

SOLOMON ISLANDS 2018 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Solomon Islands is a constitutional multiparty parliamentary democracy. Observers considered the 2014 parliamentary election generally free and fair, although there were incidents of vote buying. Parliament elected Manasseh Sogavare as prime minister after the election, and he formed a coalition government. In November 2017, after a vote of no confidence against Sogavare, parliament elected Ricky Houenipwela prime minister, and he formed a new coalition government.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

Human rights issues included corruption; criminalization of same-sex sexual activity, although the law was not enforced; and child labor.

The government took steps to prosecute officials who committed human rights abuses.

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 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, and there were no reports that government officials employed them.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

There were no significant reports regarding prison or detention center conditions that raised human rights concerns.

Physical Conditions: There were no major concerns in prisons and detention centers regarding physical conditions or inmate abuse.

In 2017 the Office of the Public Prosecutor initiated a coroner's inquiry into the 2016 death of a person held in pretrial detention. The report was completed and was submitted to the Office of the Chief Magistrate for review and possible action.

Administration: Authorities permit prisoners and detainees to submit complaints and request investigations of credible allegations of inhuman conditions. The respective prison commanders screen complaints and requests made to the Professional Standards Unit of the Correctional Service, which investigates credible allegations of problematic conditions and documents the results in a publicly accessible manner. The Office of the Ombudsman and the Public Solicitor investigate credible allegations of misconduct made against Correctional Services officers.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring by independent human rights observers, and such visits occurred during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution 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 respected these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP), and the government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish police corruption. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year. A commissioner (normally a foreign resident), who reports to the minister of police, heads the RSIP force of approximately 1,500 members, 20 percent of whom are women. The RSIP completed the process of rearming two units ahead of the withdrawal of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) forces in 2017. The two units are a dignitary protection unit and the Police Response Team, which responds to civil unrest. The RSIP continued

community consultations and public campaigns to discuss the need for limited rearmament and the controls in place.

The governments of Australia and New Zealand continued to provide support to the RSIP. Under the Solomon Islands Police Development Program, 40 unarmed Australian Federal Police officers provide capacity building and mentorship to the RSIP but are not involved in direct policing. The Australian Federal Police and the RSIP signed a memorandum of understanding in April to strengthen information sharing and enhance capacity building and professional development opportunities. New Zealand provides eight New Zealand police officers, who support community policing programs throughout the country.

The RSIP has an inspection unit to monitor police discipline and performance. Officials who violate civil liberties are subject to fines and jail sentences.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Only a magistrate or judge may issue warrants, although police have power to arrest without a warrant if they have reasonable belief a person committed a crime. The law requires detainees be brought promptly before a judge, and authorities respected this right. Delays sometimes arose after the preliminary hearing, but authorities brought detainees to court as soon as possible following arrest, especially if they were held without bail.

Police generally informed detainees promptly of the charges against them. The Public Solicitor's Office provided legal assistance to indigent defendants, and detainees had prompt access to family members and counsel. There was a functioning system of bail for less serious cases, and police and courts frequently granted bail.

Australian legal advisers in the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs helped develop the capacity of government lawyers and contributed to reducing the backlog of judicial cases.

Pretrial Detention: Delays in adjudication of the large number of cases before the courts resulted in lengthy pretrial detention for some detainees. Pretrial detainees comprised 50 percent of the prisoner population. The average length of time held in pretrial detention was approximately two years.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

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

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair and public trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. Prisoners were not afforded timely trials due to a judicial backlog that resulted in long delays in bringing cases to trial.

Trial procedures normally operated in accordance with British common law, with a presumption of innocence and the right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges. Detainees had access to attorneys of their choice; and the rights to be present at their own trial, access to free assistance of an interpreter, to adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense, to confront witnesses, to present witnesses and evidence, to refrain from self-incrimination, and to appeal convictions. The law extends these rights to both citizens and noncitizens. Judges conduct trials and render verdicts. The courts provided an attorney at public expense for indigent defendants facing serious criminal charges as necessary from the moment charged through all appeals.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The constitution provides that any person whose rights or freedoms were contravened may apply directly to the High Court for redress. The High Court has taken a leading role in applying human rights principles in rulings.

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

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

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

The constitution 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.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. The internet was available and widely used in urban areas, although 78 percent of the country's population lived in rural areas. Despite some improvements in access in rural areas, most rural dwellers did not have internet access. Approximately 11 percent of the population used the internet in 2017.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution provides for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights. Demonstrators must obtain permits, which the government generally granted.

c. Freedom of Religion

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

d. Freedom of Movement

The constitution provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights. The government cooperated with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons and other persons of concern.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The government continued to provide land for persons displaced in 2014 and 2015 due to natural disasters.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law does not provide for granting asylum or refugee status, and the government has not established a system for providing protection to refugees. The government did not grant refugee status or asylum during the year, and there were no known refugees in the country.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution provides citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot based on equal and universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Observers regarded the 2014 national parliamentary election as generally free and fair, although there was evidence of vote buying. The elections were the first the government held following the withdrawal of the RAMSI military peacekeeping contingent. The Commonwealth Observer Group reported that members of parliament used rural constituency development funds to buy political support. The postelection formation of the government was also marked by allegations that foreign and domestic business interests made corrupt payments to elected members of parliament. Following the election parliament elected Manasseh Sogavare as prime minister.

In November 2017, after a vote of no confidence against Sogavare, parliament elected Ricky Houenipwela as prime minister, and he formed a new coalition government.

Following an investigation into an alleged politically motivated shooting during the formation of the coalition government in 2014, authorities charged five persons. All were free on bail, but the police investigation continued during the year, with police offering a reward for more information.

Political Parties and Political Participation: Political parties operated without restriction, but they were institutionally weak, with frequent shifts in political coalitions and unstable parliamentary majorities. In August parliament amended the Electoral Act to require all candidates to present party certificates. It also makes provision for remote voting, increases candidate nomination fees, and calls for special accommodation for voters with disabilities.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No law limits participation of women or members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate; however, traditional male dominance limited the role of women in government. There were two women in the 50-member parliament and three female permanent secretaries in government ministries. There were no female judges on the High Court, although in September 2017 the country's first female chief magistrate was sworn in. Government measures to increase the number of women in politics did not deliver the desired result. Civil society groups such as the Young Women's Parliamentary Group continued to advocate for more leadership positions for women.

There was one minority (non-Melanesian) member of parliament.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

While the law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, the government implemented the law inconsistently and officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were reports of government corruption during the year.

In July parliament passed the Anti-Corruption Bill and the Whistleblowers Protection Act. The bill establishes an Independent Commission against Corruption tasked with preventing official corruption and provides it with investigative and prosecutorial powers. The commission is responsible to implement the National Anticorruption Strategy, but it is not yet operational. In 2017 parliament passed the Ombudsman Bill, designed to increase the effectiveness and autonomy of the Office of the Ombudsman. The Office of the Ombudsman is responsible for investigating public complaints of government maladministration.

In 2017 the RSIP and Ministry of Finance and Treasury launched "Taskforce Janus" to identify corruption in the civil service. Their investigations led to the arrests of 20 civil servants, including the permanent secretary of police.

The Public Accounts Committee is a permanent parliamentary committee established in the constitution with a mandate to examine and report to parliament on public accounts and national property.

Corruption: Corruption was a pervasive problem in the government, especially in the forestry and fishing sectors. Transparency International's 2013 Global Corruption Barometer reported that one in three public servants had sought a bribe in exchange for a service. In May authorities arrested Hypolite Taremae, a former government minister and sitting deputy provincial premier, and charged him with "conversion" after he allegedly misappropriated 475,000 Solomon Islands dollars (SBD) (\$57,500) for personal use during his tenure as minister. As of September he was free on bail and a court date was not yet set.

Police corruption was not a serious problem during the year. Observers criticized some police officers for being more loyal to their respective ethnic group or *wantok* (extended family) than to the country as a whole.

Financial Disclosure: Public officials were subject to financial disclosure laws under the leadership code of conduct. The Office of the Leadership Code Commission (LCC) investigates misconduct involving members of parliament or senior civil servants. If the LCC finds conclusive evidence of misconduct, it sends the matter to the Office of Public Prosecution, which may proceed with legal charges. The LCC chairperson and two part-time commissioners constitute a tribunal with power to screen certain cases of misconduct and apply maximum fines of SBD 5,000 (\$600) for members of parliament or senior civil servants. The LCC investigated a number of high-profile cases, including that of the permanent secretary of infrastructure development, Henry Murray, who authorities arrested in August 2017 and charged with 11 counts of defrauding the government of SBD 700,000 (\$85,000) from 2014 to 2017. Three of the charges were subsequently dropped, and the appeals process continued.

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

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were somewhat cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The constitution provides for an ombudsperson with power to subpoena and investigate complaints of official abuse, mistreatment, or unfair treatment. Although the Office of the Ombudsman has potentially far-ranging powers and operated without governmental or political party interference, a lack of resources limited its effectiveness. The Office of the Ombudsman receives its own funding allocation, which is designed to address these shortcomings.

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

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. Domestic violence is a crime, with a maximum penalty of three years in prison and a fine of SBD 30,000 (\$3,630).

Police made efforts to charge offenders for domestic violence and assault against women. In June, for example, three male nurses at Kilu'ufi Hospital Psychiatric Unit allegedly raped a 15-year-old mentally ill female patient. Police were investigating the allegation, but as of September, police had not arrested or charged the three suspects. As part of the police curriculum, officers receive specialized training on how to work with rape victims. Police have a Sexual Assault Unit, staffed mostly by female officers, to provide support to victims and investigate charges. In reported cases of domestic abuse, victims often dropped charges before a court appearance, or settled cases out of court. In cases in which charges were filed, the time between the charging of an individual and the subsequent court hearing could be as long as two years. The magistrates' courts dealt with physical abuse of women as with any other assault, but prosecutions were rare due to low judicial and police capacity and cultural bias against women.

With donor funding and support, the government conducted training workshops for local court officials in how to process cases of domestic violence and rape. The training focused on how to apply relevant laws and policies and use referral networks to support victims.

Violence against women, including rape and domestic abuse, remained a serious problem but was underreported. Among the reasons cited for failure to report abuse were pressure from male relatives, fear of reprisals, feelings of shame, and cultural taboos on discussing such matters.

A 2011 World Health Organization report revealed more than half of the women in the country had experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner and that 64 percent of women age 15 to 49 years regularly experienced violence in the home.

The Family Protection Act requires that victims of domestic violence have access to counseling and medical services, legal support, and a safe place within the community if they cannot return home. The government has a referral system in place to coordinate these services, but referral agencies often lacked funding, especially in rural areas. The Family Support Center and a church-run facility for abused women provided counseling and other support services for women.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: The incidence of customary bride-price payments continued to increase and contributed to the perception of male ownership of women.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is not illegal and was a widespread problem.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization.

Discrimination: While the law accords women equal legal rights, including the right to own property, most women were limited to customary family roles that prevented them from taking more active roles in economic and political life. No laws mandate equal pay for work of equal value (see section 7.d.). The government did not provide sufficient resources to enforce equal rights laws effectively.

Children

Birth Registration: Children acquire citizenship through their parents. The laws do not allow dual citizenship for adults, and persons who acquire dual citizenship at birth must decide by age 18 years which citizenship to retain. Registration delays did not result in denial of public services to children.

Education: Education was neither free nor compulsory. The government continued to implement its Free Fee Basic Education Policy, which covers the operational costs for children to attend school but allows school management to request additional contributions from families in the form of cash, labor, or school fundraising. The policy is intended to increase educational access by subsidizing

school fees for students age six to 15 years in grades one through nine, but it rarely covered all costs. The additional school fees and other costs or required contributions prevented some children from attending school. According to 2013 data from the Asian Development Bank, 75 percent of boys who entered primary school reached the final grade, whereas only 69 percent of girls did. According to the bank, gender imbalance in education decreased from earlier years.

Child Abuse: The law grants children the same general rights and protections as adults, with some exceptions. The law mandates the Social Welfare Division of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services to coordinate child protection services and authorizes the courts to issue protection orders in cases of serious child abuse or neglect. Laws do not specifically prohibit the use of children in illicit activities such as drug trafficking.

The government did not provide sufficient resources to enforce laws designed to protect children from sexual abuse, child labor, and neglect (see section 7.c.). The law criminalizes domestic violence including violence against children, but lacked public awareness and enforcement. Child sexual and physical abuse remained significant problems. Nonetheless, the traditional extended-family system generally respected and protected children in accordance with a family's financial resources and access to services.

Early and Forced Marriage: Both boys and girls may legally marry at age 15 years, and the law permits marriage at age 14 with parental and village consent. Marriage at such young ages was not common.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The minimum age for consensual sex is age 15 years. The maximum penalty for sexual relations with a girl younger than age 13 is life imprisonment, and for sexual relations with a girl age 13 to 15, the penalty is five years' imprisonment. Consent is not a permissible defense under these provisions; however, in the latter case, reasonable belief the victim was age 15 years or older is a permissible defense. Selling or hiring minors younger than age 15 and girls younger than age 18 for prostitution is punishable as a criminal offense. Prostitution laws do not cover boys age 15 to 18 and therefore leaves them without legal protection. There were reports of workers in logging camps sexually exploiting girls as young as age 12, but in most cases, official charges were not filed.

Child pornography is illegal and carries a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment. Amendments to the penal code passed in 2017 criminalize

commercial sexual exploitation of children and participation in or use, distribution, and storing of sexually exploitative materials with children, and some forms of internal child trafficking. Within the country girls and boys were exploited in prostitution and sexual servitude.

International Child Abductions: The country is not 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 <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data.html>.

Anti-Semitism

The Jewish community was very small, and 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

No law or national policy prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental disabilities, and no legislation mandates access to buildings, information, or communications for such individuals. Very few buildings were accessible to persons with disabilities. In August parliament passed changes to the Electoral Act that require electoral officials to provide special accommodation for voters with disabilities.

The country had one separate educational facility, supported almost entirely by the International Committee of the Red Cross, for children with disabilities. Children with disabilities could attend mainstream schools, but inaccessible facilities and a lack of resources often made it difficult for them to access education. No law requires reasonable accommodations in the workplace and high unemployment nationwide made it difficult for persons with disabilities to find work, particularly in rural areas.

The government relied upon families to meet the needs of persons with mental disabilities, and there were very limited government facilities or services for such persons.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The country has more than 27 major islands with approximately 70 language groups. Many islanders saw themselves first as members of a clan, next as inhabitants of their natal island, and only third as citizens of their nation. Tensions and resentment between the Guadalcanalese and the Malaitans on Guadalcanal culminated in violence beginning in 1998. Reconciliation ceremonies organized during the year led to further easing of tensions between the two groups. Underlying problems between the two groups remained, however, including issues related to jobs and land rights.

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

“Sodomy” is illegal, as are “indecent practices between persons of the same sex.” The maximum penalty for the former is 14 years’ imprisonment and for the latter five years. There were no reports of arrests or prosecutions directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex persons under these provisions during the year, and authorities generally did not enforce these laws.

There are no specific antidiscrimination laws based on sexual orientation and gender identity. There were no reports of violence or discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation or gender identity, although stigma may hinder some from reporting.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

There was societal discrimination toward persons with HIV/AIDS, but unlike in the past, there were no specific reports of disownment by families and no reports of violence targeting persons with HIV/AIDS.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

There were three reported cases of sorcery-related violence during the year. The violence typically targeted the most vulnerable persons: young women, widows without male sons, and the elderly.

In February, Prime Minister Houenipwela launched the second phase of the UN Peacebuilding Project aimed at consolidating peace, stability, and social cohesion. With support from the UN Peacebuilding Project, the government hosted stakeholder dialogues targeting women and youth as key agents for peacebuilding efforts.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right of workers to form and join unions, conduct legal strikes, and bargain collectively. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination but does not specifically provide for reinstatement of workers fired for trade union activity. The law permits strikes in both the public and private sectors. A notice to the government 28 days prior to a strike is required for strikes to be legal. The government prohibits strikes by civil servants in essential services, but there are procedures in place to provide these workers due process and protect their rights. The government defines essential services as including, but not limited to, the health, public security, aviation, marine, immigration, and disaster-relief sectors. The law does not provide for the rights of workers in the informal sector to organize or to collective bargaining.

Government enforcement of the law was inconsistent; the small penalties were not sufficient to deter violations. The penalty for antiunion discrimination was not effective, for example, because employers could afford to pay the fine and easily replace workers. Penalties for illegal strikes, on the other hand, served as a deterrent for employees to strike.

Collective bargaining agreements determined wages and conditions of employment in the formal economy. Disputes between labor and management not settled between the two sides were referred to the Trade Disputes Panel for arbitration, either before or during a strike. While the panel deliberates, employees have protection from arbitrary dismissal or lockout. The three-member panel, composed of a chairperson appointed by the judiciary, a labor representative, and a business representative, is independent and neutral. The panel's decisions are binding on the parties. Administrative and judicial procedures were not subject to lengthy delays or appeals.

Workers exercised their rights to associate and bargain collectively, although employers did not always respect these rights. Since only a small percentage of the workforce was in formal-sector employment, employers could easily replace workers if disputes were not resolved quickly.

In February the Solomon Islands Nurses Association issued a strike notice to the government for not honoring a 2008 agreement to improve working conditions. The government agreed to review the agreement, and the union withdrew the strike notice. The Workers Union of Solomon Islands actively negotiated with private employers during the year.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The constitution prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, except as part of a court sentence or order. The government did not effectively enforce the law. The immigration act prohibits transnational forced labor, and the penal code prohibits internal forced labor and prescribes a maximum penalty of 15 years' imprisonment (or 20 years if the victim is a child).

The government typically relied on labor inspectors to report on any instances of forced or compulsory labor during regularly scheduled routine inspections; however, there were not enough inspectors or resources to enforce the laws effectively. The government continued its efforts to monitor and investigate operations at logging companies, although it did not initiate any prosecutions.

There were reports of adults forced to work in logging camps and of children in domestic servitude or service industries. Fishermen have reported situations indicative of labor trafficking, including nonpayment of wages, severe living conditions, violence, and limited food supply on Taiwan-flagged fishing vessels in the Solomon Islands' territorial waters and ports.

Also see the Department'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 labor by children younger than age 12 years, except light agricultural or domestic work performed in the company of parents, or other labor approved by the commissioner of labor. Children younger than age 18 may not work at night in any industry without specific written permission from the labor

commissioner. Girls younger than age 18 may not work on a ship or underground in mines; boys may work on a ship or underground in a mine if they are at least 16 years old, provided they have a medical certificate attesting they are fit for such work. The law bars children younger than age 15 from work in industry or on ships, except aboard training ships for educational purposes. The law does not limit the number of hours a child can work, nor does it clearly set forth a minimum age for hazardous work or delineate the type of work considered hazardous for all children.

The commissioner of labor is responsible for enforcing child labor laws, but the resources devoted to investigating child labor cases were inadequate to investigate or deter violations. The law provides for penalties of SBD 5,000 (\$605) for any person who contravenes or fails to comply with the law on the employment of children and young persons; there was no information available on the application of such penalties.

Children worked in agriculture, fishing, alluvia mining, as domestic servants, cooks, and in logging camps where conditions often were poor. For example, young girls worked long hours and in isolation as domestic workers in mining camps. In some cases these conditions could amount to forced labor (see section 7.b.). There were reports of commercial sexual exploitation of children (see section 6, Children). Children also assisted in cultivating, distributing, and selling local drugs such as betel nut or marijuana. They were at risk of physical abuse, mental illness, addiction, sexual abuse, and robbery.

According to the Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey, 2 percent of children age five to 11 years and 12 percent of children age 12 to 14 were engaged in paid labor. Paid child labor was more common among female children in urban areas and all children living in rural areas.

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

No laws regarding employment and occupation prohibit discrimination in employment and occupation. Under the Public Service Code of Conduct, public officers have a responsibility to ensure their workplace is “free from harassment, including sexual harassment.” Discrimination in employment and occupation

occurred with respect to women, disability, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, and HIV-positive status.

Women experienced discrimination especially in the attainment of managerial positions. Employed women were predominantly engaged in low-paying and low-skilled jobs. A 2013 government report, the most recent data available, presented evidence of a significant gender gap in senior positions, using public service as an example. According to the report, women continued to dominate the lower administrative level on the public service workforce, but very few women held senior management positions. A shortage of jobs compounded the limited entry and opportunities of women in the workforce. A program funded by the International Finance Corporation and implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children, and Family Affairs worked with businesses for four years to provide tools to recruit, retain, and promote women throughout domestic companies. The ministry is also responsible for implementation of the National Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy, which aims to remove barriers to women's participation in formal employment.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The minimum wage was SBD 4.00 (\$0.48) per hour for all workers except those in the fishing and agricultural sectors, who received SBD 3.50 (\$0.42). The official estimate for the extreme poverty level in the country was SBD 9.74 (\$1.18) per day. The proportion of the population living below the food poverty line was 4.4 percent. The standard workweek is 45 hours and is limited to six days per week.

Occupational safety and health laws require employers to provide a safe working environment and forbid retribution against any employee who seeks protection under labor regulations. These laws are current and appropriate for main industries. Laws on working conditions and safety standards apply equally to foreign workers and citizens. Some workers could not remove themselves from situations that endangered their health or safety, particularly in the fishing and logging industries, without jeopardy to their employment.

The commissioner of labor in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labor and Immigration, the public prosecutor, and police are responsible for enforcing labor laws; however, they usually reacted to complaints rather than routinely monitoring adherence to the law. The government's minimal human and financial resources limited its ability to enforce the law in smaller establishments, the informal economy, and the subsistence sector. The number of labor inspectors was,

moreover, insufficient to monitor labor practices routinely, particularly in extractive sectors outside of the capital. An active labor movement and an independent judiciary, however, helped provide effective oversight of labor law enforcement in major state and private enterprises. The law does not specify penalties for violations, significantly weakening effective enforcement.

Workers in the logging, construction, and manufacturing industries were subject to hazardous and exploitative work. Accidents were largely due to negligence or failure to adhere to safety practices by employees and employers.