

# NORWAY 2017 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Norway is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. The government consists of a prime minister, a cabinet, and a 169-seat parliament (Storting), which is elected every four years and may not be dissolved. The monarch generally appoints the leader of the majority party or majority coalition as prime minister with the approval of parliament. Observers considered the multiparty parliamentary elections on September 11 to be free and fair.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

There were no reports of egregious human rights abuses.

The government investigated officials who committed violations, whether in the security forces or elsewhere in the government.

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

#### **Prison and Detention Center Conditions**

While prisons and detention centers generally met international standards, reports regarding conditions at the Trandum detention center raised human rights concerns.

Physical Conditions: NGOs, including Amnesty International Norway and the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), reported concerns with conditions for migrant families and children at the Trandum detention center. The parliamentary civilian ombudsman, who visited the center in March, expressed concerns with the use of solitary confinement and alleged unnecessary force at the center. The center's manager responded that such force was necessary in specific cases.

Spot counts by prison authorities revealed an average of almost 200 prisoners in solitary confinement (in an average prison population of 3,700). As of June 2016, the latest data available, the Correctional Services Directorate received five reports of cases where the total period of solitary confinement for a prisoner exceeded 42 days (after which authorities must evaluate the status every 14 days).

NGOs criticized the government for leasing Norgerhaven Prison in the Netherlands for convicts from Norway because prisoners there did not have access to the same educational resources and opportunities for visits from family members as in Norway.

On June 8, the Supreme Court rejected the final appeal by convicted murderer Fjotolf Hansen (formerly Anders Breivik) that his treatment in prison violated the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights prohibiting inhuman and degrading treatment.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted visits, including unannounced visits, by independent human rights observers, including the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture.

#### **d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention**

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention and provide for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his/her arrest or detention in court, and the government generally observed these prohibitions.

#### **Role of the Police and Security Apparatus**

The national police have primary responsibility for internal security. Police may call on the armed forces for assistance in crises. In such circumstances the armed forces operate under police authority. The National Police Directorate oversees the police force.

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

### **Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees**

The law requires warrants authorized by a prosecutor for arrests. The police may make an arrest without a warrant if any delay would entail risk to the police. If police arrest a person without a warrant, a prosecutor must consider as soon as possible whether to uphold the arrest. Detainees must be informed of the charges against them immediately after an arrest, and, if the prosecutor wishes to detain suspects, he or she must arraign them no later than three days after arrest. The arraigning judge determines whether the accused should be held in custody or released pending trial. There is a bail system, but it was rarely utilized. Officials routinely released defendants accused of minor crimes pending trial, including nonresident foreigners. Defendants accused of serious or violent crimes usually remained in custody until trial. Before interrogation, authorities allowed arrested persons access to a lawyer of their choice or, if the requested lawyer was unavailable, to an attorney appointed by the government. The government pays the attorney fees in all cases. Authorities usually allowed arrested persons access to family members.

The law mandates that detainees be transferred from a temporary police holding cell to a regular prison cell within 48 hours. Authorities did not always observe this time limit.

The law provides that a court must supervise whether and how long a detainee may be held in solitary confinement during pretrial detention.

Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court: Persons arrested or detained are entitled to challenge in court the legal basis of their detention and to obtain prompt release and compensation if found to have been unlawfully detained.

### **e. Denial of Fair Public Trial**

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

#### **Trial Procedures**

The constitution and the law provide for the right to a fair and public trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and the right to be informed promptly of the charges against them. Trials are held without undue delay. Defendants have the right to be present at their trials. Defendants also have the right to counsel at public expense, to have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense, to free interpretation as necessary from the moment charged through all appeals, to confront and question adverse witnesses, to present their own evidence and witnesses, and to appeal. Defendants may not be compelled to testify or to confess guilt.

#### **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

#### **Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies**

Individuals or organizations may seek civil remedies for human rights violations through domestic courts. They may appeal cases alleging violations of the European Convention on Human Rights by the government to the European Court of Human Rights after exhausting all avenues of appeal in domestic courts.

#### **Property Restitution**

The government, the Holocaust Center, and the Jewish Community report that Holocaust-era restitution has not been an issue and that no litigation or restitution claims regarding real or immovable property covered by the Terezin Declaration, to which the government is signatory, were pending before authorities.

### **f. Arbitrary or Unlawful 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.

## **Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:**

### **a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press**

The constitution and law provide for freedom of expression, including for the press, and the government generally respected this right. 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 prohibits “threatening or insulting anyone, or inciting hatred or repression of or contempt for anyone because of his or her: a) skin color or national or ethnic origin; b) religion or life stance; c) sexual orientation or lifestyle; or d) disability.” Violators are subject to a fine or imprisonment not to exceed three years. According to the government ombudsman for equality and discrimination (LDO), hate speech on the internet against ethnic minorities, religious groups, women, and LGBTI persons continued to be a problem. Beginning in 2017, hate crime statistics were to include prosecuted cases and final convictions.

Press and Media Freedom: Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction. The prohibitions against hate speech applied also to the print and broadcast media, the publication of books, and online newspapers and journals.

### **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. According to the International Telecommunication Union, 97 percent of the population used the internet.

### **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 and law 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/](http://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/).

### **d. Freedom of Movement**

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

### **Protection of Refugees**

Refoulement: Authorities deported unsuccessful asylum seekers and others who had no legal right to stay in the country to Russia, Nigeria, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, and other countries. NGOs criticized the government for returning some unsuccessful asylum seekers to areas in their home countries different from where they originated, as frequently occurred for returnees to Afghanistan. NGOs also criticized the government for rejecting a high percentage of the asylum claims for Afghans.

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 government continued to implement regulations associated with a more restrictive immigration policy pursuant to parliament's 2016 amendment of immigration laws.

NOAS reported there is no system for automatically reassessing cases of unaccompanied minors granted temporary residence after they turn 18. It noted that many of these unaccompanied minors, fearing their applications would be denied, "disappeared" rather than apply for permanent residency. NOAS also criticized the government for lacking a fully independent appeals system for asylum seekers whose applications are rejected.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: The country is party to the EU's Dublin III regulation, which allows the government to transfer asylum seekers to the European country determined to be responsible under the regulation for adjudicating the case. As of August the government requested other countries within the Schengen area to accept 344 persons under the regulation, including 22 to Greece and 67 to Italy.

Freedom of Movement: The law permits detention of migrants to establish their identity or to affect their removal from the country if authorities deem it likely the persons would evade an order to leave.

Asylum seekers residing in an asylum reception center may not be absent from the center for more than three days without potentially losing their place at the center and all concomitant financial support from the government. Centers were often located in remote areas of the country, and long travel times and a lack of money to pay for public transport effectively limited asylum seekers' ability to move freely. Residents may apply for permission to live away from the reception center temporarily. Rejected asylum seekers were generally permitted to remain in asylum centers while awaiting voluntary return, assisted return, or deportation.

Employment: Asylum seekers may not work while their cases are under evaluation unless their identity can be documented through a valid travel document or a national identification card. NOAS and other NGOs reported that few asylum seekers possessed these documents, and thus relatively few were allowed to work.

Durable Solutions: The government also offered resettlement for refugees in cooperation with UNHCR. The government's Directorate of Immigration (UDI) had several programs to settle refugees permanently in the country. According to the UDI, as of August the country accepted 1,923 refugees for resettlement.

Through the International Organization for Migration and other government partners, the government assisted the return of unsuccessful asylum seekers to their countries of origin through voluntary programs that offered financial and logistical support for repatriation. Identity documents issued by either the Norwegian or the returnee's government are required in order to use this program. The government continued routinely to offer migrants cash support in addition to airfare to encourage persons with weak or rejected asylum claims to leave the country voluntarily.

Individuals granted refugee status can apply for citizenship when they meet the legislative requirements, that include a minimum length of residence of seven out of the last 10 years, completion of language training, and successful completion of a Norwegian language test and a course on Norwegian society.

Temporary Protection: The government also provided temporary humanitarian protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees and provided it to 337 individuals through the end of August. The permits may be renewed and become permanent. The government also provided temporary protection to 360 unaccompanied minors, who were granted residence permits in the country until the age of 18.

### **Stateless Persons**

According to authorities, 2,424 stateless persons lived in the country at the end of 2016; they were not counted as refugees. According to the UDI, at the end of August, an additional 306 stateless asylum seekers lived in receiving centers, a decrease of 38 percent from the same period in 2016. Of these, 101 persons had permission to stay, and 56 were under orders to leave the country. The remainder continued the asylum application process.

Citizenship is derived from one's parents, and children born in the country do not automatically become citizens. The government effectively implemented laws and policies to provide stateless persons the opportunity to gain nationality on a nondiscriminatory basis.

### **Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process**

The constitution and law 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.

#### **Elections and Political Participation**

Recent Elections: Observers considered the parliamentary elections held on September 11 to be free and fair.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit the participation of women and/or members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate.

#### **Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government**

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively.

Corruption: There were no reports of government corruption and one report of police corruption, a high-profile drug case with the convicted police officer sentenced to 21 years in prison (the longest sentence permitted under the law).

Financial Disclosure: By law income and asset information from the tax forms of all citizens, including public officials, must be made public each year. Failure to declare properly may result in up to two years in prison. Each year officials must declare income, assets, liabilities, and holdings in public companies.

#### **Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses 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 often were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The country has ombudsmen for public administration (the parliamentary ombudsman), children, and equality and the LDO. The parliamentary ombudsman is appointed by parliament, while the government appoints the others. All ombudsmen enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government interference. The parliamentary ombudsman and the LDO hear complaints against actions by government officials. Although the ombudsmen's recommendations are not legally binding, authorities usually complied with them.

Parliament's Standing Committee on Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs reviews the reports of the parliamentary ombudsman, while the Standing Committee on Justice is responsible for matters relating to the judicial system, police, and the penal, civil, and criminal codes.

The Norwegian National Human Rights Institution reports directly to parliament on the human rights situation in the country. It makes recommendations to help ensure that the country's international human rights obligations are fulfilled by advising the government, disseminating public information, promoting education

and research on human rights, and facilitating cooperation with relevant public bodies. The organization submits an annual report on human rights in the country.

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

### **Women**

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, and the government generally enforced the law. The penalty for rape is up to 21 years in prison, depending on the severity of the assault, the age of the victim, and the circumstances in which the crime occurred. Very few cases resulted in a sentence longer than three years and four months in prison.

Violence against women, including spousal abuse, was a problem. The law provides penalties for domestic violence of up to six years in prison and up to 21 years for aggravated rape. The government generally enforced the law, although the foundation Oslo Crisis Center continued to criticize the conviction rate (approximately 10 percent) as too low.

The government had programs to prevent rape and domestic violence and to counsel victims. Following the consolidation of police districts from 27 to 12 on January 1, all districts had a domestic violence coordinator.

Public and private organizations operated 47 government-funded shelters and managed five 24-hour crisis hotlines. The Oslo Crisis Center repeated its claim that the network of shelters was too small. Victims of domestic violence have a right to consult a lawyer free of charge before deciding whether to make a formal complaint. If the government initiates criminal proceedings, the victim is entitled to free assistance from a victim's advocate.

Sexual Harassment: The law provides that "employees shall not be subjected to harassment or other unseemly behavior," and the government effectively enforced this provision. Employers who violate this law are subject to fines or prison sentences of up to two years, depending on the seriousness of the offense. The LDO concluded that sexual harassment was not an acute problem in the country.

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/](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/monitoring/maternal-mortality-2015/en/).

Discrimination: Women have the same legal status as men, but they experienced discrimination in employment. Approximately 25 percent (43 of 175) of complaints received and investigated by the LDO in 2016 concerned discrimination based on gender. The law mandates that 40 percent of the members of boards of directors of publicly listed companies be women, and virtually all public companies complied with the law.

## **Children**

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived from one's parents; children born in the country do not automatically become citizens. All birth clinics in the country reported births to a central birth register and provided the parents with a birth certificate. The birth certificate does not confer citizenship.

Child Abuse: The legal definition of rape includes sexual offenses against children under the age of 14. In 2015, the most recent year data were available, the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs initiated 43,681 investigations of alleged child abuse and completed 44,100. By the end of 2015, approximately 36,800 children received assistance from the Child Welfare Services, of whom 21,950 received in-home assistance, while 14,850 were removed from their family home.

An independent children's ombudsman office under the Ministry of Children and Equality is responsible under the law for the protection of children and providing assistance and support services. If criminal proceedings are initiated, the victim is entitled to free assistance from a victim's advocate.

Early and Forced Marriage: The minimum legal age for marriage in the country is 18 for both women and men, although a 16-year-old child may marry with the consent of parents or guardians and permission from the county governor. The county governor may give permission only when there are "special reasons for contracting a marriage."

In March the government introduced an action plan for 2017-20 to combat "negative social control" (restricting children's freedom to living within family or group norms), forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: Commercial sexual exploitation of children under the age of 18 is illegal, both in the country and abroad when committed by a citizen of the country. In both cases the punishment is either a fine or a prison sentence of up to two years. Child pornography is also illegal and punishable by a fine or a prison sentence of up to three years. The government generally enforced the laws. The age for consensual sex is 16.

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](http://travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/legal/compliance.html).

### **Anti-Semitism**

Approximately 1,300 Jews lived in the country, 700 of whom belonged to Jewish congregations. Jewish Community leaders reported the public generally supported the community.

In May the Progress Party, the junior member in the governing coalition, expressed its support at a party convention for a law banning ritual circumcision of children under the age of 16. Domestic and international Jewish leaders spoke out against it, and the government stated it would not pursue the issue.

Under the government's 2016 action plan to counter anti-Semitism, police must work toward including anti-Semitism as a separate category of hate crime in police statistics. The action plan also institutionalized the reporting of anti-Semitic attitudes in society every five years.

The Jewish Community expressed concern over a march of 50 neo-Nazis from the group Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) that took place in the town of Kristiansand in July.

### **Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at [www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/](http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/).

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, transportation, access to health care, the judicial system, and the provision of other governmental services, and the government effectively enforced and implemented these provisions. The law mandates access to public buildings, information, and communications for persons with disabilities. In 2016 there were 10 complaints of problems such as lack of ramps for wheelchair users where there are steps or stairs to enter a building.

In June parliament revised the Equality and Discrimination Act to prohibit discrimination based on disability. The LDO noted the amended law should make identifying and investigating discrimination easier by consolidating several antidiscrimination statutes.

### **National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities**

Discrimination against immigrants, including asylum seekers and irregular migrants, and ethnic minorities remained a problem. Ethnic discrimination occurred in employment.

Racial profiling is against the law, but authorities did not keep records relating to the stop and search of members of vulnerable groups. NGOs such as the Organization against Public Discrimination (OMOD) continued to report complaints of police profiling of members of ethnic and racial minority groups, particularly the young. According to the NGOs, many incidents went unreported to authorities because victims declined to pursue charges. OMOD also described racial discrimination in the housing market and by certain government authorities, such as the welfare service and customs authority.

During the year the NGO Norwegian Center against Racism and other NGOs observed an increase in hateful rhetoric directed at minorities in online commentaries and social media. The NGOs attributed this rise in part to the media's coverage of perceived anti-immigrant statements by Immigration and Integration Minister Sylvi Listhaug.

The government continued to implement the national strategy against hate speech released in late 2016.

A survey of students with immigrant backgrounds conducted during the summer by the Norwegian Center against Racism found out that one in four such students

experienced various forms of racism in school on a regular basis. Other NGOs echoed concerns of pervasive racist sentiments in society.

In June parliament revised the Equality and Discrimination Act to prohibit discrimination based on ethnicity; the revised law was scheduled to enter into force on January 1, 2018. The LDO noted that the amended law should make identifying and investigating discrimination easier by consolidating several antidiscrimination statutes.

In addition to the Sami, five ethnically non-Norwegian groups with a long-standing attachment to the country have a special protected status under the law: Kvens/Norwegian Finns, Jews, Forest Finns, Roma, and Romani/Tater people (a distinct group of travelers who emigrated to Norway and Sweden in the 1500s).

Roma representatives reported widespread discrimination in dealings with government agencies, especially the welfare, education, and child protective service authorities.

The government financially supported the development of a Romani culture house in Oslo, which the community expected to include a kindergarten as well as language and cultural resources. In 2016 an advisory group was formed to help facilitate communication between Romani representatives and the government.

### **Indigenous People**

Although there is no official registry of Sami in the country, as of January 2015 (the latest data available), 55,600 persons of this ethnicity were estimated to live in the northern part of the country. In addition to participating freely in the national political process, the Sami elect their own parliament, the Samediggi. Elections for the Sami parliament were held in September.

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

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. While violence motivated by discriminatory attitudes towards transgender persons is not considered a hate crime, crimes based on discriminatory attitudes towards sexual orientation can be treated as aggravated crimes. In June parliament revised the Equality and Discrimination Act to prohibit discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation; the revised law was scheduled to enter into force on January 1,

2018. The LDO noted that the amended law should make identifying and investigating discrimination easier by consolidating several antidiscrimination statutes.

One police station in Oslo had staff that had special training in hate crimes and reported 41 such cases towards the LGBTI community in 2016. In 2015 there were 33 such cases reported.

Members of the LGBTI community reported four cases of harassment during the Oslo pride event, including one threat of rape and two acts of violence. The Association for Gender and Sexual Diversity also reported a continued rise in online harassment from a neo-Nazi group, the NRM, which chanted slogans such as “crush the gay lobby” during a march in Kristiansand in July.

Transgender persons who are 16 and older (and from age 6 to 16 with parental permission) may change their gender on legal identification documents based on gender identity without having to undergo surgery or physical transformation. During the year 190 persons changed their gender on legal documentation.

### **Other Societal Violence or Discrimination**

The Norwegian Center against Racism reported continued anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment in society. The Muslim community continued to allege that its complaints were largely ignored in public debate.

## **Section 7. Worker Rights**

### **a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining**

The law provides for the right of workers, including migrant workers (those who have a work permit in the country), to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and requires reinstatement of workers fired for union activity.

The right to strike excludes members of the military and senior civil servants. With the approval of parliament, the government may compel arbitration in any industrial sector if it determines that a strike threatens public safety. Trade unions criticized the government for intervening too quickly in labor disputes, although the law generally allows unions to conduct their activities without government interference.

The government effectively enforced applicable laws. The penalties were sufficient to deter violations.

### **b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor**

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, and the government effectively enforced laws against it. A maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment for violations of the law was sufficiently stringent to deter violations. As of September 1, police received 100 reports of violations of the labor law and no reports on forced labor from the Norwegian Labor Inspection Authority (NLIA).

Trafficking discussions in the country generally focused on prostitutes, considered a large victim group. NGOs, such as NOAS, reported on unaccompanied minor asylum seekers who "disappeared" from asylum reception centers and were feared to be victims of trafficking and forced labor. During the year the same concerns applied to those who disappeared from asylum centers after receiving a final rejection of their asylum claims. Children were subjected to forced labor (see section 7.c.).

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at [www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/](http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/).

### **c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment**

Children between the ages of 13 and 15 may be employed up to 12 hours per week in light work that does not adversely affect their health, development, or schooling. Examples of light work include assistant work in offices or stores. Children under age 15 need parental permission to work and those older than 15 can work as part of vocational training, as long as they are supervised. Between the ages of 15 and 18, children not in school may work up to 40 hours per week and a maximum eight hours per day. The law limits work by children who remain in school to only those hours "not affecting schooling" without specific limits, but less than 40 hours per week. No child may work at night between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. Working more than nine hours a week qualifies a child for health benefits.

While employers generally observed minimum age rules, there were reports that children were trafficked for forced labor (see section 7.b.). Children were subjected to forced begging and criminal activity, particularly drug smuggling and

theft. Commercial sexual exploitation of children also occurred (see section 6, Children). There were also reports of children forced to work as unpaid domestic help.

#### **d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation**

Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to gender and ethnicity. Discrimination against Romani and migrant workers also occurred.

The law provides that women and men engaged in the same activity shall receive equal wages for work of equal value. In 2016 women earned on average 13.9 percent less than men on a monthly basis, according to Statistics Norway. The government attributed this to differences in the professions chosen by women and men and the predominance of women in part-time or public-sector work. The LDO expressed concern that many women were in part-time positions involuntarily because of a tendency in certain industries, such as health and services, to divide work into a large number of part-time positions with no meaningful opportunity for full-time employment. According to Statistics Norway, in the second quarter of the year, nearly 40 percent of women and 17 percent of men worked part time.

Equally qualified immigrants sometimes had more difficulty finding employment than ethnic Norwegians. As of August the unemployment rate among immigrants was 6.1 percent, compared with 2.6 percent among nonimmigrants, according to Statistics Norway. African immigrants had the highest unemployment rate at 10 percent, followed by immigrants from eastern EU countries at 6.9 percent, Asians at 6.6 percent, and South and Central Americans at 6.4 percent.

#### **e. Acceptable Conditions of Work**

The law does not mandate an official minimum wage. Instead, minimum wages were set in collective bargaining agreements. Statistics Norway uses 60 percent of the median household income for the relative poverty limit, which in 2015 was 294,000 kroner (\$36,000) per year. In 2015, the most recent year data were available, 13 percent of the total population had an income below the poverty limit.

The law provides for premium pay of 40 percent of salary for overtime and prohibits compulsory overtime in excess of 10 hours per week.

The law provides the same benefits for citizens and foreign workers with residency permits but forbids the employment of foreign workers who do not have residency permits. The law provides for safe and physically acceptable working conditions for all employed persons. The NLIA, in consultation with nongovernment experts, sets occupational safety and health standards. The law requires enterprises with 50 or more workers to establish environment committees composed of management, workers, and health-care personnel. Enterprises with 10 or more workers must have safety delegates elected by their employees. Workers may remove themselves from situations that endanger health or safety without jeopardy to their employment; authorities effectively protected employees in this situation.

The NLIA effectively enforced laws and standards regarding acceptable work conditions in the formal sector. The number of labor inspectors was sufficient to enforce compliance. The NLIA may close an enterprise immediately if the life or health of employees is in imminent danger and may report enterprises to police for serious breaches of the law. A serious violation may result in fines or, in the worst case, imprisonment. The penalties were sufficient to deter violations.