

NORTH MACEDONIA 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Republic of North Macedonia is a parliamentary democracy. A popularly elected president is head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces. The unicameral parliament exercises legislative authority. Presidential elections were last held in 2019 and won by President Stevo Pendarovski. Parliamentary elections took place in July 2020 after a three-month delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In its July 2020 preliminary statement on the parliamentary elections and October 2020 final report, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights observed the elections were “generally administered effectively amid adjustments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but legal stability was undermined by substantial revisions to the electoral code and subsequent ad hoc regulations enacted during the state of emergency.” The report characterized the elections as “genuinely competitive” despite politicians’ limited ability to conduct outreach during the pandemic. Election day went smoothly.

The national police maintain internal security, including migration and border enforcement, and report to the Ministry of the Interior. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. Members of the security forces committed some abuses, including excessive use of force by police and prison guards.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: inhuman and degrading conditions and severe overcrowding in some prison units; violence and threats of violence against journalists; cases of serious government corruption; lack of accountability for gender-based and family violence; and for crimes involving violence and threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex persons.

The government took steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who committed abuses or engaged in corruption. The ombudsman believed police

the category of household activities, which included farming and use of agricultural equipment, followed by the construction sector.

Informal Sector: Although the government set occupational safety and health standards for employers, those standards were not enforced in the informal sector. The informal sector of the economy is estimated to account for approximately 22 percent of employment. Many workers in the informal sector were male and included young people as well as retired persons working in the agricultural sector. After agriculture, construction and commerce were thought to be the sectors of the economy with the most informal workers. In September the Ministry of Finance and the UN Development Program launched a Public Finance Management Reform Project designed to identify the main causes driving employment in the informal economy and to map out precisely sectors where it is most prevalent.