

SWEDEN 2015 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kingdom of Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a freely elected multiparty parliamentary form of government. Legislative authority rests in the unicameral parliament (Riksdag). Observers considered the national elections in September 2014 to be free and fair. In October 2014 the king announced that the center-left coalition led by Stefan Lofven of the Social Democratic Party had taken office. The king is largely a symbolic head of state. The prime minister is the head of government and exercises executive authority. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

The main human rights abuses included societal discrimination and incidents of violence against foreigners and members of ethnic and religious minorities, and domestic abuse of women and children. While the criminal justice system operated effectively in other respects, authorities subjected a high percentage of pretrial detainees to extended periods in isolation and limited their access to visitors, mail, and exercise.

Other reported problems included some unauthorized accessing of personal information by police; societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice; sexual harassment of women; displaced children's living on the streets; an increased number of anti-Semitic hate crimes; trafficking of men, women, and children; discrimination against persons with disabilities; and wage abuse of mainly foreign seasonal berry pickers.

Authorities generally prosecuted officials who committed abuses in the security services or elsewhere in the government.

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

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

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

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices, although there were sporadic reports of police using excessive force.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison and detention center conditions generally met international standards.

Physical Conditions: During 2014 there were three reports of suicide by prisoners.

Administration: Authorities investigated credible allegations of restrictive conditions for prisoners. There were no prison ombudsmen, but the justice ombudsman, who works independently from the government, received and handled prisoner complaints. In 2014 the justice ombudsman conducted seven prison inspections.

Restrictive conditions for prisoners held in pretrial custody remained a problem, although the law includes the possibility of appealing a decision to impose specific restrictions to the Court of Appeals and ultimately to the Supreme Court. According to the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, during the year authorities subjected approximately 49 percent of pretrial detainees to extended isolation or to restrictions on mail delivery or exercise. Authorities stated they took this step when detainees' contact with people outside the detention center could risk destroying evidence or changing witnesses' statements, thereby imperiling a continuing investigation.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring by certain independent, nongovernmental observers, including the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture. While the national Red Cross and church associations may visit prisoners, they may not monitor or inspect the prisons.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The national police and the national criminal police are responsible for law enforcement and general order within the country. The Security Service is responsible for national security related to terrorism, extremism, and espionage. The Ministry of Justice provides the funding and the letters of instruction for police activities, but it does not control how they are performed. According to the constitution, all branches of the police are independent authorities.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the national police, the national criminal police, and the Security Service, and the government had effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year.

In 2014 the national prosecutor's office for police cases received 8,488 reports of alleged on- and off-duty misconduct by officers and civilian police employees, employees of the justice system, and parliamentarians: 94 percent of the incidents took place while the employee was on duty and usually related to an arrest or a traffic violation. Almost 3,000 of these cases stemmed from officials' being caught on speed cameras while exercising official duties or officials' filing reports of possible misconduct against themselves. During 2014 prosecutors took 145 cases to court. Authorities ultimately dropped charges in 21 cases.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires warrants based on evidence and issued by duly authorized officials for arrests, and the government generally respected this requirement. Police must file charges within six hours against persons detained for disturbing public order or considered dangerous and within 12 hours against those detained on other grounds. Police may hold a person six hours for questioning or as much as 12 hours, if deemed necessary for the investigation, without a court order. After questioning, authorities must either arrest or release an individual, based on the level of suspicion. If a suspect is arrested, the prosecutor has 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances) to request continued detention. Authorities must arraign an arrested suspect within 48 hours and begin initial prosecution within two weeks unless there are extenuating circumstances. Authorities generally respected these requirements.

Although there is no system of bail, courts routinely released defendants pending trial unless authorities considered them dangerous or there was a risk the suspect

would leave the country. Detainees may retain a lawyer of their choice. In criminal cases the government is obligated to provide an attorney, regardless of the defendant's financial situation. The law affords detainees prompt access to lawyers and to family members. A suspect has a right to legal representation when the prosecutor requests his detention beyond 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances). The type of crime that authorities accused a suspect of committing influenced the suspect's access to family members. Authorities sometimes did not allow a suspect any contact with family members if police believed it could jeopardize an investigation.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

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

Trial Procedures

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

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence, have a right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them (with free interpretation as necessary), and have a right to a fair, public trial without undue delay. Cases of a sensitive nature, including those involving children, rape, and national security, may be closed to the public. Juries are used only in cases involving freedom of the press or freedom of speech. In other cases judges or court-appointed civilian representatives decide guilt or innocence. Defendants have the right to be present at their trial and to consult an attorney in a timely manner. In criminal cases the government is obligated to provide a defense attorney. Defendants generally have adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense. Defendants can confront or question witnesses against them and present witnesses and evidence on their behalf. Defendants and their attorneys have access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases and cannot be compelled to testify or confess guilt. If convicted, defendants have the right of appeal. The law extends the above rights to all defendants.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals and organizations may seek civil remedies for human rights violations in the general court system. Citizens can appeal cases involving possible violations of the European Convention on Human Rights by the government to the European Court of Human Rights.

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

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

The majority of the 145 cases involving police misconduct that went to court in 2014 related to officials' making illegal data searches in police databases. Authorities continued to investigate the gathering of personal information by police in Skane (see section 6, National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities).

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

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

Freedom of Speech and Expression: The law criminalizes expression considered to be "hate speech" and prohibits threats or expressions of contempt for a group or member of a group based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation. Penalties for hate speech range from fines to a maximum of four years in prison. In addition, the country's courts have held that it is illegal to wear xenophobic symbols or racist paraphernalia or to display signs and banners with inflammatory symbols at rallies.

In 2014 there were reports of 690 cases of hate speech, equivalent to 11 percent of all hate crimes reported. Of all cases reported in 2013, the last year for which detailed information was available, 59 percent were investigated, 41 percent were dismissed without an investigation, and 5 percent led to prosecution.

In September the attorney general decided to prosecute Martin Saxlin, editor in chief of the neo-Nazi website Nordfront, for incitement to racial hatred. Saxlin was investigated after a complaint that he had published on the site a text honoring Adolf Hitler.

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. According to the Swedish Institute, 95 percent of the country's residents between the ages of nine and 55 used the internet on a daily basis. Some 88 percent of the population has broadband connectivity in their homes.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

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

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution provides for the freedoms of 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, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The constitution and law provide 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 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Protection of Refugees

During the year many countries in the EU and Southeast Europe experienced an unprecedented wave of migration from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, consisting of a mix of asylum seekers/potential refugees, economic migrants, and trafficking victims, among others. For simplicity, this report will refer to these populations as “migrants and asylum seekers” if more specific information is not available.

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. Applicants may appeal against unfavorable asylum decisions.

From January to December 1, 149,028 persons applied for asylum. The Migration Agency granted asylum to 29,861 persons, of whom 1,900 were refugees resettled under the auspices of UNHCR, 9,782 received humanitarian protection, 17,833 received subsidiary protection, and 346 received temporary protection. In addition, the country received 39 asylum seekers relocated from Italy under EU auspices. Because of the pressure of numbers of persons arriving in the country under neither UNHCR nor EU auspices, on November 30, the EU Commission agreed to relocate an undecided number of persons from the country to other EU member states. Since the Migration Agency needed approximately one year to process an application for asylum, excluding appeals, many cases adjudicated during the year concerned persons who applied for asylum in previous years.

On November 24, to cope with the large inflow of refugees and migrants, the government tightened entry standards to the minimal international and EU levels.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: In accordance with EU regulations, the government denied asylum to persons who had previously registered in other EU member states or in countries with which the country maintained reciprocal return agreements. During the year the Migration Agency decided to return 6,402 such persons to those countries, except to Greece. Many of those persons remained in the country during their appeals. By October 15, police deported approximately 1,000 persons.

Refugee Abuse: As of November 30, 25 cases of attempted arson against housing for asylum seekers were reported during the year. Police arrested two men for planning to burn down housing for asylum seekers in Borlange on September 9.

Although government policies mandate housing for asylum seekers, the Migration Agency occasionally was not able to provide adequate shelter due to overwhelming

numbers of applicants. On November 5, the minister for migration announced that the government could no longer guarantee housing for newly arrived asylum seekers. On November 14, authorities began to house some persons applying for asylum in the city of Malmo in tents, and on November 19, some asylum seekers were forced to sleep outdoors in inclement weather due to the housing shortage. Authorities provided asylum seekers with food, clean water, medical care, and other amenities.

Durable Solutions: The government authorized financial support for the repatriation of asylum seekers denied residence in the country in the amount of 30,000 kronor (\$3,500) per adult and 15,000 kronor (\$1,750) per child, with a maximum of 75,000 kronor (\$8,700) per family. In 2014 the government provided repatriation support to 2,016 persons, most of them of Iraqi origin.

Temporary Protection: See above, Access to Asylum.

Stateless Persons

Citizenship is derived from one's parents. According to UNHCR, there were 27,167 stateless persons in the country in December 2014. The large number related to the influx of migrants and refugees and the birth of children to stateless parents who remained stateless until either one parent acquired citizenship or a special application for citizenship for stateless children under the age of five was made. Most stateless persons came from the Middle East (the Occupied Territories, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq) and Somalia.

Stateless persons who are granted permanent residence can obtain citizenship through the same naturalization process as other permanent residents. Gaining citizenship generally requires four to eight years, depending on the individual's grounds for residency, ability to establish identity, and lack of a criminal record.

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 based on universal and equal suffrage, and citizens exercised that ability.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Observers considered the national elections held in September 2014 to be free and fair.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year.

Corruption: A special unit in the office of the Swedish Prosecution Authority prosecutes cases involving corruption. Fifteen investigations initiated by the unit over the past 12 years resulted in convictions during the year.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires public officials and political parties to disclose income and assets. The declarations are available to the public, and there are criminal and administrative sanctions for noncompliance.

Public Access to Information: The constitution and law provide for public access to government information, and the government generally granted such access to citizens and noncitizens, including foreign media.

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

A variety of 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: The country has seven national ombudsmen: four justice ombudsmen; the chancellor of justice; the children's ombudsman; and the discrimination ombudsman with responsibility for ethnicity, gender, transsexual identity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disabilities. There are normally ombudsmen at the municipal level as well. The ombudsmen enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government or party interference. They had adequate resources, and observers considered them generally effective.

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

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases. The government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, including spousal rape, and domestic violence are illegal, and the government enforced the law effectively. The law stipulates more severe penalties for repeated crimes and for cases in which the perpetrator had a close relationship with the victim. Penalties range from two to 10 years in prison.

Authorities apprehended and prosecuted abusers in most cases of domestic violence. The majority of women exposed to domestic violence never pressed formal charges against the perpetrator.

The law provides for protection of survivors from contact with their abusers. When necessary, authorities helped survivors protect their identities or obtain new identities and homes. According to official statistics, approximately 13,100 persons, mostly women, were in these programs as of October 2014. Both national and local governments helped fund volunteer groups that provided shelter and other assistance for abused women, and both private and public organizations ran shelters and operated hotlines.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: Honor-related violence often involved immigrants from the Middle East or South Asia. No information was available regarding the extent of honor-related violence. In June the Swedish Prison and Probation Services estimated that 73 persons were in prison for committing honor-related violence.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment, and the government generally enforced this law. Criminal penalties range from a fine to up to two years in prison.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals have the right to decide the number, spacing, and timing of their children, manage their reproductive health, and have access to the information and means to do so free from discrimination, coercion, or violence.

Discrimination: Women have the same legal status and rights as men, including under family, labor, property, nationality, and inheritance law. The law requires equal pay for equal work. Women's salaries averaged approximately 88 percent of those of men. Women were underrepresented in high-ranking positions in both the public and the private sectors (see section 7.d.). Gender-based discrimination in access to credit, owning or managing a business, and access to education and housing is prohibited and not commonly reported.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived from one's parents. Children born in the country, regardless of their parents' citizenship and status in the country, are registered immediately in the tax authority's population register.

Child Abuse: Child abuse was a problem. The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically. Parents, teachers, and other adults are subject to prosecution if they physically punish a child, including by slapping or spanking. The usual sentence for such an offense is a fine combined with counseling and monitoring by social workers. Authorities may remove abused children from their homes and place them in foster care.

The children's ombudsman published a number of reports and publications for children and those working to protect children from abuse.

Early and Forced Marriage: The minimum age of marriage is 18, and it is illegal for anyone under 18 to marry. The law allows no exceptions.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law criminalizes "contact with children under 15 for sexual purposes," including internet contact intended to lead to sexual assault. Penalties range from fines to one year in prison. The law prohibits child pornography; penalties range from fines to six years in prison. Authorities enforced the law. The minimum age for consensual sex is 15.

Displaced Children: In September the Stockholm Police reported that underage children, mainly from Morocco, Algeria, and other countries in North Africa, were living on the streets. Police estimated that approximately 500-600 boys have been criminally active since 2012 and registered 1,839 cases in which the suspects were minors without residency and without a legal guardian in the country. Many children sought asylum in the country, but authorities considered only a much smaller number as qualifying for asylum. Social Services offered accommodation

for children or foster families regardless of asylum status, but many were stuck in a criminal lifestyle. Because the juveniles' countries of origin were unwilling to accept them back due to their criminal record, they could not be deported.

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

Anti-Semitism

Leaders of the Jewish community estimated there were 20,000 Jews in the country. The Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities estimated there were approximately 9,000 practicing members. The National Council for Crime Prevention registered 267 anti-Semitic crimes in 2014, compared with 193 in 2013, a 38-percent increase. This was the highest-ever number of anti-Semitic crimes and included threats, verbal abuse, vandalism, graffiti, and harassment in schools. Anti-Semitic incidents were often associated with events in the Middle East and actions of the Israeli government, and Swedish Jews were at times blamed for Israeli policies.

In 2014 the most common types of anti-Semitic crimes reported were hate speech (34 percent), unlawful threats and harassment (30 percent), and destruction or defacement of property (20 percent). The number of instances of destruction or defacement of property increased 10 percent from 2013. In 69 percent of the cases, the perpetrators were not previously known to the victim, and the crimes were committed mainly on the internet or in public places. Authorities initiated an investigation in 70 percent of the cases reported in 2013, the latest year for which detailed information was available, but brought formal charges in only 3 percent.

In January television reporter Petter Ljunggren wore a kippa (or yarmulke) on camera in the city of Malmo to test attitudes toward Jews. The reporter was cursed at and told to "get out." At one point, a dozen men shouting anti-Semitic slogans threatened the reporter, and residents in apartments overhead threw eggs at him. In a follow-up program, the reporter interviewed individuals who had appeared in the first program and asked why he was met with such hatred, to which they responded that it was due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

After the February 14-15 attacks in Copenhagen in which two persons, including a volunteer guard at a synagogue, were killed, police increased protection of

synagogues in the country. In August the County Administrative Board of Skane gave Malmo's Jewish congregation permission to place four video cameras outside the city's synagogue as a security measure.

A young civil society leader received numerous threats during the year because of his work to promote religious tolerance and combat anti-Semitism. A Malmo rabbi attacked in 2014 continued to be subjected to verbal and physical harassment during the year.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center left in place its travel warning first issued in 2010 for Jews traveling in southern Sweden, because Jews in Malmo could be "subject to anti-Semitic taunts and harassment."

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency cooperated with religious communities on a national level to promote dialogue and prevent conflicts leading to anti-Semitic incidents. Representatives from the national unit trained police officers to detect hate crimes and visited high schools to raise awareness of such crimes and encourage more victims to report abuses. The government made available information in several languages for victims of hate crimes and provided interpreters to facilitate reporting. Police hate-crime units existed throughout the country.

During the year several prominent politicians participated in public demonstrations in support of the country's Jewish community, such as a human "ring of peace" around the great synagogue of Stockholm in February, and condemned anti-Semitic violence and sentiments.

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 employers from discriminating against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in hiring decisions (see section 7.d.) and prohibits universities from discriminating against students with disabilities in making admission decisions. The law protects, and the government effectively enforced, the right to access to healthcare and other public services for all citizens, including for persons with disabilities.

In 2014 the number of reports of discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of government services increased to 461, compared with 403 in 2013. Those involved handled many complaints through mediation procedures rather than formal court hearings.

Observers reported cases of insufficient access to privately owned buildings used by the public, such as apartments, restaurants, and bars. Many buildings and some means of public transportation remained inaccessible. Government regulations require full accessibility for new buildings, and similar requirements exist for public facilities. As of January inadequate accessibility of all kinds for persons with disabilities legally constitutes a form of discrimination covered by the Discrimination Act.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law recognizes Sami (formerly known as Lapps), Swedish Finns, Tornedalers, Roma, and Jews as national minorities. The discrimination ombudsman received 601 complaints regarding ethnic discrimination in 2014, compared with 755 in 2013. Of the complaints, 180 related to the labor market (see section 7.d.).

Societal discrimination and violence against immigrants and Roma continued to be problems during the year.

Police registered reports of xenophobic crimes, some of which related to neo-Nazi or white-power ideology. Police investigated and the district attorney's office prosecuted race-related crimes. Official estimates placed the number of active neo-Nazis and white supremacists at 1,500. Neo-Nazi groups operated legally, but courts have held that it is illegal to wear xenophobic symbols or racist paraphernalia or to display signs and banners with inflammatory symbols at rallies, since the law prohibits incitement of hatred against ethnic groups.

Expo, a private foundation that researches and maps antidemocratic, right-wing extremists and racist tendencies in the country, reported more activity in the ultranationalist anti-Muslim movement than by neo-Nazis. The movement's dissemination of mainly online propaganda increased, but it was still a marginalized group, due to the violence of its activists.

The government estimated the Romani population at 50,000. A majority of the Roma lived as socially excluded outcasts. The unemployment rate among Roma

was high, due in part to poor education and prejudices. In 2014 authorities identified 287 hate crimes directed against Roma, including several acts of violence, such as assault and attempted arson. Perpetrators of nonviolent hate crimes usually worked in the service sector, as civil servants, or were unknown to the victim. The number of Roma, mainly from Romania, engaged in street begging increased. As EU citizens, they are allowed to stay without permission for up to three months, and begging is legal in the country.

In 2013 the media reported that Skane County police had compiled a dedicated database of approximately 4,700 Roma in the country. The ethnocentric database tracked family ties between individuals. On March 17, the justice ombudsman released the results of an investigation into the database which concluded that police kept illegal records, that the purpose for this use of personal data was far too general, that its use had not been logged, that sufficient culling did not happen, and that there was no indication of who were suspects. In terms of management responsibility, the ombudsman determined that persons lacking the requisite authority made decisions, the lines of authority were so vague that lines of responsibility were unclear, and the lack of controls on the use of the database limited the possibility to detect misuse. Management knew about these problems but did nothing to rectify them. The ombudsman laid blame for this on the police authority and specifically the chief commissioner, the head of the criminal intelligence service in Lund, and the police officers who supplied the information for the database.

The government continued its 20-year strategy to equalize the opportunities available to young Roma and non-Roma by 2032. The strategy included a series of measures to improve the condition of Roma in six focus areas: education, work, housing, health and social care, culture and language, and civil society. During the year the government commissioned the Agency for Youth and Civil Matters to distribute grants to organizations within civil society to implement health promotion initiatives targeting Roma. The agency also conducted a project to facilitate exchange of experience between Romani and non-Romani organizations.

The Gothenburg City Museum's exhibition "We are Roma--Meet the People Behind the Myth" continued until March. The exhibition examined why Roma were not accepted into society. From August to December, the exhibition continued at the Forum for Living History in Stockholm. The Forum also arranged workshops and education on the subject for schoolchildren, companies, government authorities, and associations.

Indigenous People

The approximately 20,000 Sami in the country are full citizens with the right to vote in elections and participate in the government, including as members of the country's parliament. They are not, however, represented as a group in parliament. A 31-member elected administrative authority called the Sami parliament ("Sametinget") also represented Sami. The Sami parliament acted as an advisory body to the government and has limited decision-making powers in matters related to preserving the Sami culture, language, and schooling. The national parliament and government regulations govern the Sami parliament's operations.

Longstanding tensions between Sami and the government over land and natural resources persisted, as did tensions between Sami and private landowners over reindeer grazing rights. Certain Sami have grazing and fishing rights, depending on their tribal history. Sami continued to press the government for exclusive access to grazing and fishing.

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

Antidiscrimination laws exist, are enforced, and apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals. There were isolated incidents of societal violence and discrimination against persons perceived to be LGBTI.

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 independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The government respected these rights. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination, and a worker cannot be fired because of union activity.

The law provides for collective bargaining. Foreign companies may be exempt from collective bargaining provided they meet minimum working conditions and pay. Public-sector employees enjoy the right to strike, subject to limitations in the collective agreements protecting the public's immediate health and security. The government mediation service may also intervene to postpone a strike for up to 14 days for mediation. The International Trade Union Confederation claimed the law restricts the rights of the country's trade unions to take industrial action on behalf

of foreign workers in foreign companies operating in the country. The law allows unions to conduct their activities largely without interference. The Labor Court settles any dispute that affects the relationship between employers and employees. An employer organization, an employee organization, or an employer who has entered into a collective agreement on an individual basis can lodge claims. The Labor Court may issue fines, although information regarding the sufficiency of such fines to deter violations was not available. Administrative and judicial procedures were not subject to lengthy delays and appeals.

Workers and employers exercised all legal collective bargaining rights, which the government protected. There were few reports of antiunion discrimination and violence toward union members.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, including by children, and the government enforced these laws. Penalties ranged from two to 10 years in prison and were comparable with other serious violations. Forced labor involving trafficked men and women occurred in agriculture, construction, hospitality, domestic work, and forced begging and theft. There were reports of forced labor involving trafficked children (see section 7.c.). In some cases employers or contractors providing labor seized the passports of workers and withheld their pay. Resources and inspections were adequate.

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 permits full-time employment from the age of 16 under the supervision of local authorities. Employees under the age of 18 may work only during the daytime and under supervision. Children as young as 13 may work part time or perform light work with parental permission. The government effectively implemented these laws and regulations. No cases of child labor were reported. Illegal employment of a child in the labor market is considered a civil rather than a criminal violation. According to law, forcing a child to work may be treated as coercion, deprivation of liberty, or child abuse, and carries a wide range of penalties, including fines and imprisonment. Resources for enforcement were adequate.

Children trafficked from outside the country were subjected to forced begging and forced petty theft. There were no reliable estimates of the number of children subjected to trafficking to the country. Police and social services acted promptly on trafficking cases. In July the government tasked the Stockholm County Council with conducting a new national survey of child victims and suspected victims of trafficking and presenting the results by December.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment or Occupation

Labor laws and regulations prohibit discrimination with respect to employment or occupation on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, or HIV-positive or other communicable diseases status. The government generally enforced these laws effectively.

Discrimination in employment or occupation occurred. The discrimination ombudsman investigated complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. The ombudsman received 660 complaints of discrimination in the labor market, of which 250 were related to gender discrimination. Complaints could also be filed with the courts or with the employer. Labor unions generally mediated in cases filed with the employer.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no national minimum wage law. Annual collective bargaining agreements set wages. By regulation, both foreign and domestic employers must offer conditions of employment on par with the country's collective agreements. Nonunion establishments generally observed these contracts as well.

The legal standard workweek is 40 hours or less. The labor law and collective bargaining agreements regulate overtime and rest periods. The law allows a maximum of 200 hours overtime. Collective agreements determined compensation for overtime, which could take the form of money or time off. The law requires a minimum period of 36 consecutive hours of rest, preferably on weekends, during a period of seven days. The law also provides employees with a minimum of five weeks' paid annual leave.

The Swedish Work Environment Authority, a government agency, effectively enforced these standards. In 2014 the authority conducted 26,300 labor inspections. It employed an estimated 240 inspectors around the country,

approximately 0.6 inspectors per 10,000 employees. This decrease in labor inspectors coincided with a 1.5-percent decrease in work accidents among all workers. Penalties for violations amounted to fines. Information regarding their sufficiency to deter violation was not available.

The Swedish Work Environment Authority issued occupational health and safety regulations, and trained union stewards and safety ombudsmen whom government inspectors monitored. Safety ombudsmen have the authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and to call in an inspector. The authority effectively enforced these rules. Workers can remove themselves from situations that endanger health and safety without jeopardizing their employment, and authorities effectively protected employees in this situation.

A foreign company providing berry pickers to Swedish companies must have a branch registered in the country to guarantee the conditions of employment. The foreign labor broker must also show how it expects to pay workers in case of limited work, such as, for example, a bad berry harvest.

Many foreign seasonal workers, including berry pickers from Asia and Bulgaria, faced harsh conditions of work, including the seizure of passports, withholding of pay, and poor living and working conditions. In July the Swedish Retail and Food Federation presented new guidelines to improve the situation of the pickers. The guidelines cover EU citizens who pick berries in the country, but not workers from outside of the EU. The berry pickers are to be informed that they have the right to sell their berries to all buyers and that nobody has the right to control their working hours. The guidelines task food and retail organizations with ensuring their implementation.