

SWEDEN 2017 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 2014 to be free and fair. In the same year, 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 most significant human rights issues included anti-Semitic threats of violence and attempted bomb attacks on immigrants, which the authorities investigated and prosecuted.

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 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

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

Physical Conditions: Reporting on prison conditions in 2015, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) stated that it received allegations of recourse by authorities to collective punishment at the special unit for detained foreign nationals in the prison of Norrtälje. The CPT also noted that some cells at Kronoberg Remand Prison and most of the cells at the Falun Remand Prison did not have in-cell sanitation and that it received a few inmate complaints about delays in gaining access to the toilet.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring by independent, nongovernmental observers, including the CPT. While the national Red Cross and church associations may visit prisoners, they may not monitor or inspect prisons.

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 requirements.

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 funding and letters of instruction for police activities, but it does not control how they were 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.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires warrants based on evidence and issued by duly authorized officials for arrests. 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 long 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). In 2015 the CPT observed that access to a lawyer was usually granted at the beginning of the first formal interview by the investigating officer, although it received a few allegations of delayed access, including until the very end of the police custody period. The CPT suggested it was still highly exceptional for persons in police custody to benefit from access to a lawyer from the very outset of deprivation of liberty (i.e., from the moment they were obliged to remain with police). 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.

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 70 percent of the estimated 9,500 pretrial detainees to extended isolation or restrictions on mail delivery or exercise. Authorities stated they took this step when detainees' contact with individuals outside the detention center could risk destroying evidence or changing witnesses' statements, thereby imperiling a continuing investigation.

Pretrial Detention: In serious criminal cases, a prisoner could be held for several years while the investigation continues.

Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court: Persons arrested or detained, whether on criminal or other grounds, are entitled to challenge in court the legal basis or arbitrary nature 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 provides for the right to a fair and public 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, and have a right to a fair, timely, public trial without undue delay. Defendants may be present at their trial. Cases of a sensitive nature, including those involving children, rape, and national security, may be closed to the public. In other cases judges or court-appointed civilian representatives decide guilt or innocence. Defendants have the right 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 with free interpretation as necessary from the moment charged through all appeals. Defendants may confront or question prosecution or plaintiff witnesses and present witnesses and evidence on their behalf. They may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt. If convicted, defendants have the right of appeal.

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 may appeal cases involving alleged violations

of the European Convention on Human Rights by the government to the European Court of Human Rights.

Property Restitution

The government did not confiscate property belonging to Jews, Roma, or other groups targeted by Nazi Germany during the Holocaust era, and Jewish and human rights nongovernmental organizations report no disputes related to restitution.

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 Speech and 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.

Freedom of Expression: The law criminalizes expression considered to be hate speech and prohibits threats or statements 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 2016 there were 683 reports of cases involving hate speech, or 10 percent of all hate crimes reported.

Press and Media Freedom: The law criminalizing hate speech applies as well to 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 Internet Foundation in Sweden, more than 99 percent of citizens under the age of 55 used the internet on a daily basis. More than 93 percent of the population over the age of 12 used the internet daily.

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.

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 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.

Abuse of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons: During 2016 police reported 92 nonaccidental fires involving housing facilities or planned housing facilities for asylum seekers. Of these, 55 fires occurred in inhabited facilities. In 23 cases residents were suspects, while in 30 cases the perpetrator was unknown. In two cases the arsonist was a person not residing in the facility.

In a February 2016 report the CPT found that written information about detention and the rules of a prison were available to prisoners only in Swedish. As a direct

consequence of the CPT's criticism, the Swedish Migration Agency produced informational material in asylum seekers' most commonly spoken languages (Arabic, Dari, English, Northern Kurdish, Mongolian, Russian, Somali, Sorani, and Tigrinya) as well as Swedish. If necessary, the agency has the material translated into other languages. For example, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service translated informational material concerning regulations into English, Russian, Arabic, and Spanish. If information is not available in writing in the required language, it is communicated through an interpreter or staff with a good knowledge of languages.

Protection of Refugees

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 unfavorable asylum decisions.

During its visits in 2009 and 2015, the CPT found that the law provides for a public defense counsel to be appointed for detained foreign nationals who are subject to an expulsion or refusal-of-entry order, but only concerning the problem of detention and if the detention was longer than three days. Unless the detention period exceeds three days, a public defense counsel is also not provided to persons who have been refused entry to the country and were detained by police. The CPT also understood that persons deported under the Dublin Regulation could not benefit from a public defense counsel. The CPT believed the right of access to a lawyer for persons detained under the country's aliens law was unduly limited.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: In accordance with EU regulations, the government denied asylum to persons who had previously registered in another EU member state or in countries with which Sweden maintained reciprocal return agreements.

Access to Basic Services: Although asylum seekers who have been denied residence in the country are not entitled to asylum housing or a daily allowance, many municipalities continued to support rejected asylum seekers through the social welfare system at the local level.

During 2016 the Migration Agency registered 2,199 unaccompanied minors, a significant decrease from approximately 35,000 in 2015. Processing a child's request for asylum averaged 510 days.

After the 2016 CPT report noted there was no systematic medical screening of detained migrants upon arrival at the Marsta detention center or assurance of medical confidentiality, the Migration Agency initiated a trial procedure at the Gavle detention center. Detainees may present their medical case in writing and leave it in a locked mailbox to which only medical staff have access.

Durable Solutions: The government assisted in the voluntary return of rejected asylum seekers to their homes and authorized financial support for their repatriation in the amount of 30,000 kronor (\$3,500) per adult and 15,000 kronor (\$1,700) per child, with a maximum of 75,000 kronor (\$8,700) per family. The country also participated in the European Reintegration Network that offers support for reintegration for returning rejected asylum seekers.

Temporary Protection: The government also provided various forms of temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees. In 2016 it provided temporary protection to 1,170 persons.

Stateless Persons

According to UNHCR there were 36,036 stateless persons in the country in December 2016. The large number of stateless persons was due 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 (available 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 were granted permanent residence could obtain citizenship through the same naturalization process as other permanent residents. Gaining citizenship generally took 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 held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

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

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit participation of women or members of minorities in the political process, and women and minorities 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. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year.

Corruption: At the end of 2016, the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* published a series of revelations about the National Audit Office. The agency's three national auditors resigned after being confronted with corruption accusations, such as tailoring the authority's recruitment process to favor former colleagues and letting third parties influence audits. Parliament's Constitutional Committee acted promptly, initiating an investigation scheduled for completion at year's end.

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.

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 had 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 were 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

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, including spousal rape and domestic violence, are illegal, and the government enforced the law effectively. Penalties range from two to 10 years in prison.

Authorities apprehended and prosecuted abusers in most cases of domestic violence reported to them.

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. Both national and local governments helped fund volunteer groups that provided shelter and other assistance for abused women.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: Honor-related violence often involved immigrants from the Middle East or South Asia. In July the Swedish Prison and Probation Services estimated that 97 persons were in prison for committing honor-related violence.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment and provides for criminal penalties from a fine to up to two years in prison. The government generally enforced this law.

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/.

Discrimination: Women have the same legal status and rights as men, including under family, religious, personal status, labor, property, nationality, and inheritance law. The law requires equal pay for equal work. 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 was 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, were registered immediately in the tax authority's population register.

Child Abuse: Child abuse existed. The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically. 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 the sale of children; penalties range from two to 10 years in prison. It also bans child pornography with penalties ranging from fines to six years in prison. Authorities enforced the law. The minimum age for consensual sex is 15.

Displaced Children: Stockholm Police reported that underage children, mainly from Morocco, Algeria, and other countries in North Africa, were living on the streets. 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 in many cases 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. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Child Abduction* at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/legal/compliance.html.

Anti-Semitism

Leaders of the Jewish community estimated there were 20,000 to 30,000 Jews in the country and approximately 6,000 registered members of Jewish congregations.

The NCCP registered 182 anti-Semitic crimes in 2016, compared with 277 in 2015, a decrease of approximately 34 percent. Anti-Semitic crimes included threats, verbal abuse, vandalism, graffiti, and harassment in schools. Anti-Semitic incidents were often associated with events in the Middle East and the actions of the Israeli government, and Swedish Jews were at times blamed for Israeli policies.

The most common forms of anti-Semitism were unlawful threats/harassment (49 percent of complaints), hate speech (27 percent), defamation (5 percent), and vandalism/graffiti (10 percent). Ten violent anti-Semitic hate crimes were reported in 2016, an increase from eight such crimes in 2015. Authorities initiated an investigation in 58 percent of the complaints of anti-Semitism reported in 2015; 37 percent were directly dismissed due to lack of evidence. Formal charges were brought in only 4 percent of the cases.

On September 30, an estimated 500 supporters of the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) marched through Gothenburg. The original route was supposed to pass a downtown synagogue on Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, but a court changed the route after local protests. Participants in a counterprotest of approximately 10,000 persons clashed with the NRM supporters and police. Some NRM members attempted to break through police lines. Police arrested 22 NRM supporters and one counterdemonstrator. The Jewish community expressed appreciation for the robust police presence and reported they were not affected by the disturbances.

Police, politicians, media, and Jewish groups have stated that anti-Semitism has been especially prevalent in Malmo. The Simon Wiesenthal Center left in place its travel warning, first issued in 2010, regarding travel in southern Sweden, because Jews in Malmo could be “subject to anti-Semitic taunts and harassment.”

In April the Jewish Association in Umea ended its activities and closed the center following neo-Nazi threats. The small association with approximately 50 members received threatening emails, and its buildings were painted with swastikas and the phrase, “we know where you live.” A car connected to the association was also vandalized. Local authorities and police held a meeting with the center to see if they could find a new venue, but representatives chose to close since their members did not feel safe. Minister for Home Affairs Anders Ygeman called what happened in Umea “completely unacceptable.”

In September unknown persons threw stones at the windows of the Malmo synagogue and broke the outer glass. The incident was classified as destruction of property and a hate crime.

In response to international events, on December 8 and 9, protesters at demonstrations in Malmo shouted “shoot all the Jews” and “the Jews should remember that Mohammed’s army will return.” Malmo Mayor Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh condemned the statements. On December 9, an estimated 10-20 persons threw Molotov cocktails at a synagogue in Gothenburg. The incendiaries did not ignite the building, and nobody was hurt. Police later arrested three individuals in connection with the attack; the investigation continued. Government officials, including the prime minister and foreign minister, condemned the attack. On December 11, unknown assailants threw two Molotov cocktails at a building in the old Jewish cemetery in Malmo. Nobody was injured, and a police investigation was continuing.

The government allocated 10 million kronor (\$1.2 million) to increase security for places of worship during the year. All religious communities may apply for the grant.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency continued to cooperate with religious communities on a national level to promote dialogue and prevent conflicts leading to anti-Semitic incidents. It continued to train 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 officers operated throughout the country.

The Living History Forum, a public authority commissioned to work with problems related to tolerance, democracy, and human rights using the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as its starting point, continued to sensitize the public, and particularly the young, to the need to respect the equal value of all persons, with a specific focus on teaching about the Holocaust as a means of fighting Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism.

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 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 health care and other public services.

Adequate accessibility for persons with disabilities is required by law:

Government regulations require full accessibility for new buildings, and similar requirements exist for public facilities. 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.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law recognizes Sami (formerly known as Lapps), Swedish Finns, Tornedalers, Roma, and Jews as national minorities. Societal discrimination and violence against immigrants and Roma continued to be problems during the year.

Police registered reports of xenophobic crimes, some of which were linked 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.

On July 7, three men with ties to the neo-Nazi NRM were sentenced to up to eight-and-a-half years in prison for bomb attacks in western Sweden in November 2016 at a left-wing bookstore, and in January at an asylum center and for an attempted bombing of a second asylum center. One man was seriously injured in the asylum center attack. Two of the men received paramilitary training in Russia, according to the verdict.

On September 17, approximately 50 individuals from the NRM marched in Gothenburg without a permit. It is not illegal to demonstrate without a permit. Police surveilled the demonstration, but did not interrupt it.

A majority of the Roma lived as socially excluded outcasts. Perpetrators of nonviolent hate crimes usually worked in the service sector or were unknown to the victim. The Red Cross estimated that 4,700 “vulnerable EU citizens,” the vast majority of whom were Roma from Romania and Bulgaria, resided in the country in abject poverty at any given time. As EU citizens, they are allowed to stay in the country without permission for up to three months, but authorities did not enforce this limit.

In April a verdict by the appeals court determined that 11 Romani persons who had been registered in the database and had filed a lawsuit against the government had been subjected to a severe violation by being registered purely on the basis of their ethnicity.

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 had limited decision-making powers in matters related to preserving the Sami culture, language, and schooling. The national parliament and government regulations governed the Sami parliament’s operations.

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

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

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

The NCCP reported 550 hate crimes based on sexual orientation and 80 reports of transphobic hate crimes. On July 22, a group of 15 far-right extremists, some from the right-extremist organization Nordic Youth, briefly halted a pride parade in

Ostermalm. Police quickly led the group away without arrest, and the parade resumed.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

In 2016 the NCCP identified 6,415 police reports with a hate crime motive, a majority with xenophobic motives.

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 may not be fired because of union activity. If a worker were unlawfully fired for union activity, the case would go to court. If the court found the dismissal unlawful, the employee would have the right to be reinstated. The parties may also negotiate until they find a solution that satisfies both sides.

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 may lodge claims. The Labor Court may impose prison sentences sufficient to deter violations. 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. The government and employers respected freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. There were few reports of antiunion discrimination.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, including by children, and the government effectively enforced the law. Penalties of imprisonment were generally sufficient to deter 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 begging involving trafficked children (see section 7.c.). According to police an estimated 5,000 persons worked under slave-like conditions. 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 law limits the types of work children may or may not engage in. For instance, a child may not work with dangerous machinery or chemicals. A child may also not work alone or be responsible for handling cash transactions. The law considers illegal employment of a child in the labor market 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. The government effectively implemented these laws and regulations. No cases of child labor were reported.

Children trafficked from outside the country were subjected to forced begging, forced petty theft, and sexual exploitation. Police and social services reportedly acted promptly on reported cases.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

Discrimination in employment or occupation occurred. The discrimination ombudsman investigated complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. In 2015 the ombudsman received 619 complaints of discrimination in the labor market, of which 157 were related to gender. Approximately 200 of the

complaints of ethnic discrimination involved the labor market. Workers with disabilities faced workplace access discrimination (see section 6). Complaints may 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, which were greater than the poverty income level. 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 labor law and collective bargaining agreements regulate overtime and rest periods. The law allows a maximum of 200 hours of overtime annually. 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, over a seven-day period.

The occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were appropriate. The responsibility for identifying unsafe situations remains with OSH experts and not the worker.

Workers may remove themselves from situations that endanger health and safety without jeopardizing their employment, and authorities effectively protected employees in this situation.

The Swedish Work Environment Authority, a government agency, effectively enforced these standards. In 2016 the authority conducted approximately 21,000 labor dialogue visits and 18,000 labor inspections. The number of inspectors was adequate, but the government increased the authority's budget for the year to hire additional labor inspectors.

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. An employer may be fined for violating work environment regulations. Information regarding the penalties' sufficiency to deter violation was not available.

A foreign company providing berry pickers to the country's 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. The guidelines of the Swedish Retail and Food Federation cover EU citizens who pick berries in the country but not workers from outside the EU. Under the guidelines 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 workhours. The guidelines task food and retail organizations with ensuring their implementation.