokesperson said an investigation into the incident concluded that the IDF had not used tear gas in the vicinity of the baby’s family home, but “dozens of meters” away.

Freedom of Association

In the West Bank, PA law allows freedom of association, but authorities sometimes limited it, including for labor organizations (see section 7.a.). In August the media reported that the PA froze the assets of Future for Palestine, an NGO established by former PA prime minister Salaam Fayyad.

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas attempted to prevent various organizations from operating, including some it accused of being Fatah-affiliated, as well as private businesses and NGOs it deemed to be in violation of its interpretation of Islamic social norms. The Hamas “Ministry of Interior” has supervisory authority over all NGOs, allowing the ministry to request documents, and there were instances where the de facto authorities temporarily closed NGOs that did not comply. Activists reported women’s rights groups faced significant pressure from Hamas.

Israel maintained prohibitions on some prominent Jerusalem-based Palestinian institutions, such as the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce and the Orient House, which was the de facto PLO office in Jerusalem. Israeli authorities have closed both since 2001 and claimed the groups violated the Oslo Accords by operating on behalf of the PA in Jerusalem.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State’s *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

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

The PA basic law provides for freedom of movement, and the PA generally did not restrict freedom of movement. The basic law does not specify regulations regarding foreign travel, emigration, or repatriation.

Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip restricted some foreign travel and required exit permits for Palestinians departing through the Gaza-Israel Erez crossing. Hamas also prevented the exit of some Palestinians from Gaza because of the purpose of their travel or coerce a behavior change, such as the payment of taxes and fines. There were some reports unmarried women faced restrictions on their travel.

The ISF imposed the most significant restrictions on Palestinians’ movement within the occupied territories and foreign travel, and, citing military necessity, it increased these restrictions at times.

Barriers to movement included checkpoints, a separation barrier that divides the majority of the West Bank from Israel and East Jerusalem, internal road closures, and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods into and out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Restrictions on movement affected virtually all aspects of life, including access to places of worship, employment, agricultural lands, schools, and hospitals, as well as the conduct of journalistic, humanitarian, and NGO activities.

Israeli authorities claimed they eased the naval blockade off the Gaza Strip coast, extending fishing limits from three to six nautical miles following the 2014 conflict. Authorities fired at fishing boats that moved within the six-mile mark or towed them to Israeli ports and detained fishermen.

The PA, Hamas, and the Israeli government generally cooperated with humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees; however, Israeli government officials imposed controls on the entry and exit of goods and persons to and from Gaza and constrained UNRWA's ability to operate freely in Gaza. AI and HRW also reported that the Israeli government denied their employees permits to enter Gaza.

In-country Movement: PA authorities did not interfere with movement within the West Bank.

Hamas authorities in general did not appear to enforce routine restrictions on internal movement within the Gaza Strip, although there were some areas to which Hamas prohibited access, and, for many months this year, Hamas imposed checkpoints at night at many intersections in cities to prevent movement of Salafist groups it considered security risks. Increasing pressure to conform to Hamas's interpretation of Islamic norms led to significant restrictions on movement by women. IDF soldiers routinely detained Palestinians residing in Gaza who have permits to enter Israel and conduct business for hours and subjected them to interrogations and strip searches at Israeli-controlled checkpoints.

The Israeli government imposed significant restrictions on movement in the West Bank and between the West Bank and Jerusalem. Israeli authorities frequently prohibited travel between some or all West Bank towns and deployed "flying" (temporary) checkpoints. Palestinians who lived in affected villages stated that such "internal closures" continued to have negative economic effects. During periods of potential unrest including on some major Israeli, Jewish, and Muslim

holidays, Israeli authorities enacted “comprehensive external closures,” which precluded Palestinians from leaving the West Bank. For example, Israeli authorities blocked three of the four main entrances into Tulkarem with dirt mounds in late October and early November. This action was a result of a vehicle attack wherein the attacker fled back to Tulkarem. After authorities arrested the assailant in December, the ISF removed the closures, and all entrances returned to normal in Tulkarem by year’s end. While the exact number and placement of closures fluctuated, at the end of 2014, OCHA reported 490 closures including not just permanently staffed checkpoints, but also partial checkpoints, earth mounds, road closures, road blocks/barriers, earth walls, and trenches.

Palestinian travel is restricted or entirely prohibited on 41 roads and sections of roads throughout the West Bank, including many of the main traffic arteries, covering a total of more than 400 miles of roadway, upon which Israelis may travel freely. The IDF also imposed temporary curfews confining Palestinians to their homes during arrest operations. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Israeli authorities eased restrictions on Palestinians entering Jerusalem and Israel, allowing men over the age of 40 to visit the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount without a permit for the first time in more than 10 years.

The Israeli government continued construction of the separation barrier, which ran largely inside the West Bank and along parts of the Green Line (the 1949 Armistice line). By use of special permits, Israel continued to restrict movement and development within this area, including access by some international organizations. NGOs reported that Israeli authorities allowed many Palestinians, separated from their land, access to their property only a few days each year. Private security companies employed by the Israeli government controlled many points of access through the barrier, and international organizations and local human rights groups claimed these companies did not respond to requests to allow movement of goods and officials through the barrier. Many Palestinians and NGOs reported there were higher levels of mistreatment at checkpoints run by security contractors than at those staffed by IDF soldiers. The barrier affected the commute of children to school in Jerusalem and some farmers’ access to land and water resources. Palestinian farmers continued to report difficulty accessing their lands in Israeli-controlled Area C and in the seam zone, the closed area between the separation barrier and the Green Line. The NGO Machsom Watch reported that more than 24 Palestinian villages had lands inaccessible in the seam zone, and a complicated Israeli permit regime (requiring more than 10 different permits) prevented Palestinians from fully using their lands.

Israel eased restrictions on access to farmland in the Gaza Strip to 100 meters from the boundary with Israel and to fishing areas along the coast. Despite this easing, reports indicated Israel continued to enforce “buffer zone” restrictions on nonfarmers within 328 feet of the boundary. OCHA estimated nearly 35 percent of the Gaza Strip’s cultivable land was located in the restricted area.

Gaza’s fishing waters were partially inaccessible to Palestinians due to Israeli restrictions that only allowed fishing within six nautical miles of land. The UN reported that the restriction was “of particular concern.” Israeli naval patrol boats strictly enforced this fishing limit, which was a reduction from 20 nautical miles, as designated under the 1994 Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area (later incorporated into the 1995 Interim Agreement). Israeli naval forces regularly fired warning shots at Palestinian fishermen entering the restricted sea areas, in some cases directly targeting the fishermen, according to OCHA. The Israeli armed forces often confiscated fishing boats intercepted in these areas and detained the fishermen, while Palestinian fishermen reported confusion over the exact limits of the new fishing boundaries.

During the year Israeli security forces restricted movement around parts of Jerusalem, including the neighborhoods of Beit Hanina, Shufat, Silwan, Ras al-Amud, Wadi al-Joz, al-Tur, Jabal al-Mukabir, and Jerusalem’s Old City, where forces established roadblocks and checkpoints. Israeli security forces also blocked entrances to the Jerusalem neighborhood of Issawiya and frequently established checkpoints at other entrances, inspecting each person entering or leaving the neighborhood. The Israeli government imposed new restrictions on Palestinians and Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem during the evening of October 14, installing checkpoints, barriers, and other obstacles to free movement. During the following weeks, the Israeli government adjusted the number of restrictions. At least 16 obstacles remained in place as of November 23, according to OCHA. Military authorities continued to restrict severely Palestinian vehicular and foot traffic in the commercial center of Hebron, citing a need to protect several hundred Israeli settler residents. They prohibited Palestinians from driving on most roads in downtown Hebron and from walking on Shuhada Street and other roads in the Old City; Israeli settlers had free access to these roads. The IDF closed most shops on the street and sealed entrances to Palestinian houses. Demolition orders in and around Hebron also threatened family homes, and other civilian structures; in some cases authorities subjected entire villages, such as Dkaika, southeast of Hebron, to demolition orders. In November, Israeli forces restricted Palestinian males between 15 and 25 years old from entering certain neighborhoods of Hebron; they

required other residents to register with the Israeli authorities to pass through certain checkpoints.

The INP restricted access for broad categories of Muslim worshippers based on age or gender on 27 days during the year, sometimes during periods of unrest, and sometimes corresponding to periods of increased Jewish visits to sites during or on days surrounding Jewish holidays. The restrictions limited Muslim access for noon prayers on at least four Fridays, and included consecutive days of restrictions as long as eight days in the nine-day period from September 28 to October 6. Additionally, the INP, beginning September 3, maintained a “black list” of female Muslim worshippers banned from the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount for alleged harassment of Jewish visitors. The banned women had no recourse to appeal their prohibition with the INP or through the Israeli court system.

Following a series of attacks by Palestinians on Israelis in Jerusalem in September and October, in an unprecedented move, Israeli authorities barred all non-Old City resident Palestinians from entering the Old City for two days during the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah.

Foreign Travel: PA authorities did not limit residents’ foreign travel.

Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip enforced movement restrictions on Palestinians attempting to exit Gaza to Israel via the Erez Crossing and to Egypt via the Rafah Crossing. Individuals permitted to enter or exit the Gaza Strip at the Erez Crossing were largely limited to humanitarian cases; the Israeli government also continued to permit a limited number of businesspersons to cross.

Egyptian authorities enforced movement restrictions on Palestinians attempting to exit Gaza via the Rafah Crossing. The Egyptian government only periodically allowed border crossing two or three days at a time--and mostly only in one direction for passenger travel and humanitarian aid.

Restrictions on access to Jerusalem had a negative effect on patients and medical staff trying to reach the six Palestinian hospitals that offered specialized care unavailable in the West Bank. IDF soldiers at checkpoints harassed and delayed Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) ambulances from the West Bank or refused them entry into Jerusalem even in emergency cases. When ambulances lacked access, medics moved patients across checkpoints from an ambulance on one side to a second ambulance (usually one of five East Jerusalem-based ambulances) or a private vehicle on the other side. The PRCS reported hundreds of such actions

taken against its teams and humanitarian services during the year. Most incidents included blocking access to those in need, preventing their transport to specialized medical centers, or maintaining delays at checkpoints for up to two hours. Most incidents took place at the Qalandiyah and Az-'Za'ayem checkpoints leading to Jerusalem; the remainder took place at other checkpoints circling the West Bank.

The IDF restricted students in the Gaza Strip from studying in the West Bank or Israel and limited West Bank Palestinians from university study in Jerusalem and Israel (see section 2.a.). Palestinians possessing Jerusalem identity cards issued by the Israeli government needed special documents to travel abroad. Upon individual requests by Palestinians, the Jordanian government issued passports to them.

According to NGOs residency restrictions prevented family reunification, which did not qualify as a reason to enter the West Bank. For a child in the Gaza Strip, Israeli authorities permitted access to a parent in the West Bank only if no other relative was resident in the Gaza Strip. Israeli authorities did not permit Palestinians abroad during the 1967 War, or whose residence permits the Israeli government subsequently withdrew, to reside permanently in the occupied territories. It was difficult for foreign-born spouses and children of Palestinians to obtain residency. Authorities required Palestinian spouses of Jerusalem residents to obtain a residency permit with reported delays of several years to obtain them.

Exile: Neither the PA nor Hamas imposed forced exile.

Continued Israeli revocation of Jerusalem identity cards amounted to forced exile to the occupied territories or abroad. According to HaMoked, an Israeli human rights organization, the Israeli Ministry of Interior during the year again renewed “temporary” orders authorizing the revocation of Jerusalem residency rights from legal residents. Between 1967 and 2014, Israel revoked the status of 14,416 Palestinians from East Jerusalem. Reasons for revocation included having acquired residency or citizenship in another country, living “abroad” (including in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip) for more than seven years, or, most commonly, being unable to prove a “center of life,” interpreted as full-time residency, in Jerusalem. Some Palestinians who were born in Jerusalem but who studied abroad reported losing their Jerusalem residency status.

Internally Displaced Persons

OCHA estimated that by August 2014, hostilities during Operation Protective Edge internally displaced 520,000 persons in Gaza, who sought shelter in UNRWA schools, public buildings, or with other families. Thousands remained in UNRWA shelters following the cessation of hostilities because their homes were no longer habitable. UNRWA reported it was able to close the last remaining emergency shelters on June 17 after providing transitional shelter to those who required it. The UN reported that fighting damaged or destroyed more than 143,000 Palestinian refugee dwellings. As of September only 6.7 percent of construction materials required to rebuild and repair houses destroyed and damaged during the 2014 fighting and previous hostilities, and to address natural population growth, had entered Gaza.

As of December 2, Israel demolished 499 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and East Jerusalem. According to OCHA a number of policies drove displacement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; these included displacements linked to settlement activity. In Area C and East Jerusalem, authorities annually demolished hundreds of Palestinian homes and other structures due to residents' lack of Israeli-issued building permits. According to OCHA and ACRI, residence restrictions made it almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain permits in Area C and East Jerusalem, while providing preferential treatment for Israeli settlements in these areas. OCHA noted that in many cases displacement resulted from a combination of factors, including settler violence, movement restrictions, and restricted access to services and resources. Authorities also displaced Palestinians in East Jerusalem due to forced evictions, facilitating takeover of their property by settler organizations, and making it difficult for Palestinians to secure residency status.

UNRWA and other humanitarian organizations provided services to IDPs in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, with some limitations due to Israeli restrictions on movement and border access.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: There were no reports of persons seeking asylum in the occupied territories. According to an UNRWA estimate, as of January 1, there were 774,167 registered Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and more than 1.27 million in the Gaza Strip. One-quarter of refugees in the West Bank lived in refugee camps, as did approximately 40 percent of refugees in Gaza. Refugees included those displaced due to the 1948 conflict in Israel and their descendants.

Refugee Abuse: The Israeli government obstructed refugee access to UNRWA-provided humanitarian assistance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli government restrictions on import of certain commodities considered dual use continued to impede UNRWA operations. In August, UNRWA reported that an updated dual-use goods list issued by the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories restricted wood more than one centimeter (three-eighths inch) thick. For UNRWA this new restriction was expected to limit production of doors for infrastructure projects and furniture for its schools in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli security operations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem led to both injuries and fatalities among Palestinian refugees. In 2013 and 2014, UNRWA reported a sharp increase in the number of Palestinian refugees killed and injured during law enforcement activities carried out by Israeli security forces in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. During the year this trend persisted, and the continued frequent use of live ammunition remained a serious concern. In 2014 there were 21 refugee fatalities, all but one of them caused by live ammunition. From January to November, there were 37 refugee fatalities, including 17 Palestinians allegedly involved in attacks/attempted attacks on ISF personnel or Israeli civilians, and 557 injuries. All but two of the 37 fatalities resulted from live ammunition, as did 199 of the 557 injuries.

On March 18, Israeli soldiers shot 20-year-old Ali Mahmoud Abd a-Rahman Safi, who later died of his injuries, during a violent demonstration at the al-Jalazun Refugee Camp in the West Bank governorate of Ramallah.

On June 10, Israeli soldiers shot and killed 22-year-old 'Iz a-Din Walid Hassan Bani Gharrah in the Jenin Refugee Camp. Accounts differed regarding the circumstances surrounding his death.

Access to Basic Services: All UNRWA projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip required Israeli government permits.

During the first 11 months of the year, movement restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities on the West Bank resulted in the loss of 71 UNRWA staff days. Since September 2014 Israeli authorities demanded UNRWA trucks use only commercial crossings into Jerusalem, where they faced significant delays, long detours, and increased search demands, compared with the checkpoints used previously. UNRWA reported that delivery of services was problematic in the area between the West Bank barrier and the 1949 armistice line, in particular in the Bartaa area and in three refugee communities near Qalqilya. Essential infrastructure in the

Gaza Strip, including water and sanitation services, continued in a state of severe disrepair, due in part to inability to import spare parts and components due to Israeli import restrictions. During Operation Protective Edge, Israeli armed forces destroyed electrical, water, and other public infrastructure.

The deterioration of socioeconomic conditions during the year severely affected refugees in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA reported that food security continued to deteriorate due to the effect of Operation Protective Edge on livelihoods, tunnel closures, and increases in food prices.

A shortage of school buildings during the year meant that quality of education was a major problem, resulting in a double-shift system, shorter hours, and overcrowding of students.

Stateless Persons

According to NGOs 40,000 to 50,000 individuals in the Gaza Strip did not have identification cards recognized by Israel. Some of these persons were born in the Gaza Strip, but Israel never recognized them as residents; some fled the Gaza Strip during the 1967 war; and some left Gaza for various reasons after 1967 and later returned. A small number were born in the Gaza Strip and never left, and they had only Hamas-issued identification cards. The Israeli government controlled the Palestinian Population Registry that would allow stateless persons to obtain status.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The PA basic law provides Palestinians with the ability to elect their government through democratic means, but the PA has not held elections in the West Bank or Gaza since 2006; Israeli authorities ban the PA from conducting political activities in East Jerusalem. Residents of the Gaza Strip, under Hamas control since 2007, were unable to choose their own government or hold it accountable. Civil society organizations in the Gaza Strip stated that Hamas and other conservative Islamist groups did not tolerate public dissent, opposition, civic activism, or the promotion of values contrary to their political and religious ideology.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In 2006 voters elected the 132-member PLC in a process under the PA basic law that international observers concluded generally met democratic standards in providing citizens the ability to change their government peacefully.

Hamas-backed candidates participated in the 2006 PLC elections as the “Change and Reform Movement” and won 74 of 132 seats. Fatah won 45 seats, and independents and candidates from third parties won the remaining seats. The PLC lacked a quorum and did not meet during the year. Although the Israeli government and the PA followed mutually agreed guidelines for Palestinians residing in Jerusalem to vote in 2005 and 2006, Israeli authorities did not allow all Palestinians in Jerusalem to vote, and authorities required those who could vote to do so via post offices (of which there were few), thereby impeding their ability to vote. No date was set for new national elections by year’s end.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The PA allowed a diversity of political parties to exist but limited the ability of Hamas members to campaign and organize rallies, although PA officials slightly eased this policy during the year. In Gaza Hamas allowed other political parties to exist but severely restricted their activities.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Legally women and minorities can vote and participate in political life on the same basis as men and nonminority citizens, although women faced significant social and cultural barriers in the West Bank and Gaza. There were 17 women in the 132-member PLC, which represented West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem districts, and there were three women in the 23-member cabinet. There were seven Christians in the PLC and three in the cabinet. Hamas excluded women from leadership positions.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

Palestinian law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government respected the law, making progress in investigations and prosecutions during the year.

Corruption: The PA’s anticorruption commission consisted of special prosecutors and an anticorruption court with a panel of three judges. The PA attorney general has responsibility for combating official corruption. There were allegations of corrupt practices among Fatah officials, particularly the theft of public funds and international assistance funds.

In the Gaza Strip, local observers and NGOs alleged instances of Hamas complicity in corrupt practices, including preferential purchasing terms for real estate and financial gains from involvement in the illegal tunnel trade by Hamas security forces, but authorities severely inhibited reporting and access to information.

Financial Disclosure: PA ministers were subject to financial disclosure laws.

Public Access to Information: PA law requires official PA institutions to “facilitate” acquisition of requested documents or information by any Palestinian, but it does not require agencies to provide such information. Reasons for denial generally referred to privacy rights and the necessity of security. Authorities made inadequate effort to train officials on the implementation of the law.

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

Palestinian human rights groups and several international organizations generally operated without PA restriction, and officials cooperated with their efforts to monitor the PA’s human rights practices. Several PA security services, including General Intelligence and the Palestinian Civil Police, appointed official liaisons who worked with human rights groups.

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas routinely harassed civil society groups, including by dissolving and closing peaceful organizations. Gaza-based NGOs reported that Hamas representatives appeared at their offices to assure compliance, seek tax payments, and summoned NGO representatives to police stations for questioning.

Palestinian, Israeli, and international NGOs monitored the Israeli government’s practices in the occupied territories and published their findings, although movement and access restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip made it difficult to work. The Israeli government permitted some human rights groups to hold and publish press conferences, and it provided the ICRC with access to most detainees.

The United Nations or Other International Bodies: PA and Israeli officials generally cooperated with and permitted visits by UN representatives or other organizations, such as the ICRC, although there were numerous reports the Israeli government blocked the delivery of humanitarian aid. There were numerous reports Hamas harassed members of international organizations.

The UN reported continued difficulty accessing seam zone communities in the northwestern West Bank due to what they considered Israeli authorities’ excessive demands for searches of personnel, including UN employees, based on their nationality.

In July 2014 the Human Rights Council established an international commission of inquiry “to investigate all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the ‘Occupied Palestinian Territory,’ including East Jerusalem, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip, in the context of the military operations conducted since June 13.” The government of Israel announced it would not cooperate with the commission of inquiry stating that it unfairly focused on Israel and not on terrorist attacks by Hamas. In June 2014 the commission of inquiry presented findings that there were credible allegations of war crimes committed in 2014 by both Israel and Palestinian armed groups. The report expressed concern about the inherently indiscriminate nature of rockets and mortars fired at Israeli civilians by Palestinian armed groups, condemned the killing of persons suspected of being collaborators, and said Palestinian authorities consistently failed to bring violators of international law to justice. The commission also expressed concern regarding Israel’s extensive use of weapons with a wide kill and injury radius. Although these weapons were not illegal, their use in densely populated areas was highly likely to kill combatants and civilians indiscriminately. It also stated that impunity generally prevailed regarding violations allegedly committed by Israeli forces, in both Gaza and the West Bank.

In November 2014 the UN Secretary-General announced a board of inquiry to investigate attacks on UN facilities in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge and incidents in which the IDF found weapons at those facilities. In April the board of inquiry released findings that Israel was responsible for damage to seven UN facilities in the Gaza Strip during Operation Protective Edge. The board also concluded that Palestinian militant groups used three UN facilities for storing weapons and for firing rockets and mortar shells.

Palestinian officials announced they submitted an instrument of ratification to the UN Secretary-General as the depositary for the Rome Statute and lodged an ad hoc declaration accepting the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) jurisdiction as of June 13, 2014. Following this announcement, the ICC Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) stated that it was opening a preliminary examination to determine whether there were crimes committed within the court’s jurisdiction on the territory of the “State of Palestine.” Palestinian officials indicated that they continued to submit information regarding alleged crimes to the OTP. Israeli officials strongly opposed the preliminary examination but maintained communication with the OTP.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The ICHR continued serving as the PA’s ombudsman and human rights commission. The ICHR issued monthly and annual

reports on human rights violations within Palestinian-controlled areas; the ICHR also issued formal recommendations to the PA. The ICHR was generally independent but faced resource shortages that limited its ability to work effectively.

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

PA law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, language, or social status. PA authorities worked to enforce these laws but often failed to do so. Some laws are discriminatory. For example, it is illegal for a Palestinian to sell land to Israelis, an offense punishable by death.

Hamas, despite remaining under the authority of Palestinian laws prohibiting discrimination, continued to implement discriminatory policies based on race, political affiliation, gender, and sexual orientation.

Many NGOs alleged Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza amounted to racial and cultural discrimination, citing legal differences between the treatment of Palestinians and Jewish settlers in the West Bank.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape is illegal under PA law, but the legal definition does not address spousal rape. Laws that apply in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip relieve of any criminal responsibility rapists who marry their victim. Authorities generally did not enforce the law effectively in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. Punishment for rape is five to 15 years in prison. Societal norms led to significant underreporting. There were reports police treated rape as a social and not a criminal matter and that authorities released some accused rapists after they apologized to their victims.

PA law does not explicitly prohibit domestic violence, but assault and battery are crimes. Authorities did not enforce the law effectively in domestic violence cases. NGOs reported women were frequently unwilling to report cases of violence or abuse to police due to fear of retribution, and HRW reported that authorities prosecuted few domestic violence cases successfully in recent years. Many women and girls stated they believed the legal system discriminated against women. According to the PA's Central Bureau of Statistics, violence against

wives, especially psychological violence, was common in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Police often treated domestic violence as a social instead of criminal matter and regularly returned victims to assailants.

The mandate of the PA Ministry of Women's Affairs is to promote women's rights. This strategy highlighted multiple challenges Palestinian women faced that require the attention, cooperation, and coordination of public institutions, NGOs, and the private sector, as well as international and regional organizations supporting women's problems. It serves as a reference for developing appropriate and gender-responsive policies to influence positively the socioeconomic and political conditions of women and men and enable women to enjoy fully their rights in equity within Palestinian society.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): There were reports FGM/C occurred in the past, but none during the year. It is prohibited by law.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: Provisions of Palestinian law discriminate against women. In 2011 President Abbas signed an amendment to the "honor killing" law that removed protection and leniency for perpetrators of crimes in defense of "family honor," although some NGOs argued the amendment did not apply to the most relevant articles of the law and thus did not have a noticeable effect. There were no reports that any honor killings occurred during the year.

Sexual Harassment: No law specifically relates to sexual harassment, and it was a significant and widespread problem. The Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces and other NGOs reported that for some women, cultural taboos and fear of stigma compelled them to remain silent about sexual harassment. Some women claimed that when they reported harassment, authorities held them responsible for provoking men's harassing behavior. Authorities in Gaza harassed women for "un-Islamic" behavior, including being in public after dark and walking with an unrelated man.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Jerusalem had access to contraception. They lacked information regarding family planning, although UNRWA continued holding workshops for Palestinian men, underscoring their role in family planning. According to the UN Population Fund, in 2014, 43 percent of girls and women ages 15 to 49 used a modern method of contraception. High workload, poor compensation, and resource shortages across the occupied territories continued to affect skilled attendance during labor and postpartum care, much of which midwives provided. Authorities and community and international NGOs operated HIV/AIDS education, prevention,

and screening programs, but there was limited information about the equality of services provided for women.

Infant mortality in Gaza rose during the year for the first time in more than half a century, according to UNRWA. The number of babies dying before they were four weeks old rose from 12 to 20 per 1,000 live births in the space of five years. There were more deaths among mothers and newborns in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. The PA Ministry of Health attributed continued increases in the number of home births to difficulties in reaching hospitals (see section 2.d.).

Discrimination: While the law provides for equality of the sexes, it also discriminates against women, as do traditional practices. Women can inherit, but not as much as men. Men may take more than one wife; although they rarely did so in urban areas, the practice was more common in small villages. Women may add conditions to marriage contracts to protect their interests in the event of divorce and child custody disputes, but they rarely did so. Societal pressure generally discouraged women from including divorce arrangements in a marriage contract. Cultural restrictions associated with marriage occasionally prevented women from completing mandatory schooling or attending college. Families sometimes disowned Muslim and Christian women who married outside their religious group. Local officials sometimes advised such women to leave their communities to prevent harassment.

Hamas enforced a conservative interpretation of Islam on the Gaza Strip's Muslim population that particularly discriminated against women. Authorities generally prohibited public mixing of the sexes. Plainclothes officers routinely stopped, separated, and questioned couples to determine if they were married; premarital sex is a crime punishable by imprisonment. Hamas's "morality police" also punished women for riding motorcycles, smoking cigarettes or water pipes, leaving their hair uncovered, and dressing "inappropriately" (that is, in Western-style or close-fitting clothing, such as jeans or T-shirts). Women living in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip stated they felt unsafe using public bathing or latrine facilities.

Palestinian labor law states work is the right of every capable citizen; however, it regulates the work of women, preventing them from taking employment in dangerous occupations (see section 7.d.). The Ministry of Labor decree No. 2 for 2004 prohibits women from working in mining and quarrying, fireworks production, asphalt production, all types of alcohol production, pesticides production, all kinds of welding activities, and in forests and natural reserves, including lumber-related work.

Female education rates were high, particularly in the West Bank, and women's attendance at universities exceeded that of men. Female university students, however, reported discrimination by university administrators, professors, and their male peers, according to the Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. In February 2014 Hamas implemented a "modest" dress code at al-Aqsa University in Gaza, drawing criticism from the PA minister of higher education.

According to press and NGO reports, in some instances teachers in Gaza sent girls home for not wearing conservative attire in Hamas-run schools, although enforcement was not systematic.

Children

Birth Registration: The PA registers Palestinians born in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and Israel requires the PA to transmit this information to the Israeli Civil Administration. Since the PA does not constitute a state, it does not determine "citizenship" alone. Children of Palestinian parents can receive a Palestinian identity card (issued by the Israeli Ministry of Defense's Civil Administration), if they are born in the occupied territories to a parent who holds a Palestinian identity card. The PA Ministry of Interior and the Israeli Civil Administration both play a role in determining a person's eligibility.

Israel registers the births of Palestinians in Jerusalem, although Palestinian residents of Jerusalem reported delays in the process.

Education: Education in PA-controlled areas is compulsory from age six through the ninth grade (approximately 16 years of age). Education is available to all Palestinians without cost through high school.

In the Gaza Strip, primary education is not universal. UNRWA and authorities in Gaza provided instruction. In addition to the PA-provided curriculum, UNRWA provided specialized classes on human rights, conflict resolution, and tolerance. There were reports Hamas instituted courses on military training in its schools.

In Jerusalem, Palestinian children did not have access to the same educational resources as Israeli children, and NGOs reported that East Jerusalem needed additional classrooms in official municipal schools to provide adequate space for Palestinian children to attend official schools (see section 6, National/Racial/Ethnic

Minorities). The Jerusalem municipality added 194 classrooms in East Jerusalem between 2009 and 2014.

Child Abuse: Child abuse was reportedly a widespread problem. The law prohibits violence against children; however, PA authorities rarely punished perpetrators of family violence.

Israeli security forces also were responsible for violence against children in custody and during arrest (see section 1.c.) in the West Bank or near the Gaza Strip buffer zone, according to NGO and UN reports.

Doctors Without Borders reported the number of children with posttraumatic stress disorder and other anxiety disorders, including depression, increased in recent years. The organization attributed a majority of the cases to trauma experienced during Israeli military incursions or to settler violence.

Early and Forced Marriage: Palestinian law defines the minimum age for marriage as 18; however, religious law allows persons as young as 15 years old to marry. Child marriage did not appear to be widespread, according to NGOs, including the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling. According to UNICEF data for the year, 2 percent of girls were married by the age of 15.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The PA considers statutory rape a felony based on the Jordanian penal code, which also outlaws all forms of pornography. Punishment for rape of a victim less than age 15 includes a minimum sentence of seven years.

Child Soldiers: There were reports Hamas trained children as combatants.

Displaced Children: Conflict and demolition orders (see section 2.d.) displaced children in the occupied territories. B'Tselem reported home demolitions displaced children in the West Bank and East Jerusalem during the year.

Anti-Semitism

Approximately 370,000 Jewish settlers lived in the West Bank. The Jewish population in Gaza, aside from foreign nationals, was nonexistent. There were an estimated 250,000 Jewish residents of East Jerusalem.

Rhetoric by some Palestinians and Muslim religious leaders included expressions of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. Anti-Israel sentiment was widespread and sometimes crossed the line into anti-Semitism in public discourse, including media commentary longing for a world without Israel and glorifying terror attacks on Israelis. Following a string of attacks by Palestinians on Israelis in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Israel, Palestinian press and social media widely circulated cartoons encouraging such attacks.

At times the PA failed to condemn incidents of anti-Semitic expression in official PA traditional and social media outlets.

In the Gaza Strip and West Bank there were instances in which media outlets, particularly outlets controlled by Hamas, published and broadcast material that included anti-Semitic content, sometimes amounting to incitement to violence.

Trafficking in Persons

No PA law specifically prohibits trafficking in persons, and reportedly small numbers of children and adults experienced forced labor in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. There were reports some children worked in forced labor in the West Bank, including in settlements.

NGOs reported employers subjected Palestinian men to forced labor in Israeli settlements in industry, agriculture, construction, and other sectors. The PA was unable to monitor and investigate abuses in these areas and elsewhere because it did not control its borders and the Israeli government limited its authority to work in Areas B and C.

Persons with Disabilities

The PA ratified Palestinian Disability Law in 1999, but NGOs complained of very slow implementation. The law does not mandate access to buildings, information, or communications, although UNRWA's policy was to provide accessibility in all new structures. The disability rights NGO Bizchut reported a lack of accessible transportation services in East Jerusalem.

Palestinians with disabilities continued to receive inconsistent and poor-quality services and care. The PA depended on UN agencies and NGOs to care for persons with physical disabilities and offered substandard care for persons with mental disabilities. There were reports Israeli authorities placed in isolation without a full medical evaluation detainees deemed mentally disabled or a threat to

themselves or others. According to Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, isolation of prisoners with mental disabilities was common.

Familial and societal discrimination against persons with disabilities existed in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

According to OCHA an estimated 27,500 Bedouin lived in Area C in the West Bank. UNRWA registered many of them as refugees, and Bedouins frequently inhabited areas designated by Israel as closed military zones or as areas planned for settlement expansion. Forced displacement by the Israeli government continued of Bedouin and herding communities in Area C, and many of these communities suffered from limited access to water, health care, education, and other basic services.

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

Palestinian law, based on the 1960 Jordanian penal code, prohibits consensual same-sex sexual activity, although the PA did not prosecute individuals suspected of such activity. Societal discrimination based on cultural and religious traditions was commonplace, making the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza challenging environments for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. Some Palestinians claimed PA security officers and neighbors harassed, abused, and sometimes arrested LGBTI individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. NGOs reported Hamas also harassed and detained persons due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

While the PA Ministry of Health provided treatment and privacy protections for patients with HIV/AIDS, societal discrimination against affected individuals was common. Anecdotal evidence suggested societal discrimination against HIV/AIDS patients was also very common in Gaza.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

OCHA, the Jerusalem Legal Aid Society and Human Rights Center, and other NGOs reported attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians and their property in the

West Bank. The attacks included direct violence against Palestinian residents. Some Israeli settlers reportedly used violence against Palestinians to harass them and to keep them away from land settlers sought to acquire.

Various human rights groups continued to claim authorities insufficiently investigated and rarely prosecuted settler violence. Some groups attributed this circumstance in part to the Israeli Civil Administration's neglect of Palestinian complaints, as well as to Palestinian residents' reluctance to report incidents due to fears of settler retaliation or because they were discouraged by the lack of accountability in most cases. The Israeli NGO Yesh Din stated that authorities closed more than 90 percent of Israeli investigations of offenses against Palestinians in the West Bank without indictments.

On February 25, a group of suspected settlers on motorcycles from the West Bank settlement of Beitar Ellit fired at Palestinian residences in the West Bank village of Nahalin. There were no reports of injuries.

On February 25, suspected settlers vandalized and set fire to a mosque in the village of Jab'a near Bethlehem. They wrote Hebrew graffiti on the walls that stated, "Revenge for the Land of Zion" and "Price Tag."

On July 31, unidentified assailants attacked and destroyed by fire two homes in the Palestinian village of Douma. The fire burned to death 18-month old Ali Dawabsheh. On August 8, his father, Saad Dawabsheh, also died from his burns, and, on September 6, his mother, Riham, died. Authorities found Hebrew graffiti with the words "Revenge" and "Long Live King Messiah" painted on the homes and nearby walls. Both PA President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu condemned the attack. As of year's end, there were no arrests for the attack, although on September 9, Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon stated that it was highly probable "an extreme group of Jews" committed the crime.

Following the murder of two Israeli settlers on October 2, there were reports of an increase in attacks by settlers on Palestinians. On the morning of October 17, 18-year-old Hebron resident Fadel al-Qawasmeh was walking to work when an Israeli settler civilian shot and killed him. Israeli military authorities reported al-Qawasmeh had a knife and intended to stab the Israeli civilian and that an investigation was underway. AI claimed that the military released no evidence to support these claims, although video cameras operated by Israeli forces heavily monitor al-Shuhada Street, where the incident took place. B'Tselem reported that locals claimed the IDF planted the knife on al-Qawasmeh, which observers could

not confirm without documentation from videos that remained in the IDF's possession.

On October 23, a knife-wielding Jewish extremist attacked Arik Ascherman, the president of Israeli human rights organization Rabbis for Human Rights while he assisted Palestinian workers with the olive harvest in a Palestinian olive grove near Itamar.

“Price tag” attacks (property crimes and violent acts by extremist Jewish individuals and groups in retaliation for activity they deemed antisettlement) continued.

In February the Lod District Court in Israel sentenced three West Bank settlers convicted of planning and carrying out a 2013 price tag attack in the West Bank village of Far'ata, adjacent to the illegal settlement outpost of Havat Gilad. Authorities convicted the settlers of burning two Palestinian-owned vehicles and painting Stars of David on village walls. The verdict noted that because one settler, Binyamin Richter, refused to cooperate during his interrogation, he received the harshest sentence of those convicted: three years imprisonment, a one-year suspended sentence, and a fine of 15,000 Israeli new shekels (NIS) (approximately \$4,000) to compensate the Palestinian victims. Additionally, his involvement in the attack violated a house arrest order that authorities had imposed on him earlier, related to other judicial proceedings. In his defense the accused argued that his actions, which he said were only spray-painting graffiti, were nonviolent and not incitement to violence. The court sentenced the other two settlers involved in the price tag attack, Yehuda Landsberg and Yehuda Savir, to 30-months' imprisonment following plea bargains. Media reported that Shin Bet (Israel's security service) described the three as radical, right-wing activists, two of whom previously associated with other violent acts.

Access to social and commercial services in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including housing, education, and health care, was available only to Israelis. Israeli officials discriminated against Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem regarding access to employment and legal housing by denying Palestinians access to registration paperwork. In both the West Bank and Jerusalem, Israeli authorities often placed insurmountable obstacles in the way of Palestinian applicants for construction permits, including the requirement they document land ownership in the absence of a uniform post-1967 land registration process, high application fees, and requirements that new housing be connected to often unavailable municipal works.

According to B'Tselem in 2000 Israel began curtailing the Palestinian population registry by denying paperwork to Palestinians and effectively declaring Palestinians illegal residents. Some Palestinians defined as illegal residents faced harassment, arrest, or deportation to the Gaza Strip.

The World Bank reported that Palestinians suffered water shortages and purchased approximately half of their domestic water supply from Israel. Oslo-era agreements limited the amount of water Palestinians can draw from West Bank aquifers. According to AI, Palestinians received less than the World Health Organization's prescribed minimum daily water supply to maintain basic hygiene standards and food security. Political constraints limited the PA's ability to improve water network management and efficiency, including the requirement for Israeli approval to implement water-related projects and the PA's lack of authority in Area C to prevent theft from the network, as well as the PA's own management problems.

The Israeli military continued to destroy water cisterns, some of which donor countries had funded for humanitarian purposes. The Israeli military also destroyed unlicensed Palestinian agricultural wells, particularly in the Jordan Valley area of the West Bank, claiming they depleted aquifer resources.

Palestinians living within the borders of the Jerusalem Municipality, but cut off from it by the separation barrier, reported that the municipality failed to provide basic services, including water, police, and infrastructure.

NGOs alleged that Jerusalem municipal and Israeli national policies aimed at decreasing the number of Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. Government-sponsored construction of new Israeli housing units continued, while building permits were difficult to obtain for Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, and authorities demolished homes built by Palestinian residents without legal permits. The Israeli NGOs Bimkom and Ir Amim stated that Palestinians in East Jerusalem continued to face barriers to purchasing property or obtaining building permits. Authorities generally zoned land owned or populated by Palestinians (including Israeli-Palestinians) for low residential growth. Authorities designated approximately 30 percent of East Jerusalem for Israeli residents. Palestinians were able in some cases to rent Israeli-owned property, but they were generally unable to purchase property in an Israeli neighborhood. Israeli NGOs stated that only 13 percent of all land in East Jerusalem was available for construction and that, in the

Israeli neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, land was not available for Palestinian construction.

The Israeli government and Jewish organizations in Jerusalem made efforts to increase Israeli property ownership or underscore Jewish history in predominantly Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem.

Although Israeli law entitles Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to full and equal services provided by the municipality and other Israeli authorities, the Jerusalem Municipality failed to provide sufficient social services, infrastructure, emergency planning, and postal service for Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem. According to ACRI, 75 percent of Jerusalem Palestinians lived in poverty, and 82 percent of East Jerusalem children lived below the poverty line. There was a chronic shortage of more than 1,100 classrooms in East Jerusalem's official school system, and despite commitments made by Israeli authorities and a high court ruling that the municipality must fill the gap of missing classrooms in East Jerusalem by 2016, authorities built only 194 classrooms in the last five years. Authorities largely segregated bus services in Jerusalem between Israelis and Palestinians. Light-rail service completed in 2010 served both Palestinian and Israeli populations and crossed into East Jerusalem; NGOs reported, however, that of the 24 stops on the light rail, only five were in Palestinian neighborhoods.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

PA law provides for the rights of workers to form and join independent unions and conduct legal strikes. The law requires conducting collective bargaining without any pressure or influence but does not explicitly provide for the right to collective bargaining. Antiunion discrimination and employer interference in union functions are illegal, but the law does not specifically prohibit termination due to union activity.

The PA labor code does not apply to civil servants or domestic workers, although the law allows civil servants the right to form unions. The requirements for legal strikes are cumbersome, and strikers had little protection from retribution. Prospective strikers must provide written warning two weeks in advance of a strike (four weeks in the case of public utilities). The PA Ministry of Labor can impose arbitration; workers or their trade unions faced disciplinary action if they rejected the result. If the ministry cannot resolve a dispute, it can be referred to a

committee chaired by a delegate from the ministry and composed of an equal number of members designated by the workers and the employer, and finally to a specialized labor court.

The government did not effectively enforce labor laws and subjected procedures to lengthy delays and appeals. Penalties and enforcement were insufficient to deter violations. Authorities had not fully implemented the PA's labor law at year's end, and labor unions claimed the current system favored employers. During the year the Ministry of Labor implemented a provision of the Labor Law by conducting periodic medical examination of workers. Authorities had not established a specialized labor court as required by labor legislation. Some judges received training in labor regulations, which reportedly shortened the time to process a labor case to approximately one year. The PA enforced the prohibitions on antiunion discrimination and employer interference in union functions; however, it inconsistently enforced laws regarding freedom of association. The PA did not seek to enforce collective bargaining rights for unions, with the exception of those representing PA employees. Hamas continued to maintain de facto control of the government and worker rights in Gaza, where the PA was unable to enforce labor law.

The PA respected freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining with some significant exceptions. In November 2014 PA security forces arrested Bassam Zakarneh, head of the PA Public Employees Union, along with his deputy, following the completion of a long-term partial strike as well as a one-day full strike to protest the lack of a cost-of-living allowance. The PA's Ministry of Labor released a statement justifying the arrests under a 2012 presidential declaration that the union "operated without union status" and was therefore in violation of PA laws. Authorities subsequently released both men pending trial. The judge in the case repeatedly postponed the trial, most recently on December 2.

Public-sector workers engaged in some protests and strikes over delayed or partial payment of wages at the beginning of the year. In the first months of the year, Palestinian health workers in Gaza staged multiple strikes to protest the PA's failure to pay their salaries, at times bringing all medical services in Gaza to a halt. Teachers, who comprise the most significant portion of the public-sector work force, also demonstrated against partial pay at the same time.

Labor unions were not independent of authorities and political parties.

Two main labor unions in the West Bank (the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and the Federation of Independent and Democratic Trade Unions and Workers) competed for membership and political recognition.

Israeli law applies to Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem, but authorities did not enforce it uniformly. Despite a 2008 high court ruling requiring Israeli law to be applied to workers in settlements, most settlements applied Jordanian labor law to Palestinian workers, which was the applicable law prior to 1967 and provides for lower wages and fewer protections than Israeli law. Palestinian workers in Jerusalem often joined West Bank unions or the Israeli General Federation of Labor (Histadrut); however, they could not vote in Histadrut elections.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

Forced labor occurred in the occupied territories. PA law does not expressly forbid forced or compulsory labor or human trafficking. Women working as domestic workers were vulnerable to forced labor conditions in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, since the PA does not regulate domestic labor within households or in the large informal sector. Forced child labor also occurred (see section 7.c.).

Also see the Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The Palestinian Authority has no unified or comprehensive set of child labor laws. The 2000 Unified Labor Law and the 2004 Palestinian Child Law prohibit the employment of any person under age 15. The law classifies children as persons under age 18 and it restricts employment for those between 15 and 18. The law permits hiring children between ages 15 and 18 for certain types of employment under set conditions. The law allows children younger than age 15 to work for immediate family members under close supervision.

The law prohibits children from working more than 40 hours per week, operating certain types of machines and equipment, performing work that might be unsafe or damage their health or education, and working at night, in hard labor, or in remote locations far from urban centers. A 2012 presidential decree amended the law to include provisions on child labor accompanied by explicit penalties for violations. Authorities can penalize repeat offenders by having fines doubled and/or full or

partial closure of their facility. Fines and enforcement were not sufficient to deter violations.

In 2014 the PA strengthened coordination within its local Child Protection Networks and streamlined the legal process for child labor cases in its courts, but it did not expand enforcement capabilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for coordinating efforts to protect children's rights, while the Ministry of Labor's Inspection and Protection Administration is responsible for enforcing the law. The Ministry of Labor reported that nearly 30 percent of its labor inspectors (similar to 2014) had training and experience in dealing with child labor, a proportion it recognized as insufficient, although an increase from prior years. During site visits Ministry of Labor inspectors raised awareness among business owners that labor by children under the age of 15 was illegal under Palestinian law.

Due to inadequate resources and logistical difficulties, PA authorities did not effectively enforce the law. Many cases of child labor violations reportedly occurred in home environments, for example, on family farms, which were not open to labor ministry inspection. Child protection officers with the Ministries of Social Affairs and Labor reported that they referred only employers who hired children less than age 15 to work in dangerous conditions or hazardous jobs to the attorney general for prosecution; the ministry referred only a few cases during the year. The government reported approximately 600 cases of child labor violations during the year. In almost all cases, authorities removed children after the inspections. In many cases the employer called the parents to come and take the child while the inspectors from the labor ministry were present. The Ministry of Labor requires that employers keep lists of employees, including children, although some employers reportedly did not keep accurate records of children they employed, hiding them from inspection. In recent years PA officials reported fining "numerous" persons after successful investigations conducted by the PA Ministry of Labor. The ministry inspected only businesses operating in the formal economy and was unable to conduct investigations in the Gaza Strip. It did not have access to Israeli-controlled Area C of the West Bank (nearly 60 percent of the West Bank), where child economic exploitation and labor were most likely to occur, according to PA officials.

In the third quarter of the year, the PA estimated that 5 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 17 worked in the West Bank and Gaza--6.7 percent in the West Bank and 2.4 percent in Gaza. Palestinian child laborers generally worked on family farms, in shops, as roadside and checkpoint street vendors, in car washes, in factories, or in small manufacturing enterprises. They were vulnerable to forced

labor. Conditions were especially poor for Palestinian children working as street vendors, many of whom worked all day without food or water and who were subjected to abuse. The 2013 statistics of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics showed that approximately 80 percent of children ages 10 to 17 who worked did not attend school.

Hamas reportedly did not enforce child labor laws in Gaza; in some cases Hamas reportedly encouraged children to work gathering gravel and scrap metal from bomb sites to sell to recycling merchants. There were reports Hamas trained children as combatants.

The Israeli government stated it did not issue permits for Palestinian West Bank residents younger than age 18 to work in Israeli settlements, except in the Jordan Valley, where the law allows work permits for persons age 16 and older; however, according to the PA, children entered the settlements or crossed into Israel, often through being trafficked, to seek work. The PA reported that Palestinian children engaged in child labor in Israeli settlements in the West Bank faced security problems, exploitation, and harassment since they did not have access to legal protection or labor inspection.

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/findings.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The law and regulations do not prohibit discrimination regarding race, language, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, or social status. Laws prohibit discrimination based on gender and disabilities; however, the government did not effectively enforce those laws and regulations.

There was discrimination based on the above categories with respect to employment and occupation. Women endured prejudice and, in some cases, repressive conditions at work. Women's participation in the workforce was extremely low, particularly in Gaza, although gradually growing, according to PA statistics (see section 6, Women).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The PA cabinet approved a minimum wage of 1,450 new Israeli shekels (\$370) per month, which went into effect at the beginning of 2013, but 36.1 percent of wage employees received less than the minimum wage. In the West Bank, approximately 21.4 percent of wage employees in the private sector received less than the minimum monthly wage; these approximately 50,000 wage employees had an average monthly wage of 1,064 NIS (\$271). In Gaza 66.7 percent of wage employees in the private sector received less than the minimum monthly wage; these approximately 74,700 wage employees had an average monthly wage of 730 NIS (\$186). Palestinians working in Israeli settlements reported they continued to receive wages lower than the Israeli minimum wage, despite a 2008 high court ruling that Israeli labor laws apply to relations between Palestinian workers and Israeli employers in settlements in the occupied territories. In 2011, the date of the most recent official estimate, the PA estimated 25.8 percent of residents in the occupied territories lived below the poverty line of 7.49 NIS (\$1.90) per day.

According to PA law, the maximum official Sunday to Thursday workweek was 48 hours. The law also allows for paid official and religious holidays, which employers may not deduct from annual leave. Workers must be paid time and a half for each hour worked beyond 45 hours per week and may not perform more than 12 hours of overtime work per week.

The PA Ministry of Labor was responsible for setting occupational health and safety standards, but its enforcement ability was limited, in part due to lack of staff. The ministry employed 42 labor inspectors during the year, including 12 to focus on child labor; ministry officials estimated they would need at least 300 inspectors to enforce the labor laws adequately. The PA did not effectively monitor smaller worksites, which were at times below legal safety standards. Workers do not have the legal protection to remove themselves from situations that endangered their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment.

The PA was unable to monitor labor conditions in the Gaza Strip and had no authority to monitor labor safety in the 60 percent of the West Bank designated as Area C under the terms of Oslo-era agreements with Israel. The ministry cannot enforce Palestinian labor law in seam zones, the area east of the Green Line and west of Israel's barrier wall, in Israel (where Palestinians were employed on permits or illegally), or in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Israeli authorities did not conduct labor inspections in Israeli settlements, where Palestinian workers constituted a significant part of the workforce. The lack of a competent labor authority in the settlements increased workers' vulnerability to exploitation. NGOs such as Kav LaOved stated that exploitative practices in Israeli settlements were

widespread. Israeli NGOs brought some cases in Israeli labor courts on behalf of Palestinian workers employed by enterprises in the settlements. The PA Ministry of Labor reported the number of Palestinians who raised cases against settlers during the year remained very low.

Occupational safety and health were poor. The large informal sector included work in illegal smuggling tunnels between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. Most dangerous work conditions were in rubble, garbage, and other solid waste collection, street vendor work, manufacturing, construction, car mechanic work, and work in metal workshops, on poultry farms, in gravel collection, and in building demolition.