

CYPRUS 2017 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

Since 1974 the southern part of Cyprus has been under the control of the government of the Republic of Cyprus. The northern part of Cyprus, administered by Turkish Cypriots, proclaimed itself the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”) in 1983. The United States does not recognize the “TRNC,” nor does any country other than Turkey. A substantial number of Turkish troops remained on the island. A buffer zone, or “Green Line,” patrolled by the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), separates the two sides.

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Republic of Cyprus is a constitutional republic and multiparty presidential democracy. In 2013 voters elected President Nicos Anastasiades in free and fair elections. In May 2016 voters elected 56 representatives to the 80-seat House of Representatives (Vouli Antiprosopon) in free and fair elections.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

The most significant human rights issues included instances of corruption, which the authorities investigated; and societal violence against members of minority ethnic and national groups.

The government investigated and prosecuted officials who committed human rights abuses. There were no reports of impunity during the year.

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

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices. There were reports, however, that police engaged in abusive tactics and degrading treatment of suspects. Members of ethnic and racial minorities were more likely to be subjected to such treatment.

On September 5, the NGO Action for Equality, Support, and Antiracism (KISA) reported that a police officer brutalized a 60-year-old Turkish citizen on August 31, when he crossed the Ledra Palace checkpoint on his bicycle without showing a valid entry visa. KISA claimed the incident occurred in front of citizens who urged police to stop. The beating allegedly continued inside a police station in view of another officer who did nothing to stop it. KISA reported the incident to the Independent Authority for the Investigation of Allegations and Complaints against Police, and the authority investigated the complaint and recommended the criminal prosecution of the officer. The Office of the Attorney General ordered the officer's criminal prosecution and rejected a police request for criminal prosecution of the complainant for resisting arrest and causing bodily harm to a police officer. The complainant remained in custody until the completion of the investigation and was deported to Turkey on October 7.

During the year the ombudsman, who also acts as the country's national preventive mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture, received "a small number" of complaints of mistreatment and discriminatory and degrading behavior, including complaints of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, from inmates in the Central Prison and in detention centers. The ombudsman reported that most of the complaints were not sufficiently substantiated. Overall, the ombudsman established improvement in the treatment of prisoners and detainees in the Central Prison and in detention centers.

KISA reported that police sometimes used violence to suppress detainees' protests in the Mennoyia Detention Center. Following a January 2016 visit to the country, the UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture stated that it still faced several problems, particularly regarding the independent monitoring of places of detention and the treatment of migrants.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison and detention center conditions, including detention centers for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants pending deportation, did not sufficiently meet international standards, and prison overcrowding was a problem. Nicosia Central Prison, the only prison in the Republic of Cyprus, and all detention centers are operated by the government. In addition to Mennoyia Detention Center for Illegal Immigrants and the Central Prison, there are seven detention facilities suitable for over 24 hours of detention in the Republic of Cyprus. There are also holding cells in police stations for short-term detention.

Physical Conditions: Overcrowding continued to be a problem for the male wing of Nicosia Central Prison, but to a lesser extent than in previous years. In 2016 the prison's official capacity was 528; the maximum number of inmates held during the year was 624. In December 2016 a new wing for female prisoners was opened which has resolved the problem of overcrowding of female prisoners.

Prison authorities held juvenile pretrial detainees in cells separate from convicted juveniles, but the two groups shared the same grounds in their daily activities. Authorities reportedly held migrants detained on deportation orders together with detainees charged with criminal offenses in nearly all police stations. Such detentions are limited to a maximum of 48 hours.

During the year the ombudsman reported a further reduction in the number of migrant detainees in detention centers as a result of a policy instituted in 2015 to transfer them to the Mennoyia Detention Center within 48 hours. The Ministry of Justice reported that it runs a substitution program for drug addicts at the Central Prison, which is based on World Health Organization recommendations.

Approximately 44 percent of prisoners in the Central Prison were non-Cypriots convicted for criminal offenses. They were convicted for immigration and drug-related offenses, thefts, sexual offenses, and road accidents.

The ombudsman reported a further reduction in the number of detainees at Mennoyia Detention Center during the year but noted that there were still some rare cases of migrants and asylum seekers detained for deportation purposes for periods longer than the stated government policy, although there was no prospect they would be deported. A considerable number of detainees at Mennoyia Detention Center were awaiting a decision on their request for international protection or for adjudication of their appeals against the rejection of their asylum applications. Unlike in previous years, the ombudsman and NGOs did not encounter cases of detainees deported before final adjudication of their asylum

applications. In previous years the ombudsman intervened and prevented some of the deportations. In a February 2016 report, the ombudsman warned that deportation of asylum seekers while court proceedings were still pending could amount to violation of the principle of nonrefoulement, which could bring into question the legality of the deportation order and detention.

Administration: Detention centers did not have facilities for religious observance.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted prison visits by independent human rights observers, and such visits, unrestricted and unannounced, occurred during the year. The Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CTP) visited the Central Prison in February. The House of Representatives Committee on Human Rights and the Committee on Education and Culture also visited the prison.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court, and the government generally observed these requirements.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Police enforce the law and combat criminal activity. The Cyprus National Guard, backed by a contingent of Greek military forces, the Hellenic Force in Cyprus, protects national security. The National Guard reports to the Ministry of Defense, which reports to the president, while police report to the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. The president appoints the chief of police.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over police and the National Guard, and the government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse. There were no reports of impunity during the year.

In June 2016 a police officer and his wife were shot and killed and a second officer was seriously injured in a mafia-style shooting while dining at an Ayia Napa resort restaurant with a local businessman rumored to be a major crime lord, who was also killed. Acting on findings of a criminal investigation into possible police complicity and case file mismanagement, on May 4, the attorney general ordered the criminal prosecution of the deputy police chief for leaking confidential information related to the case to the press. Seven other police officers and a

prison warden faced disciplinary action in the absence of evidence to support their criminal prosecution. The deputy police chief was fired from the police force. His trial began on July 3.

From July to October, the attorney general ordered the criminal prosecution of police officers in six cases. From January to October, the police investigated 34 criminal cases against members of the police force.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires judicially issued arrest warrants, and authorities respected this requirement. Authorities may not detain a person for more than one day without referral of the case to a court for extension of detention. Most periods of investigative detention did not exceed 10 days before the filing of formal charges. Detainees were promptly informed of the charges against them, and the charges were presented in a language they could understand. The attorney general made efforts to minimize pretrial detention, especially in cases of serious crimes.

While attorneys generally had access to detainees, the CPT noted in a 2014 report that persons apprehended by police were usually able to speak in private with an ex officio lawyer only at the time of their first court appearance. In criminal cases the state provides indigent detainees with an attorney. To qualify for free legal aid, however, detainees require a court decision, based on their financial need, before a lawyer is assigned. In its report the CPT noted this system inevitably delayed detainees' access to a lawyer.

There is a system of bail. The government claimed the right to deport foreign nationals for reasons of public interest, regardless of whether criminal charges had been filed against them or they had been convicted of a crime. Trial delays were common and partially caused by lengthy legal procedures, which caused a larger workload for the courts.

Detainees' Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court:

Detainees have the right to appeal to the Supreme Court to challenge the legal basis and length of their detention or for a writ of habeas corpus. If the application is successful, authorities should immediately release the detainee. NGOs reported a number of cases, however, of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants who successfully challenged their detention before the Supreme Court, but the administration immediately issued new detention orders and rearrested them.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

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

On March 1, the former deputy attorney general was sentenced to 3 1/2 years in prison for conspiring to pervert the course of justice while in office. In 2015 the Supreme Court ordered his dismissal for conduct unbecoming a public official.

Trial Procedures

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

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and the right to appeal. Officials informed defendants promptly and in detail of the charges against them. The constitution provides for fair and public trials without undue delay, and defendants have the right to be present and to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. Authorities provide an attorney for defendants who are unable to afford one, and defendants are allowed adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense. Authorities provided free interpretation as necessary through all stages of the trial. Defendants have the right to confront prosecution or plaintiff witnesses and present evidence or witnesses on their behalf. The government generally respected the above rights and provided them to all defendants.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters, permitting claimants to bring lawsuits seeking damages for or cessation of human rights violations, and citizens used this procedure. Individuals could appeal cases involving alleged human rights violations by the state to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) once they exhausted all avenues of appeal in domestic courts.

Property Restitution

According to the law, the minister of interior is the guardian of the properties of Turkish Cypriots who have not had permanent residence in the government-controlled area since 1974. Ownership remains with the original owner, but the sale or transfer of Turkish Cypriot property under the guardianship of the minister requires the approval of the government. The minister has the authority to return properties to Turkish Cypriot applicants after examining the circumstances of each case. Owners can appeal the minister's decisions to the Administrative Court.

During the year Turkish Cypriots filed seven court cases seeking to reclaim property located in the government-controlled area, including one filed with the Administrative Court. The Administrative Court issued one decision accepting the application of the owner against the guardian's decision to place the property under guardianship law. The court annulled the guardian's decision.

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

The law prohibits such actions, and there were no reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

The law provides for freedom of expression, including for 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 expression, including for the press.

Freedom of Expression: The law criminalizes incitement to hatred and violence based on race, color, religion, genealogical origin, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation. Such acts are punishable by up to five years' imprisonment, a fine of up to 10,000 euros (\$12,000), or both. In 2015 police examined 11 complaints of verbal assault and/or hate speech based on ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, and color. Authorities opened criminal prosecutions in five cases that are currently pending trial.

Press and Media Freedom: The law penalizes the use of geographical names and toponyms in the country other than those included in the gazetteer the government presented at the 1987 Fifth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical

Names. According to the law, anyone who publishes, imports, distributes, or sells maps, books, or any other documents in print or digital form that contain geographical names and toponyms on the island of Cyprus other than those permitted, commits an offense punishable by up to three years in prison, a fine of up to 50,000 euros (\$60,000), or both.

In May and June, the Radio and Television Authority issued decisions fining two television stations and a radio station for airing interviews and programs deemed to tarnish the reputation of high-level government and church officials in the country.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports that the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority.

The law criminalizes the use of computer systems to incite and promote racism, xenophobia, prejudice, racial discrimination, hate speech, and violence. Such acts are punishable by up to five years' imprisonment, a fine of up to 35,000 euros (\$42,000), or both. The use of computer systems to commit offenses related to child pornography is criminalized and is punishable with up to 10 years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to 42,500 euros (\$51,000).

According to statistics compiled by Eurostat in April, approximately 78 percent of the population used the internet in 2016.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

On April 17, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prevented 13 child members of a dance troupe from Serbia and their adult chaperones from traveling to the area under Turkish Cypriot administration to participate in a cultural event at the invitation of the "TRNC." The ministry denied reports it had detained and deported the group and stated the group voluntarily chose to depart Cyprus after officials advised them that their participation in the event would violate UN resolutions, and that no consular assistance would be available while in the north. The Greek Cypriot media reported that the Serbian Foreign Ministry claimed on April 19, that the children had been detained and barred from leaving the airport before eventually being allowed to enter the Republic of Cyprus and returning to Serbia the next day.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law and constitution provide for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

c. Freedom of Religion

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

d. Freedom of Movement

The law provides for freedom of internal movement within government-controlled areas, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.

Abuse of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons: NGOs reported that some rejected asylum seekers under detention submitted complaints of psychological and verbal abuse by police officers at the Mennoya Detention Center. Foreign nationals sentenced to a few months' imprisonment for entering the country illegally were generally deported as soon as their travel documents were ready.

According to local NGOs, authorities routinely detained irregular migrants and certain categories of rejected asylum seekers in prison-like conditions for extended periods while awaiting deportation. Detainees reportedly included unaccompanied minors.

While the government's policy was not to hold such persons in detention for long periods and to release them and provide them residency permits if they were not deported within 18 months, there were reports that irregular migrants and asylum seekers were held beyond 18 months or, if released, were rearrested and incarcerated on different grounds. In a March 2016 report following his 2015 visit, the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights expressed concern over the wide use of migrant detention, often for excessively long periods, and the practice of rearresting and redetaining migrants. The commissioner urged the government to end the detention of migrants, especially of asylum seekers and migrants deprived of liberty when there was no reasonable prospect of their deportation.

Unlike in previous years, the ombudsman reported that long-term detentions continued to occur in some rare occasions although her office, which handles these cases, did not receive any complaints concerning detainees held for considerable time based on deportation orders during the year. The ombudsman had repeatedly called on the government not to detain foreigners for deportation when there was no prospect of deportation because they did not have travel documents.

An NGO reported that in some isolated cases, undocumented foreigners arrested for illegal stays in the country remained in long-term detention.

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern, including migrants.

In-country Movement: The government did not restrict Greek Cypriots from traveling to the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, but it advised them against spending the night at Greek Cypriot properties occupied by Turkish Cypriots or Turks, gambling in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, or buying or developing property there. NGOs reported that the government prohibits recognized non-Cypriot refugees with temporary residence status and asylum seekers from crossing to the area administered by the Turkish Cypriots, asserting it could not assure their safety in an area not under its control.

In August a local newspaper alleged the government had engaged in racial discrimination by refusing to grant a passport to the child of a Greek Cypriot mother and a Turkish father, even though the child was born and living in Cyprus. The paper reported that the parents applied for their child's passport more than three months previously, but their request had not been processed, claiming this was due to the father's nationality. The Republic of Cyprus' Commissioner for the Rights of the Child requested a quick resolution to this application.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The government considers Greek Cypriots displaced as a result of the 1974 division of the island to be refugees, although they fell under the UN definition of IDPs. As of October there were 229,840 such individuals and their descendants. UNHCR did not provide assistance to IDPs and officially considered the IDP population to be zero. Depending on their income, IDPs were eligible for financial assistance from the government. They were resettled, had access to humanitarian

organizations, and were not subject to attack, targeting, or mandatory return under dangerous conditions. Until July, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were engaged in ongoing UN-facilitated peace talks, including discussions to resolve the issue of their lost property.

Protection of Refugees

Refoulement: The ombudsman reported that authorities discontinued the practice of deporting asylum seekers while their application appealing the rejection of their asylum application was pending. In 2016 the ombudsman warned authorities in writing that deportation in those cases could amount to an infringement on the principle of nonrefoulement. An NGO reported that authorities instead pressured asylum seekers arrested for immigration offenses to withdraw their appeal in exchange for being sent to a safe third country willing to receive them.

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees.

The ombudsman reported delays in the examination of asylum applications and delays in the examination of appeals against rejections of asylum applications.

In a March 2016 report based on a visit to the country's only reception center for asylum seekers in Kofinou, the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights deplored a 2014 law restricting the right of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection to family reunification. The commissioner noted the termination of the practice of detaining Syrian asylum seekers and the reduction of the capacity of the Mennoyia Detention Center by half, but expressed concern over the growing number of rejected asylum seekers and other migrants who were detained for long periods of time while awaiting deportation.

The NGO KISA visited the Mennoyia Detention Center several times during the year and reconfirmed the ombudsman's findings that detention facilities for rejected asylum seekers did not respect their fundamental rights. KISA reported that conditions at the center had improved but found the change did not entirely end the inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees.

The government provides subsidiary protection status for citizens or residents of Syria who entered the country legally or illegally. All persons seeking such status were required to provide a Syrian passport or other identification.

Employment: Authorities allowed asylum seekers whose cases were awaiting adjudication to work after residing six months in the country but limited them to the areas permitted by law. The law restricts the areas of employment for asylum seekers to fisheries, the production of animal feed, waste management, gas stations and car washes, freight handling in the wholesale trade, building and outdoor cleaning, distribution of advertising and informational materials, and food delivery.

There were reports of racism by Labor Department officers who met with valid residency applicants seeking a contract of employment. From January to October, the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance approved 36 labor contracts for asylum seekers, of which seven were in agriculture, 12 in car wash services, six in distribution of advertising and informational material, nine in outdoor cleaning, and two for labor work in recycling facilities.

Local NGOs complained about the remoteness of the government's reception center for asylum seekers at Kofinou, located approximately 40 kilometers (24.8 miles) from Nicosia, the lack of language or job training, and the shortage of job opportunities other than as day laborers at nearby farms.

Access to Basic Services: Asylum seekers who refused an available job could be denied state benefits. To obtain welfare benefits, asylum seekers also needed a valid address, which was not possible for those who were homeless. NGOs and asylum seekers reported delays and inconsistencies in the delivery of benefits to eligible asylum seekers.

In its observations released on May 12, the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) expressed concern over the limited reception facilities and insufficient access to services for the large number of asylum seekers at the Kofinou center; the limited range of employment opportunities for asylum seekers; the negative impact on the ability of asylum seekers to access benefits or assistance if categorized as "willfully unemployed," and the insufficiency of social assistance benefits paid to asylum seekers.

The ombudsman reported improvement but only on a case-by-case basis following her July 2016 report highlighting the problem of retroactive welfare benefits owed to asylum seekers. The ombudsman also reported that the system of providing welfare support to asylum seekers via coupons was problematic in that the special needs of vulnerable groups among asylum seekers were not taken into account or accommodated appropriately. The coupons could be redeemed only in specific

shops that may lack some supplies and were usually more expensive than other grocery stores.

An NGO reported that the procedure to enable access of asylum seekers to state medical care was cumbersome and time consuming.

Temporary Protection: The government also provided temporary protection, called subsidiary protection, to individuals who may not qualify as refugees. Authorities granted subsidiary protection to 767 persons in the first eight months the year.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The law and constitution provide citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage. In national elections only Turkish Cypriots who resided permanently in the government-controlled area were permitted to vote and run for office. In elections for the European Parliament, Cypriot citizens, resident EU citizens, and Turkish Cypriots who lived in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots have the right to vote and run for office.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In May 2016 the country held free and fair elections for the 56 seats assigned to Greek Cypriots in the 80-seat House of Representatives. In 2013 voters elected Nicos Anastasiades president in free and fair elections.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit participation of women and members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate. There was one woman in the 11-seat Council of Ministers and 10 women in the 56-seat House of Representatives.

In 2014 some Turkish Cypriots complained that problems in the electoral roll disenfranchised a number of Turkish Cypriot voters. A law enacted in 2014 automatically registered all adult Turkish Cypriot holders of a government identity card who resided in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots in the electoral roll for the European Parliament elections. Turkish Cypriots not residing in that area needed to apply for registration in the electoral roll, as did all other citizens. The government did not automatically register an unspecified number of Turkish Cypriots residing in the north because they were incorrectly listed in the official civil registry as residents of the government-controlled area.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, which vary depending on the charges, and the government generally implemented the laws effectively. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year. The government generally investigated and prosecuted cases of corruption.

Corruption: During the year the government initiated several investigations against public officials on suspicion of corruption. In August and September, police arrested 14 individuals in connection with possible fraud in the implementation of 23 multimillion euro (\$27 million), EU cofunded research programs by the state-owned Cyprus University of Technology and the University of Cyprus. Police were investigating embezzlement and whether the funds went to relatives of university staff without completing the projects.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires the president, members of the Council of Ministers, and members of parliament to declare their income and assets. The publication of their declarations is obligatory. There are no specific sanctions for noncompliance. Spouses and children of the same officials are required to declare their assets but the publication of their declarations is prohibited. Other public officials are not required to declare their assets.

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

Domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were often cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: There is a government ombudsman, whose portfolio includes human rights, and a legislative Committee on Human Rights.

During her independent investigations, the ombudsman generally enjoyed good cooperation with other government bodies. The ombudsman's reports focused on police misconduct, treatment of patients at state hospitals, treatment of asylum seekers and foreign workers, and gender equality in the workplace. Citizens respected the Office of the Ombudsman and considered it effective. On May 12, CERD expressed concern that the ombudsman's office lacked the financial and

human resources necessary to carry out its mandate independently, impartially, and effectively.

The legislative Committee on Human Rights, which most local NGOs considered effective, consists of nine members of the House of Representatives who serve five-year terms. The committee discussed wide-ranging human rights problems, including trafficking in persons, violence against women, sexual abuse of women and children, prison conditions, and the rights of foreign workers. The executive branch did not exercise control over the committee.

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

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, with a maximum sentence of life in prison for violations. The government enforced the law effectively.

There were reports of violence against women, including spousal abuse, and the number of cases reportedly increased in recent years. The law establishes clear mechanisms for reporting and prosecuting family violence and provides for the imprisonment of persons found guilty of abusing family members. A court can issue a same-day restraining order against suspected or convicted domestic-violence offenders.

Survivors of domestic violence had two shelters, each funded primarily by the government.

Police conducted detailed educational programs for officers on the proper handling of domestic violence, including training focused on child abuse. NGOs noted, however, that police dismissed claims of domestic abuse by foreign women and children.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): While the practice was not a problem locally, the government received and granted asylum applications from migrant women subjected to FGM/C.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace and provides a penalty of up to six months in prison and/or a 12,000 euro (\$14,440)

fine. The ombudsman and NGOs reported that authorities did not investigate sexual harassment complaints submitted by foreign domestic workers.

Sexual harassment was reportedly a widespread problem. The office of the ombudsman provided training to police, social workers, health care providers, teachers, prosecutors, labor and immigration service personnel, and journalists.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion, involuntary sterilization, or other coercive population control methods. Estimates on maternal mortality and contraceptive prevalence are available at: www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/monitoring/maternal-mortality-2015/en/.

Discrimination: The law provides for the same legal status and rights for women as for men. The law requires equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. The government generally enforced these laws. Women experienced discrimination in such areas as hiring, career advancement, conditions of employment, and pay.

Children

Birth Registration: Children derive citizenship from their parents, and there was universal registration at the time of birth.

Child Abuse: From January to October 15, police investigated 134 cases of child abuse, 47 of which were filed in court.

Early and Forced Marriage: The legal age of marriage is 18, but persons between the ages of 16 and 18 may marry, provided there are serious reasons justifying the marriage and their legal guardians provide written consent. A district court can also allow the marriage of persons between the ages of 16 and 18 if the parents unjustifiably refuse consent or in the absence of legal guardians.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law prohibits commercial sexual exploitation of children, child pornography, offering or procuring a child for prostitution, and engaging in or promoting a child in any form of sexual activity. The penalty for violations is up to life in prison. Authorities enforced these laws. Possession of child pornography is a criminal offense punishable by a maximum of 10 years' imprisonment. Authorities enforced these laws. The minimum age for consensual sex is 17. The penalty for sexual abuse and exploitation of a child between the

ages of 13 and 17 is a maximum of 25 years' imprisonment. The penalty for sexual abuse and exploitation of a child under 13 is up to life in prison.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/legal/compliance.html.

Anti-Semitism

There were approximately 3,000 persons in the Jewish community, which consisted of a very small number of native Jewish Cypriots and a greater number of expatriate Israeli, British, and other Jews.

There were reports of verbal harassment of members of the Jewish community along with incidents of property damage.

Holocaust-era restitution is no longer a significant issue in the Republic of Cyprus. Since 2009 the country has included International Holocaust Remembrance Day among important historical events observed in public secondary schools and regularly organizes teacher and student participation in Holocaust-related lectures, cultural events, and projects. This year the Honorary President of the Greek-Jewish Association of Holocaust Survivors gave lectures to secondary education teachers and students at the Ministry of Education (MOE) in cooperation with the Embassy of Israel. Teachers and MOE officials also participated in an educational visit to Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to victims of the Holocaust in Jerusalem.

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 law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, the judicial system, or in the provision of other state services. The law provides persons with disabilities the right to participate effectively and fully in political and public life, including by exercising

their right to vote and to stand for election. The government generally enforced these provisions.

Problems facing persons with disabilities included access to natural and constructed environments, transportation, information, and communications.

The state provided facilities to enable children with disabilities to attend all levels of education. The MOE has adopted a code of good practices, prepared in collaboration with the ombudsman, regarding attendance of students with disabilities in special units of public schools. Authorities provided a personal assistant for students with disabilities attending public schools but not private ones.

In a March 13 report assessing the 2016 deinstitutionalization program for persons with mental disabilities, the ombudsman noted that authorities failed to handle effectively matters related to the rights, needs, and abilities of these persons, and did not meet the main objective, which was the enjoyment of the right of independent living within society.

The Cyprus Paraplegics Organization reported that several public buildings were still not accessible to wheelchair users

The Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance's Service for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Observers did not consider fines for violating the law against employment discrimination sufficient to deter employers from discriminating against persons with disabilities (see also section 7.d.).

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Minority groups in the government-controlled area of Cyprus included Latins, Maronites, Armenians, and Roma. Although legally considered one of the two main communities of Cyprus, Turkish Cypriots constituted a relatively small proportion of the population in the government-controlled areas and experienced discrimination.

There were incidents of violence against Turkish Cypriots as well as some incidents of verbal abuse or discrimination against non-Greek Cypriots. On April 14, a married Turkish Cypriot couple driving a car with Turkish Cypriot license plates were forced off the road by a taxi and another vehicle bearing Republic of Cyprus Cypriot plates. The Greek Cypriot drivers of the two vehicles beat the

husband and caused damage to the couple's car. The victims reported the attack to police. A police investigation is ongoing.

The MOE applied a code of conduct against racism in schools that provided schools and teachers with a detailed plan on handling, preventing, and reporting racist incidents.

On May 12, CERD reported that the Romani community continued to face discrimination and stigmatization as well as challenges such as low school attendance and high dropout rates of Romani children, difficulty accessing adequate housing, unemployment, and racist attacks. The [2014 EU Roma Health Report](#) also noted that the Romani population faced difficulty obtaining housing, education, and employment.

In 2015 the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities noted incidents of racial prejudice against Romani and migrant children in schools and of Greek Cypriot parents removing their children from certain schools where there were a large number of non-Greek Cypriot students.

The ombudsman continued to receive complaints that the government delayed approval of citizenship to children of Turkish Cypriots married to Turkish citizens who resided in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots

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

Antidiscrimination laws exist and prohibit direct or indirect discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Antidiscrimination laws cover employment and the following activities in the public and private domain: social protection, social insurance, social benefits, health care, education, participation in unions and professional organizations, and access to goods and services. An LGBTI NGO noted in February that equality and antidiscrimination legislation remained fragmented and failed to adequately address discrimination against LGBTI persons. NGOs dealing with LGBTI matters claimed that housing benefits favored "traditional" families. Hate crime laws criminalize incitement to hatred or violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Despite legal protections, LGBTI individuals faced significant societal discrimination. As a result, many LGBTI persons were not open about their sexual

orientation or gender identity, nor did they report homophobic violence or discrimination. There were reports of employment discrimination against LGBTI applicants (see section 7.d.).

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

The president of the HIV-Positive Persons Support Center stated that HIV-positive persons faced prejudice from society and their own families, largely due to lack of public awareness. She also claimed that raising public awareness of this problem was low in the government's priorities.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law, including supporting statutes and regulations, provides for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, strike, and bargain collectively with employers. Antiunion discrimination is illegal. Dismissal for union activity is illegal with reinstatement, a fine, compensation options, or all three, if the courts find the dismissal illegal. The law excludes essential services personnel from joining unions and striking. Police officers could form associations that had the right to bargain collectively.

Authorities have the power to curtail strikes in essential services defined by the law as the armed forces, police, and gendarmerie. An agreement between the government and essential services personnel provides for dispute resolution and protects workers in the sector.

The government generally enforced applicable laws. Resources and investigations were adequate in the formal sector. Penalties require payment of pecuniary damages and compensation, but unions did not consider them sufficient to deter violations. Administrative procedures were efficient and immediate, but judicial procedures were subject to delays due to a backlog.

The law provides for freedom of association and collective bargaining. The government generally protected the right of unions to conduct their activities without interference, and employers generally respected the right of workers to form and join independent unions and to bargain collectively. Although collective agreements are not legally binding, employers and employees effectively observed their terms. Workers covered by such agreements were predominantly in the larger

sectors of the economy, including construction, tourism, the health industry, and manufacturing.

Private sector employers were able to discourage union activity in isolated cases because of sporadic enforcement of labor regulations prohibiting antiunion discrimination and the implicit threat of arbitrary dismissal for union activities.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, but forced labor occurred. The government did not effectively enforce the law. Inspections of the agricultural and domestic service sectors remained inadequate, and resources at the Department of Labor Inspections within the Ministry of Labor were insufficient. The maximum penalty is six years' imprisonment for forced labor of adults and 10 years' imprisonment for forced labor of minors, but actual penalties imposed were not sufficient to deter violations.

Forced labor occurred primarily in the agriculture sector. Police investigated cases of forced labor among men and women working on farms. Foreign migrant workers, children, and asylum seekers were particularly vulnerable. Employers forced foreign workers, primarily from Eastern Europe and East and South Asia, to work up to 15 hours a day, seven days a week, for very low wages and in unsuitable living conditions. In 2016 police identified two victims of labor trafficking. Employers often retained a portion of foreign workers' salaries as payment for accommodations. There have been isolated cases of Romani parents forcing their children to beg.

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 law prohibits the employment of children, defined as persons under the age of 15, except in specified circumstances, such as combined work-training programs for children who are at least 14 or employment in cultural, artistic, sports, or advertising activities, subject to rules limiting work hours. The law prohibits night work and street trading by children. The law also permits the employment of adolescents, defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 18, provided it is not harmful, damaging, or dangerous and subject to rules limiting hours of

employment. The law prohibits employment of adolescents between midnight and 4 a.m. The minimum age for employment in industrial work is 16.

The government effectively enforced laws and policies to protect children from exploitation in the workplace. Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance inspectors were responsible for enforcing child labor laws and did so effectively. The Social Welfare Services Department of the ministry and the commissioner for the rights of the child could also investigate suspected cases of exploitation of children at work. Employment of children in violation of the law is punishable by penalties, which were sufficient to deter violations. There were isolated examples of children under the age of 16 working for family businesses.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

Laws and regulations prohibit direct or indirect discrimination with respect to employment or occupation on the basis of race, national origin or citizenship, sex, religion, political opinion, gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation. The government did not effectively enforce these laws or regulations. Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and HIV-positive status. Penalties provided by the law were sufficient to deter violations.

A survey published in the *International Journal of Manpower* in 2014 suggested that despite a strong legal framework, the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance's enforcement of the law governing employment and labor matters with respect to women was ineffective. Eurostat data released in October indicated that the average pay gap between men and women was 14 percent in 2015. The ombudsman reported receiving 19 complaints related to gender discrimination in the workplace, particularly against pregnant women who were not promoted or were dismissed from employment, as well as complaints relating to additional leave for breastfeeding and mothers achieving a work-life balance.

A survey published in the *International Journal of Manpower* in 2014 suggested that LGBTI job applicants faced significant bias compared with heterosexual applicants. The survey found that gay male applicants, who made their sexual orientation clear on their job application, were 39 percent less likely to get a job interview than equivalent male applicants who did not identify themselves as gay. Employers were 42.7 percent less likely to grant a job interview to openly lesbian applicants than to equivalent heterosexual female applicants.

Discrimination against Romani migrant workers occurred. Turkish Cypriots faced social and employment discrimination (see section 6).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Although there is no national minimum wage, there is a minimum wage for groups deemed vulnerable to exploitation. The minimum wage for shop assistants, clerks, assistant baby and child minders, health care workers, security guards, cleaners of business/corporate premises, and nursery assistants was 870 euros (\$1,044) per month for the first six months and 924 euros (\$1,109) per month thereafter.

The official poverty income level is set at 60 percent of the national median equalized disposable income, as per the EU commonly agreed definition. In 2015 (the latest estimate available) the official poverty income level was 8,276 euros (\$9,931) per year for a single person and for a household of two adults with two dependent children it was 17,380 euros (\$20,856).

Collective bargaining agreements covered workers in almost all other occupations, including unskilled labor. The wages set in these agreements were significantly higher than the minimum wage for specific occupations.

Foreign workers were able to claim pensions, and some bilateral agreements allowed workers to claim credit in their home countries. The Migration Service was responsible for enforcing the minimum wage for foreign workers but did not actively do so.

The legal maximum workweek is 48 hours, including overtime. The law does not require premium pay for overtime or mandatory rest periods. The law stipulates that foreign and local workers receive equal treatment. The Department of Labor Relations within the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance is responsible for enforcing these laws. Labor unions, however, reported enforcement problems in sectors not covered by collective agreements. They also reported that certain employers, mainly in the construction industry, exploited undocumented foreign workers by paying them very low wages. The penalty for violating the law was sufficient to deter violations. The court may order the employer to pay the employee back wages.

The law protects foreign domestic workers who file a complaint with the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance from deportation until their cases have been adjudicated. The Department of Labor Relations reported that from January to

June, it received 289 complaints from migrant workers against their employers; 221 were submitted by domestic workers. The department examined 226 of the complaints. Of those, 209 were resolved by both sides signing a release agreement which gave the worker the opportunity to seek employment with another employer, while eight cases were resolved with the voluntary return of the worker to the employer on mutually agreed terms. In nine cases the workers chose to return home. A total of 56 cases were referred to the Labor Disputes Committee for Migrants from Third Countries for examination. The ministry reported that most disputes were resolved with an amicable solution.

NGOs reported many foreign domestic workers remained reluctant to report contract violations by their employers due to fear of losing their jobs and, consequently, their work and residency permits. The ombudsman and NGOs reported that both the ineffective investigation of sexual harassment and violence, and the mismanagement of complaints submitted by domestic workers to the Department of Labor discouraged domestic workers from submitting complaints. They reported authorities treated sexual harassment complaints by foreign domestic workers merely as requests for a change of employer. The victims were allowed routinely to change employers, but sexual harassment complaints rarely were examined. The ombudsman reported that it did not receive sexual harassment complaints by foreign domestic workers but continued to monitor the issue closely because the unclear status of employment of this vulnerable group of employees could lead to nonapplication of the sexual harassment legal framework. The Department of Labor reported that it received five sexual harassment complaints from foreign domestic workers. Three of them withdrew their complaint after the employer agreed to release them from their contract and were free to change employer. The department was investigating the remaining two complaints.

The Department of Labor Inspection in the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance is responsible for enforcing health and safety laws. Authorities enforced health and safety laws satisfactorily in the formal sector but not in the informal sector. Labor unions stated that more work was required to protect undocumented workers. The penalty for failing to comply with work safety and health laws was up to four years' imprisonment, a fine not to exceed 80,000 euros (\$96,000), or both. From January to October, authorities prosecuted 12 persons for violations.

The number of inspectors employed by the Ministry of Labor was not sufficient to provide for enforcement of labor laws in the agricultural sector and in the informal economy where the majority of employees are migrant workers and undocumented workers. The Department of Labor Relations, on the other hand, carried out its

own inspections to assure that employers abide by other labor laws. Inspectors were not allowed to inspect private households where persons were employed as domestic workers without a court warrant.

From January to June, there were no fatalities in work-related accidents. Workers have the right to remove themselves from situations that endanger health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, but authorities did not effectively protect employees in this situation.

THE AREA ADMINISTERED BY TURKISH CYPRIOTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1974 the northern area of Cyprus has been administered by Turkish Cypriots, who in 1983 declared the area the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”). The United States does not recognize the “TRNC,” nor does any country other than Turkey. Mustafa Akinci was elected “president” in 2015 in free and fair elections. The “TRNC constitution” is the basis for the “laws” that govern the area administered by Turkish Cypriot authorities. Police and “Turkish Cypriot security forces” were ultimately under the operational command of the Turkish military, per transitional article 10 of the “TRNC constitution,” which cedes responsibility for public security and defense “temporarily” to Turkey.

Authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

The most significant human rights issues included corruption and cronyism in the executive and legislative branches; and trafficking in persons for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor.

Authorities took steps to investigate police officials following press allegations of abuses and corrupt practices. There was evidence, however, that officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.

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

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were no reports that the “government” or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of “government” authorities.

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

The “law” prohibits such practices, but there were reports during the year that police abused detainees. The “law” does not refer to torture, which falls under the section of the “criminal code” that deals with assault, violence, and battery.

The “Attorney General’s Office” reported it had not received any complaints during the year concerning police battery and use of force. In August 2016 the “Attorney General’s Office” opened an investigation against a police officer on assault and battery charges, and a “court” case was pending against the officer who allegedly beat a 67-year-old man arrested for the sexual assault of a mentally disabled 19-year-old boy. According to reports, police detained, beat, and insulted the man in an effort to obtain his confession without informing him of the nature of his arrest. When the victim was later brought to face and identify the alleged attacker, police discovered they had detained the wrong person. Political party leaders called for an investigation. The “Attorney General’s Office” reported the investigation was still ongoing, but would be delayed because the complainant will undergo open-heart surgery.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison and detention center conditions did not meet international standards in a number of areas, and prison overcrowding was a particular problem.

Physical Conditions: The area’s prison, located in the northern part of Nicosia, has a stated capacity of 311. As of September 21, it held 443 prisoners and pretrial detainees. Approximately 40 percent of the prison population consisted of persons awaiting trial. As of September the prison system held 19 female prisoners and nine juveniles. The prison did not separate adults and juveniles, and there were no detention or correction centers for children. Due to lack of space, detainees and prisoners were kept in the same cells.

In July the newspaper *Halkin Sesi* reported that prisoners at the “Central Prison” sent it a letter complaining that there was insufficient drinking water during the summer, cells were overcrowded, and the prison had limited products for sale at very high prices. The inmates also complained that a fellow inmate had HIV, and there were no medical services available. Additionally, the prisoners noted a 14-year-old inmate was forced to work in the kitchen against his will, and prison visits were held outdoors in the heat.

In a July interview with the local newspaper *Kibris*, the chair of the Guards Association claimed the air quality was bad in the “Central Prison” due to poor ventilation and smoking and complained that 50 persons had to share three toilets and two showers.

A Turkish company was awarded the tender to construct a new prison in July. In September, *Kibris* reported Turkish and Turkish Cypriot construction companies and union representatives discussed the construction of the new “Central Prison” with the “Minister of Interior.” The new “Central Prison” will be 23 acres and have an estimated capacity of 765. The new “Central Prison” will cost 75 million Turkish lira (\$20 million) to build and will be funded by Turkish aid. The construction was expected to begin in November.

A journalists association reported that the prison was overcrowded with inmates and detainees kept in the same place. Other NGOs reported facilities lacked health and other services and inmates had limited access to wash water and hot water. Human rights advocates reported that the prison had an inadequate level of health care and a lack of medical supplies, no full-time doctor, and an insufficient number of social workers. Human rights activists also reported major problems in security, including a lack of measures to reduce violence between inmates and detainees, and overcrowded cells. Authorities reported that a doctor visited the prison twice a week and remained on call for any emergencies. In September 2016 a local newspaper reported that inmates were under serious risk of contracting contagious diseases at the “Central Prison,” including HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C.

Administration: In a January interview by a local newspaper, 15 female prisoners complained that “Central Prison” authorities did not provide soap, and they had to purchase it themselves. The women said there are fewer social activities for women than for men and requested more sports equipment. The women also stated the prison’s visitation policy of 30 minutes every 15 days was inadequate.

Independent Monitoring: Authorities permitted prison monitoring by independent nongovernmental observers.

Improvements: In August the “Prime Ministry” Fight against Drugs Commission launched a rehabilitation project at the “Central Prison” to provide drug-counseling services. The “Central Prison” reported the inmates were permitted to establish a music group to take lessons. The “Central Prison” also began social activities, such as yoga, for female inmates. Additionally, the Prevention of Traffic Accidents Association carried out safe driving workshops for inmates.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The “law” prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and provides for the right of any person to challenge his/her arrest or detention in court, and authorities generally observed these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Police are responsible for enforcement of the “law.” The “chief of police” reports to a “general,” who is nominally under the supervision of the “Prime Ministry,” which holds the “security portfolio.” Police and Turkish Cypriot security forces are ultimately under the operational command of the Turkish armed forces, as provided by the “TRNC constitution” which “temporarily” cedes responsibility for public security and defense to Turkey.

Police and Turkish Cypriot security forces generally cooperated with civilian authorities and were effective in enforcing the “law.” The “Attorney General’s Office” worked with police inspection division (or occasionally the criminal investigative division) to investigate allegations of police misconduct. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Judicially issued warrants are required for arrests. Authorities may not detain a person longer than 24 hours without referring the case to the “courts” for a longer period of detention. Authorities generally respected this right and usually informed detainees promptly of charges against them, although they often held individuals believed to have committed a violent offense for longer periods without charge. According to the “law,” police must bring a detained person before a “judge” within 24 hours of arrest. Police can then keep the detainee in custody for

up to three months, but a “judge” must review the detention after the third day and every eight days thereafter. Bail may be granted and was routinely used. There were no alternatives to bail, which is determined by the “court.” Detainees’ passports were confiscated by the “court,” pending trial. Authorities usually allowed detainees prompt access to family members and a lawyer of their choice. Authorities provided lawyers to the indigent only for cases involving violent offenses.

Police sometimes did not observe legal protections, particularly at the time of arrest. Contrary to the “law,” some “courts” did not permit suspects to have their lawyers present when giving testimony. Suspects who demanded the presence of a lawyer were sometimes physically intimidated or threatened with stiffer charges.

According to the Turkish Cypriot Human Rights Foundation (TCHRF), the detention review process pressures the detainee to sign a confession in order to be released on bail from police custody. They cited situations in which police used detention as a threat to plead guilty. The TCHRF commented that lack of cameras or voice recorders and the lack of a “legal” requirement that a lawyer be present during the provision of statement created an atmosphere where many of the detainees at police stations were coerced to sign statements admitting their guilt.

Detainee’s Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court: Persons who are arrested or detained, regardless of whether on criminal or other grounds, are entitled to challenge in court the legal basis or arbitrary nature of their detention and can obtain prompt release and compensation if found to have been unlawfully detained.

Speaking to a local newspaper in September, the TCHRF said the “Central Prison” authority was arbitrarily restricting the rights of indicted individuals as well as sentenced prisoners from seeing their lawyers. The TCHRF stated that, according to the “TRNC constitution,” indicted detainees and prisoners have the fundamental right to access justice and “legal” representation. This right is also protected under the European Declaration of Human Rights.

Additionally, a TCHRF lawyer reported that according to the “Central Prison Regulation,” if an indicted individual is subjected to solitary confinement, he or she cannot meet with a lawyer unless the “Prison Director” gives permission. The “Prison Director” does not provide a justification if he denies permission.

The TCHRF reported that in September, prison authorities prevented a prisoner from seeing his lawyers after the detainee was allegedly beaten by guards and subsequently subjected to solitary confinement. The TCHRF reported it had to take the case to a “member of parliament” and the “Ministry of Interior” to be able to visit the prisoner, who had initially been denied medical treatment. According to the TCHRF, when the prison administration wants a detainee, indicted individual, or prisoner not to speak or meet with his or her family or lawyer, prison authorities commonly threaten to punish the individual with solitary confinement.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The “law” provides for an independent judiciary, and authorities generally respected judicial independence and impartiality.

Most criminal and civil cases begin in district “courts,” from which appeals are made to the “Supreme Court.” Civilian “courts” have jurisdiction in cases where civilians face charges of violating military restrictions, such as filming or photographing military zones.

Trial Procedures

The “law” provides for the right to a fair public trial, and independent judicial authorities generally enforced this right.

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and have a right to appeal. The “TRNC constitution” provides for public trials, the defendant’s right to be present at those trials, and the defendant’s right to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. Authorities provide lawyers to indigent defendants only in cases involving violent offenses. Defendants may question witnesses against them and present evidence and witnesses on their behalf. Authorities generally respected these rights and generally respected “court” orders.

Various NGO representatives and human rights lawyers noted that defendants did not fully enjoy the right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them. They also noted that there was a lack of sufficient free interpretation for some languages as well as a lack of professional translation. For example, authorities recruited nonprofessional translators haphazardly, and they did not translate everything said during “court” proceedings. Insufficient translation also delayed hearings and caused longer detention periods for suspects.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were reports of detention of persons with alleged ties to the so-called “Fethullah Gulen Terrorist Organization (FETO)” and the deportation to Turkey of Turkish citizens purportedly affiliated with “FETO.”

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals or organizations may seek civil remedies for human rights violations through domestic “courts.” Authorities generally respected “court” orders. Individuals and organizations may appeal adverse decisions by the “courts” that involve human rights to the ECHR. Under ECHR rules, if adequate local remedies exist, an appellant does not have standing to bring a case before the ECHR until that appellant exhausts all local remedies.

Property Restitution

Greek Cypriots continued to pursue property suits in the ECHR against the Turkish government for the loss since 1974 of property located in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots pursued property claims against the government of the Republic of Cyprus as well.

In response to an ECHR 2005 ruling that Turkey’s “subordinate local authorities” in Cyprus had not provided an adequate local remedy to resolve property claims, a property commission was established to handle claims by Greek Cypriots. In 2006 the ECHR ruled that the commission had satisfied “in principle” the ECHR’s requirement for an effective local remedy. In a 2010 ruling, the ECHR recognized the property commission as a domestic remedy. As of October claimants had filed 6,361 applications with the commission, 833 of which were concluded through friendly settlements and 25 through formal hearings. The commission has paid more than 238 million British pounds (\$314 million) in compensation to applicants.

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

The “law” prohibits such actions. There were reports that police subjected Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots to surveillance. Although authorities reported otherwise, a Maronite representative

asserted that during the year the Turkish armed forces occupied 18 houses in the Maronite village of Karpasia.

In July the Turkish Cypriot administration announced it would allow Maronites to return to the three Maronite villages (Karpasia, Agia Marina, and Asomatos) under military control in the north. In August the “Presidency” formed a committee to develop a roadmap and discuss implementation.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

The “law” provides for freedom of expression, including for the press, and authorities generally respected this right. Individuals were usually able to criticize authorities publicly without reprisal, with some exceptions.

Freedom of Expression: While there is no “law” restricting the use of non-”TRNC” flags or symbols, some individuals who have flown Republic of Cyprus flags have been publicly criticized and put on trial on charges of “disturbing the peace” or “provocative actions.”

On January 2, famous Turkish fashion designer Barbaros Sansal, while in the “TRNC,” was detained by Turkish Cypriot police and deported to Turkey, initially for “inciting the public to hatred and hostility” and later for “insulting the Turkish nation” in a Facebook video he posted on New Year’s Eve. Some Turkish Cypriot political parties and NGOs criticized the “government” for deporting Sansal and allowing Turkish authorities to restrict speech made in the “TRNC.”

Press and Media Freedom: While authorities generally respected press freedom, they at times obstructed journalists in their reporting. Journalists practiced self-censorship for fear of losing their jobs in connection with investigating a story. One media representative complained that press and media representatives were prevented from getting close enough to conduct on-site reporting during incidents or to follow up reporting at “court” hearings. Journalists also alleged that owners of media outlets influenced press coverage and discouraged journalists from reporting contrary to the media outlet owners’ views.

A journalist reported some press representatives engaged in self-censorship regarding negative commentary about the authority and leadership in Turkey.

Journalists also reported that they were at times prevented from doing their jobs, verbally assaulted, and their equipment damaged while at “courts,” hospitals, and police stations.

Violence and Harassment: There were reports that defendants in some “court” cases allegedly threatened journalists, who also faced pressure for their reporting from companies that advertised in their publications. In March 2016 three masked persons attacked a journalist departing a fitness club, inflicting head injuries that required five stitches. Police have not announced the results from their investigation of the incident.

On July 14, local newspapers reported that Mert Ozdag, a reporter, received a threatening message on his parked vehicle, which read, “Be careful. You are in trouble.” Ozdag had been writing about allegations of illegal loans and illegal construction in July. Police started an investigation of the threat and were reviewing closed circuit cameras in the area. On July 15, the journalists’ association and NGOs condemned the threat.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: Journalists cannot access or report on persons under control of the armed forces. The Turkish Cypriot Journalists Association reported that authorities used these restrictions to deny access and prevent journalists from investigating valid subjects, such as suicides or allegations of police torture or battery within the military or police systems.

In May, *Afrika* newspaper journalist Kubilay Ozkirac was called to the police station for interrogation for an article he wrote about Turkey and the Kurdish issue in June 2016. According to the paper, the Turkish Cypriot police called Ozkirac at the request of the Ankara Attorney General’s Office. The same news story reported the editor of *Afrika* was also summoned for interrogation over his similar article a few months earlier.

Internet Freedom

Authorities did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports that they monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. Although technological developments improved the delivery methods for journalists, they reported continued difficulties in accessing public information.

For the first quarter of the year, the “IT Council” reported that the number of broadband users reached 147,646 in the north, including fixed line and mobile internet subscribers.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

Authorities did not restrict academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The “law” provides for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the “government” generally respected these rights.

Freedom of Association

While the “law” provides for the freedom of association, and the “government” generally respected this right, some organizations faced lengthy registration processes.

c. Freedom of Religion

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

d. Freedom of Movement

The “law” provides for freedom of movement within the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation. Authorities generally respected these rights. An intermediary NGO handled cooperation between UNHCR and Turkish Cypriot authorities. Because no “law” exists regarding the handling of asylum applications, UNHCR representatives in the Republic of Cyprus adjudicated asylum claims.

Abuse of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons: UNHCR reported that, with few exceptions, asylum seekers generally were treated as illegal migrants because an official framework for asylum does not exist. Most either were denied entry or deported.

In-country Movement: Authorities required Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to show identification cards when crossing the “Green Line.”

Only Turkey recognizes travel documents issued by the “TRNC.” Some Turkish Cypriots used Turkish travel documents, but many obtained travel documents issued by the Republic of Cyprus. Turkish Cypriots born after 1974 to parents who, prior to 1974, were both Republic of Cyprus citizens, obtained passports relatively easily, compared with Turkish Cypriots born after 1974 to only one Cypriot parent.

In August a local newspaper reported that journalists, news reporters, as well as non-”TRNC” and non-Turkish citizens were prevented from entering Dherynia Public Beach, located on the east of the island, which remains under Turkish military control. Despite the fact that the beach had opened in August and was operated by a local Turkish Cypriot authority, the Turkish military still requested identification upon entry and only allowed “TRNC” and Turkish citizens to enter.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Turkish Cypriots considered persons displaced as a result of the island’s 1974 division to be refugees, although they fell under the UN’s definition of IDPs. At the time of the division, the number of IDPs was approximately 60,000 in the north. They were resettled; had access to humanitarian organizations; and were not subject to attack, targeting, or return under dangerous conditions. Until July, Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots were engaged in ongoing UN-facilitated peace talks including discussions to resolve the issues of their lost property.

Protection of Refugees

Refoulement: Authorities did not provide protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom could be threatened. During the year the Turkish Cypriot Refugee Rights Association (RRA) stated that, despite its efforts, authorities at “ports” often denied entry to asylum seekers, and those trying to enter the north illegally were usually detained and subsequently deported. The RRA stated that as of October 2016, it had successfully cancelled the expulsion of 64 persons, allowing them access to the territory or regularizing their stay in the “TRNC.”

Access to Asylum: The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is incorporated into Turkish Cypriot domestic “law,” as were all other “laws” that originated from the British colonial period and the pre-1963 Republic of Cyprus period and were later “ratified” by the Turkish Cypriot administration. There is no

“law” or system in place for dealing with asylum seekers or the protection of refugees. Turkish Cypriot authorities evaluated individuals on a case-by-case basis and generally cooperated with the RRA as well as UNHCR’s local NGO implementing partner, the SOS Children’s Orphanage. As of October 2016, the RRA reported that 279 persons claiming to be in need of international protection arrived in the Turkish Cypriot area, including at “ports of entry.” As of October 2016, the RRA also directed 146 individuals either to regularize their stay in the “TRNC” or to apply for asylum in the government-controlled area with the assistance of UNHCR.

There were reports that Turkish Cypriot authorities deported numerous asylum seekers during the year before making a determination on their status and that not all received facilitated access to continue their claims with UNHCR, leading to either their imprisonment or systematic deportation. Some potential asylum seekers who attempted to enter the area administered by Turkish Cypriots illegally were arrested, taken to “court,” and deported after serving their prison sentences.

Human rights associations continued to work with authorities, including UNHCR, to provide protection for asylum seekers from refoulement, at times without success. With the involvement of these associations and increased facilitation from Turkish Cypriot authorities, several asylum seekers traveled to Turkey or entered the government-controlled area through the UN-patrolled area, and started the asylum process there.

Employment: According to immigration “law,” employers need official permission from the “Department of Labor” to register foreign workers. Authorities prohibited entry or deported irregular migrants without work permits. Authorities sometimes treated asylum seekers as irregular migrants and either deported them or denied them entry. According to Turkish Cypriot labor authorities, as of October 33,543 Turks and 13,654 laborers from other countries were in possession of work permits.

A “regulation” provides that any employer of illegal workers may be fined 10,875 Turkish lira (\$2,819) or face closure of their business for two months. During the year the “Labor Authority” stated that it had identified workers without work permits. As of September the “Labor Authority” had checked 1,192 workers to verify their status at 330 work places and identified 119 illegal workers. The authorities fined employers 288,865 Turkish lira (\$77,525).

Access to Basic Services: According to the RRA, at the end of October 2016, there were 78 asylum seekers residing and working (often for below-minimum wages or in exchange for food) or attending school in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. They could not travel abroad because they would be unable to return due to their lack of “legal” status. UNHCR provided financial assistance to asylum seekers only in exceptional cases.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The “law” provides Turkish Cypriots the ability to choose their “government” in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Turkish Cypriots choose a leader and a representative body every five years or less. In 2015 Turkish Cypriots elected Mustafa Akinci “president” in elections that were considered free and fair. In 2013 Turkish Cypriots held “parliamentary” elections that observers also considered free and fair.

Political Parties and Political Participation: While neither membership nor nonmembership in the dominant party conferred formal advantages or disadvantages, there were widespread allegations of political cronyism and nepotism.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit participation of women and/or members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate. There were four women in the 50-seat “parliament.” In 2016 one Turkish Cypriot woman was a member of the “cabinet.” In April she was replaced with the establishment of a new “government,” leaving no women in “cabinet” positions.

While there were no laws or cultural practices preventing women from participating in political life, Turkish Cypriot authorities did not permit Greek Cypriots and Maronites residing in the north to participate in Turkish Cypriot elections. The two groups were eligible to vote in Greek Cypriot elections but had to travel to the government-controlled area to exercise that right. Greek Cypriot and Maronite enclave communities in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots directly elected municipal officials, but Turkish Cypriot authorities did not

recognize these officials. There was no minority representation in the 50-seat “parliament” or in the “cabinet.”

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The “law” provides criminal penalties for official corruption. Authorities did not implement the “law” effectively, and “officials” sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Observers generally perceived corruption, cronyism, and lack of transparency to be serious problems in the legislative and executive branches.

Corruption: In June 2016 the press reported that the “prime minister” used “state” funds to travel to Istanbul with a seven-person delegation to attend his daughter’s graduation. The press also reported the group was given a travel advance of 5,000 Turkish lira (\$1,340), reportedly paid by the “state.” The same month the People’s Party (HP) filed a complaint with the “Auditor General’s Office” concerning the “prime minister’s” use of “state” funds to cover the delegation’s travel. The HP urged that the money be returned to the “state” and an apology made to the public.

In April the “ombudsman” published a report about the “prime minister’s” 2016 trip financed by “state” funds, which noted the trip was against the “constitution” and reported the “prime minister” had neglected his duties regarding use of financial resources. The “prime minister” responded with a statement that the “ombudsman” had exceeded her purview and authority by publishing the report.

In October local press reported that police arrested four persons for issuing and illegally producing forged “TRNC” driving licenses to 116 Turks who do not live in the “TRNC.” Among those arrested are a former driver’s license inspector and the “Private Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture,” two current driver’s license inspectors, and a driving school owner. The public sector employee was removed from his position at the “Ministry of Agriculture” immediately. Police stated that 24 Turkish citizens were issued “TRNC” licenses without completing the 10 mandatory driving lessons. The four suspects were released on bail, and the trial is pending.

Financial Disclosure: The “law” provides that all “government” employees must declare their wealth and assets. The “law” covers persons who hold elective office, “Council of Ministers” appointees, all “judges” and “prosecutors,” the “ombudsman,” the chair of the “Attorney General’s Office,” and “Attorney General’s Office” members. Every five years employees who fall under this “law”

must declare any movable and immovable property, money, equity shares, stocks, and jewelry worth five times their monthly salary as well as receivables and debts that belong to them, their spouses, and all children under their custody. The disclosure is made internally and is not public information. Once a declaration is overdue, the employee receives a written warning to disclose wealth within 30 days. If the disclosure is not forthcoming, a complaint is filed with the “Attorney General’s Office.” The penalty for noncompliance is a fine of up to 5,000 Turkish lira (\$1,340), three months’ imprisonment, or both. If confidentiality is violated, employees may receive a fine of up to 10,000 Turkish lira (\$2,700), 12 months’ imprisonment, or both.

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

While many local groups were concerned with human rights conditions, only a limited number of domestic human rights organizations operated in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. NGOs promoted awareness of domestic violence; women’s rights; rights of asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants; trafficking in persons; police abuse; and the rights of LGBTI persons. These groups had little effect on specific “legislation” to improve the protection of human rights. Local Turkish Cypriot NGOs conducted liaison with the United Nations, UNHCR, and other international NGOs on human rights issues.

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

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The “law” criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, and provides for a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Authorities and police enforced the “law” effectively. There were local NGOs whose specific mission was to support rape victims.

Violence against women, including spousal abuse, remained a problem. The “law” prohibits domestic violence under a general assault/violence/battery clause in the “criminal code.”

In August a social services expert in an interview with local press said sexual abuse cases were increasing in the north and added the “state” is failing to address the issue.

An NGO reported that five women were murdered by their male partners during the year, including two in public in the “TRNC.”

NGOs and political parties accused “authorities” of lack of effective “laws” and policies to protect women’s rights in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots.

Sexual Harassment: The “criminal code” prohibits sexual harassment and considers it a misdemeanor punishable by up to 12 months’ imprisonment and/or an unspecified fine. According to NGOs, incidents of sexual harassment went largely unreported.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion, involuntary sterilization, or other coercive population control methods. Estimates on maternal mortality and contraceptive prevalence are available at: www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/monitoring/maternal-mortality-2015/en/.

Discrimination: The law provides for the same legal status and rights for women as for men. Women experienced discrimination in such areas as employment, credit, owning or managing businesses, education, and housing. The “government” generally enforced “laws” requiring equal pay for men and women performing the same work at the white-collar level. Women working in the agricultural and textile sectors routinely received less pay than their male counterparts.

Children

Birth Registration: Children derive “citizenship” from their parents, and there was universal registration at birth, including children born to migrants.

Child Abuse: There were reports of child abuse. As with domestic violence, there were social and cultural disincentives to seeking legal remedies for such problems.

Early and Forced Marriage: The minimum age of marriage for girls and boys is 18. A “court” may allow marriages for minors who are between the ages of 16 and 18 if they receive parental consent.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The “criminal code” prohibits commercial sexual exploitation of children, and authorities generally enforced the prohibition. The age of consent is 16. Statutory rape or attempted statutory rape of a minor under

the age of 16 is classified as a felony, and the maximum penalty is life imprisonment. If the offender is under 18 and two years or less apart in age from the victim, the act is a misdemeanor punishable by up to two years in prison and/or an unspecified fine. There are no “laws” regarding child pornography.

Anti-Semitism

The small Jewish community consisted primarily of nonresident businesspersons. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

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 “law” prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, the “judicial system,” or the provision of other “state” services, and authorities effectively enforced these provisions. The “law” does not mandate access to public buildings and other facilities for persons with disabilities, and the disability community complained of the absence of infrastructure in public areas, including lack of sidewalks, blocked sidewalks, and the inability to use public transportation.

In May the Turkish Cypriot Federation for Disabled Persons complained that disabled persons had no access to buildings, sidewalks, or public areas, and there were no public restrooms they could use. The federation noted that the “government” had not employed a single person with disabilities since 2006 and reminded “authorities” that, according to the “law,” it is mandatory to have 4 percent of public sector positions filled by persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The “law” prohibits discrimination, and the 1975 Vienna III Agreement remains the legal source of authority regarding the treatment of the 326 Greek Cypriot and 83 Maronite residents in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots.

Under the Vienna III Agreement, UNFICYP visited enclaved Greek Cypriot residents weekly and Maronites twice a month. On September 24, the “MFA” announced the Turkish Cypriot administration would begin to tax humanitarian aid convoys to those Greek Cypriot and Maronite communities beginning October 1. As a result, UNFICYP announced October 4 it had limited its humanitarian aid delivery for Greek Cypriots living in Rizokarpaz to medical supplies only.

Greek Cypriots and Maronites were able to take possession of some of their properties but were unable to leave their properties to heirs residing in the government-controlled area. Maronites living in the government-controlled area could use their properties in the north only if those properties were not under the control of the Turkish military or allocated to Turkish Cypriots.

A small Kurdish minority that emigrated from Turkey in the 1980s lived in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. There were reports of social and job discrimination against the Kurds as well as allegations that police closely monitored Kurdish activities, in particular the annual Nowruz festival.

There are reportedly more than 10,000 African students studying at universities in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, some of whom reported racial discrimination. A pastor assistant for a congregation led by African students reported that approximately 50 fully armed Turkish Cypriot police officers appeared at their church-organized event attended by 50 African students in September. Police ultimately did not interfere, but several African students felt intimidated by the scale of the response to their gathering.

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

The “law” prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

While there were no cases recorded of official or societal discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, or access to education or health care, members of the LGBTI community noted that an overwhelming majority of LGBTI persons hid their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid such problems.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The “law” provides for the rights of workers, except members of police and Turkish Cypriot security forces, to form and join independent unions of their own choosing without prior authorization. The “law” allows unions to conduct their activities without interference and also allows them the right to strike, with the provision that a union notify authorities in writing if the duration of a strike was planned for longer than 24 hours. The “law” does not provide for reinstatement of workers fired for union activities nor permit “judges,” members of the police force, and Turkish Cypriot security forces to strike. The “Council of Ministers” has the power to curtail a strike in any individual sector twice a year for up to 60 days if it affects the general health, security, or public order or if it prevents the provision of essential services. There is no list of what constitutes essential services. The “law” provides for collective bargaining but does not prohibit antiunion discrimination.

According to union representatives, the “government” did not effectively enforce applicable “laws.” Despite having the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, there was very little unionization among the estimated 90,000 workers in the private sector. According to a union representative, if private sector workers affected business operations while seeking their rights, the employer would likely replace them. Labor authorities and the “state” did not provide adequate resources, inspections, or improvements and did not implement labor “laws.” There was one labor inspector, and a written complaint from a union was required to begin an investigation. If necessary the “registrar’s office” filed a complaint with the “Attorney General’s Office.” Any employer convicted of violating the “law” can be fined from two to eight times the monthly minimum wage of 2,175 Turkish lira (\$584).

Workers formed and joined independent unions. Some companies pressured workers to join unions that the company led or approved. Officials of independent unions claimed that authorities created rival public sector unions to weaken the independent unions.

Workers exercised the right to bargain collectively. Public and semipublic employees benefited from collective bargaining agreements. Semipublic employees worked for companies run jointly by public and private enterprises where, for example, the “government” handled administration while the company’s budget came from private sources.

Private sector employers were able to discourage union activity because the enforcement of labor “regulations” in the private sector was sporadic.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The “law” prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, but the “government” did not effectively enforce it. Information regarding the adequacy of inspections and resources was not available. Forced labor was reportedly punishable by up to one year in prison, a term that was not commensurate with other serious crimes and was not adequate to deter violations. There were reports of forced labor during the year.

Conditions of forced labor existed for men and women employed in the industrial, construction, agriculture, restaurant, domestic, and retail sectors. Migrant workers in the construction and agricultural sectors were subjected to reduced wages and nonpayment of wages, beatings, and threats of deportation.

A union representative reported that the university sector in the north is used to smuggle and traffic large numbers of Africans and South Asians. The union representative stated that these persons are registered to certain universities by their employers to obtain a student status resident “permit” and are subsequently subjected to forced labor.

A union representative reported in September that a registered student from Cameroon who also worked at a pizza restaurant in Famagusta was beaten by her employer for requesting her unpaid two-month salary. The student was temporarily detained by police under charges of “creating trouble at the workplace” and later released. Police are continuing to investigate claims that the student was not an employee at the restaurant, that she was working without a work permit, and that her student visa had expired.

According to a human rights organization, students mainly from Nigeria and Zimbabwe are unable to pay their tuition and therefore cannot renew their student visas. In exchange for not being turned in to immigration police, they reportedly accept harsh working conditions consistent with labor exploitation at construction sites.

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 minimum age for restricted employment is 15, the last year for which education is compulsory. Employers may hire children between the ages of 15 and 18 in apprentice positions under a special status. Children over the age of 15 are restricted to not more than six hours per day and 30 hours per week. The “law” prohibits children between the ages of 15 and 18 from working during mealtimes, at night, in heavy physical labor, and under dangerous conditions. The “law” also states that every six months the employer must prove, with medical certification, that the physical work done by a child is suitable for children. Written parental consent is also required, and children are entitled to the hourly wage of a full-time employee. The “law” generally provides protection for children from exploitation in the workplace.

The “Ministry of Labor and Social Security” is responsible for enforcing child Labor “laws” and policies. Resources and inspections were not adequate to deter violations. Penalties for violations consist of fines and “court” procedures.

NGOs alleged authorities did not always effectively enforce the “laws,” and employers used children, mainly from Turkey, for labor, primarily working alongside their families in the agricultural, manufacturing, automotive, and construction sectors. NGOs reported children worked in dangerous conditions, such as on construction sites, and were subjected to heavy physical work despite “legal” prohibitions. One NGO reported that some employers delayed applying for work permits for seasonal agricultural workers from Turkey, which prevented the workers’ children from being eligible for local schooling.

According to one NGO, child labor in the urban informal economy was also a problem, albeit to a lesser extent than in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. The number of children selling tissues or other small items on the street increased, particularly in neighborhoods in Nicosia with large immigrant populations. It was common in family-run shops for children to work after school and for young children to work on their family farms. One NGO reported children were also collecting metal and aluminum to resell as scraps.

One union representative reported there are currently only nine “inspectors” working at the “Employment Department,” making it difficult to inspect workplaces to detect child labor.

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” generally prohibits discrimination with respect to employment or occupation regarding race, sex, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and social status. The “law” does not specifically address discrimination with respect to religion, political opinion, or HIV-positive status. The “government” did not effectively enforce these “laws.” Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to race, ethnicity, sex, disability, and gender.

Foreign migrant workers faced societal discrimination, with respect to ethnicity, race, and religious belief. Women were paid far less than men in the private sector, faced sexual harassment in the workplace, and held far fewer managerial positions. Greek Cypriots faced social and employment discrimination. LGBTI individuals often hid their orientation in the workplace. Persons with disabilities routinely found it difficult physically to access traditional workplace settings, such as office buildings.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The “government” increased the minimum wage during the year, but it is insufficient to meet the poverty level for a family of four, as inflation and the cost of living outpaced the wage increase. Limited information was available on conditions of work. Accommodations for migrant workers, either as part of their compensation or for those made to pay, were substandard.

The standard workweek for the private and public sectors is 40 hours. There is premium pay for overtime in the public sector. Premium pay for overtime is also required, but frequently not paid, in the private sector. The “law” prohibits compulsory overtime and provides for paid annual holidays.

The “Ministry of Labor and Social Security” is responsible for enforcing both the minimum wage and paying public sector wages, but did not effectively do so. For example, in October 112 workers for the Yeni Erenkoy “municipality” reported they had not received salaries for three months. Employers paid undocumented migrant workers below the minimum wage.

Occupational safety and health standards were not current. Despite occasional inspections of working conditions by labor authorities, enforcement was rare and authorities did not effectively enforce standards in all sectors. There was little improvement in working conditions, particularly for hazardous sectors and vulnerable groups. It was common practice to deport migrant workers claiming violations. Authorities did not apply penalties to violators, and resources and inspections were not adequate to protect worker rights. The “government” has not established social protections for workers in the informal economy.

Between January and September, labor authorities reported they received 3,256 labor-related complaints to the local labor hotline, and that they have addressed 1,250 of the complaints.

Based on 2016 statistics, labor authorities reported that 126,463 persons were employed in the “TRNC,” of whom 32,236 worked in the public sector.

According to a household survey conducted in October 2016, there are 488 Turkish Cypriots working in the government-controlled area.

According to labor authorities, as of April there were 52 workplace accidents, eight of which resulted in fatalities. Workers could not remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety without jeopardy to their employment. Authorities did not protect workers in these situations.