

# AZERBAIJAN 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Azerbaijani constitution provides for a republic with a presidential form of government. Legislative authority is vested in the Milli Majlis (National Assembly). The presidency is the main branch of government, dominating the judiciary and legislature. In February 2020 the government conducted National Assembly elections. The election observation mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe concluded that the National Assembly elections and the 2018 presidential election took place within a restrictive legislative framework and political environment that prevented genuine competition in the elections.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Security Service are responsible for security within the country and report directly to the president. The Ministry of Internal Affairs oversees local police forces and maintains internal civil defense troops. The State Security Service is responsible for domestic matters, and the Foreign Intelligence Service focuses on foreign intelligence and counterintelligence matters. The State Migration Service and the State Border Service are responsible for migration and border enforcement. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. There were credible reports that members of security forces committed some abuses.

A cease-fire in November 2020 halted 44 days of intensive fighting involving Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Armenia-supported separatists. Sporadic incidents of violence along the undelimited international border between the two countries and some other areas during the year resulted in casualties and detentions. There were credible reports that Azerbaijani and ethnic Armenian forces engaged in unlawful killings, torture, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment during, and in some cases after, the November 2020 fighting. Complaints submitted by Azerbaijan and Armenia to the European Court of Human Rights accusing each other of committing atrocities during the fighting in fall 2020 and summer 2016 awaited the court's ruling. The government acknowledged holding 41 Armenian detainees, but there were allegations, disputed by the Azerbaijani government, that























































































































labor inspectorate was weak and ineffective due to the moratorium. Workers cannot remove themselves from situations that endanger health or safety without jeopardy to their employment. Local human rights groups, including the Oil Workers Rights Defense Organization, an NGO dedicated to protecting worker rights in the petroleum sector, maintained that employers, particularly foreign oil companies, did not always treat foreign and domestic workers equally. Domestic employees of foreign oil companies reportedly often received lower pay and worked without contracts or private health-care insurance. Some domestic employees of foreign oil companies reported violations of labor law, noting they were unable to receive overtime payments or vacations.

The government did not effectively enforce occupational safety and health laws, largely due to the extended moratorium on worksite inspections. Penalties for violations were not commensurate with those for similar crimes. According to official statistics, 51 workers died on the job during the year, none from the oil and gas sector.

**Informal Sector:** According to most estimates, the informal sector accounted for 30 to 40 percent of the economy, especially in the service and construction sectors. Informal workers are covered by wage, hour, and OSH laws and inspections, although these laws were commonly ignored.