

# ALGERIA

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Algeria is a multiparty republic whose head of state and government (president) is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The president has the constitutional authority to appoint and dismiss cabinet members and the prime minister. A 2008 constitutional amendment eliminated presidential term limits, and in April 2009 President Abdelaziz Bouteflika won reelection to his third term in office. Some opposition parties boycotted the election, arguing that restrictions on freedom of association skewed the election in favor of the incumbent. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

Riots sparked by increases in staple food prices spread across 24 of the country's 48 provinces in January. A fledgling political opposition coalition failed to garner widespread public support, and the government prevented the group from staging weekly marches in Algiers. In February the government lifted the state of emergency that had been in effect since 1992 but continued to prohibit marches in the capital and restrict freedom of association throughout the country. Beginning in March and extending through mid-April, dozens of groups staged protests and sit-ins in public spaces and in front of government ministries in Algiers, demanding higher wages, improved benefits, and better working conditions. Most protests remained peaceful and ended after the government agreed to meet most demands. In December both houses of parliament passed a series of reform laws on elections, political parties, female representation in elected bodies, associations, and media.

The three most significant continuing human rights problems were restrictions on freedom of assembly and association; the inability of citizens to change their government, notably in light of the 2008 constitutional revisions that allow the president to run for unlimited terms of office; and the failure to account for disappearances, especially those cases from the 1990s. On February 9, the government repealed the state of emergency, in force for 19 years, and subsequently adopted two ordinances that replaced provisions related to the state of emergency that allow the army to intervene in terrorist offenses and subversive acts.

Other human rights concerns were reports of unlawful killings, overuse of pretrial detention, poor prison conditions, abuse of prisoners, and lack of judicial independence. Additionally, widespread corruption accompanied reports of

limited government transparency. Authorities used security grounds to constrain freedom of expression and movement. Women faced violence and discrimination, and the government maintained restrictions on workers' rights.

Impunity remained a problem. The government did not always provide public information on actions taken against police and security service officials.

The government continued to pursue terrorist groups that committed a significant number of attacks against government officials, members of security forces, and, to a lesser extent, civilians. Kidnapping for ransom--by taking European hostages--has become a key funding source for terrorist groups operating in the southern portion of the country.

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

### **a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life**

There were reports that the government or its agents committed unlawful killings.

During rioting in the first week in January, four protesters and one police officer were killed, and more than 789 others were injured, among them 736 members of security forces and 53 protesters, according to government figures. On January 6, police shot and killed Azzedine Lebza in the M'sila region, 155 miles southeast of Algiers. On the same day Akriche Abdelfattah died in the town of Bou Smail, 25 miles west of the capital, after being struck by a can of tear gas. On January 8, a man died after suffering a bullet wound to the head when he was trying to prevent looters from entering his father's business. On January 9, a taxi driver died after inhaling tear gas fired by police in Annaba in eastern Algeria. The government maintained that only two protesters were killed.

The government and the press attributed most terrorist attacks during the year to the terrorist group al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which emerged in 2007 after the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat allied itself with al-Qaida in 2006. Former minister of interior Noureddine Zerhouni stated in 2008 that an estimated 400 terrorists operated in the country; the figure remained the most recent one available. During the year press reports indicated that security forces killed or captured approximately 800 suspected terrorists. According to press reports, terrorists killed 38 civilians and 34 security force members.

### **b. Disappearance**

Enforced disappearances, reportedly numbering in the thousands, were a significant problem during the 1990s. In August 2010 the government listed the official number of disappeared cases as 6,544, which represented a significant reduction in the official number reported in previous years. During a 2009 conference in Geneva, representatives of the government's human rights advisory office, the National Consultative Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (CNCPPDH), stated that 8,023 persons remained missing or disappeared as a result of government actions between 1992 and 1999.

The 2006 Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation granted amnesty to and prevented investigation into the conduct of the National Popular Army, the security forces, state-sponsored armed groups, and persons who fought on behalf of the government during episodes of civil strife in the 1990s. The amnesty also covered certain persons involved in Islamist militant and terrorist activities. Persons implicated in mass killings, rapes, or bomb attacks in public places were not eligible for amnesty. Some local NGOs, including SOS Disparus, Djazairouna, Somoud, and the Algerian Human Rights Defense League (LADDH), criticized the charter for enabling terrorists to escape justice and security forces for acting with impunity.

The law provides measures for compensating victims of disappearances, although families of the disappeared reportedly experienced complications and delays in receiving compensation.

On June 1, the UN Human Rights Committee asked the government to investigate the disappearance of Brahim Aouabdia in the province of Constantine. There was no information on the case at year's end.

In January 2010 the local human rights NGO Alkarama presented to the government human rights commission the disappearance case of Lakhdar Bouzenia, who allegedly was arrested by security forces in 1993 and tortured. The case remained unresolved at year's end.

Armed criminals conducted abuses against civilians, including kidnappings, false checkpoints, and extortion, particularly in areas east of Algiers and in the southern portion of the country. In May security officials reported that 177 kidnapping cases occurred in 2010.

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

The law prohibits such practices, but NGO and local human rights activists reported that government officials sometimes employed abusive treatment to obtain confessions. Government agents can face prison sentences of between 10 and 20 years for committing such acts, and some individuals were tried and convicted. Nonetheless, impunity remained a problem.

Local human rights lawyers maintained that abusive treatment occurred in detention facilities, most often against those arrested on “security grounds.” Amnesty International (AI) and other international organizations documented the mistreatment of terror suspects, where they have been “at unrecognized detention centers where they were at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.”

In December 2010 two senior police officers working in the main police station of the eastern province of Constantine received 12-month prison sentences, with six-month suspended sentences, on charges of negligence and disrespect for pretrial detention procedures for not removing the shoelaces of Tifouti Kamel, who hanged himself in his cell during pretrial detention.

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

Prison conditions generally did not meet international standards, and the government did not permit visits to military, high-security, or standard prison facilities or to detention centers by independent human rights observers. Overcrowding remained a problem in many prisons. Prisoners had access to potable water, and steps have been taken to improve recordkeeping and the use of alternative sentencing for nonviolent offenders. Conditions for female prisoners were generally better than those for men. According to human rights lawyers, prison overpopulation was explained partially by the government’s excessive use of pretrial detention. In 2008 the CNCPPDH conducted 34 prison visits and highlighted concerns with overcrowding, insufficient bed space, and problems with lighting, ventilation, nutrition, and hygiene.

According to the director general of the Prisons Administration, there were 56,000 prisoners, including 411 minors, in the country’s 133 prisons. Prisons held men and women separately. The Ministry of Justice has undertaken a prison building program to alleviate crowding problems. New prisons opened during the year provide training, education, and reinsertion programs for prisoners and comply

with international standards. Prison guards are also receiving renewed training. Officials permitted prisoners weekly visits by their families, and family members have the right to bring in food and clothes. Prisoners also could observe religious events and had a place to perform prayers. All Muslim religious days were observed within prisons. In each prison inmates can submit complaints to the penitentiary administration or their lawyers. An ombudsman does not exist to serve on behalf of prisoners or detainees.

The penal code permitted the substitution of community service in lieu of imprisonment for first-time offenders with a maximum prison sentence of three years.

The government held political prisoners and suspected terrorists in military prisons where international observers were not allowed. In a 2008 report, the UN Committee Against Torture expressed concern over reports that the Department of Intelligence and Security (DRS), the intelligence agency tasked with internal security, maintained secret detention centers inside military barracks that operated outside judicial authority. During the year AI reported significant concerns that torture and abuse occurred in DRS detention facilities.

The lifting of the state of emergency in February resulted in some individuals formerly detained by the intelligence and security services being transferred to facilities under Justice Ministry jurisdiction.

During the year the government permitted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Red Crescent Society to visit regular, nonmilitary prisons. ICRC visits to persons held in places of detention run by the Ministry of Justice and to those detained in police stations and gendarmeries took place in accordance with ICRC standard practices. Visitors to selected prisons saw no signs of torture or mistreatment.

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

Although the constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, overuse of pretrial detention occurred in practice. On July 9, the government-appointed head of the CNCPPDH, Farouk Ksentini, stated that pretrial detention was “a significant weakness of the Algerian legal system.” He questioned the official rate given by the Ministry of Justice that only 11 percent of detainees were under pretrial detention, stating that the rate was certainly higher. Ksentini noted in August 2010

that judicial error resulted in cases of “unjustified” pretrial detention due to a lack of incriminating evidence.

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

The national police force, consisting of more than 140,000 members, falls under the control of the Ministry of Interior and has national jurisdiction. The National Gendarmerie, under the Ministry of Defense, also performs police-like functions outside urban areas. Organizationally the DRS reports to the Ministry of Defense and exercises internal security functions, but it also performs functions comparable to the police in terrorism cases.

Impunity remained a problem. The government did not always provide public information on the numbers, infractions, or punishments of police, military, or other security force personnel.

The criminal code provides mechanisms to investigate abuses.

During the year police responded to 10,910 civil disturbances nationwide, according to Abdelghani Hamel, director general of the national police.

### **Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention**

According to the law, police must obtain a summons from the Prosecutor’s Office to require a suspect to appear in a police station for preliminary questioning. Summonses also are used to notify and require the accused and the victim to attend a court proceeding or hearing.

Police may make arrests without a warrant if they witness the offense. Public lawyers reported that procedures for warrants and summonses usually were carried out properly.

The constitution specifies that a suspect may be held in detention for up to 48 hours without charge. If more time is required for gathering additional evidence, the police may request that the prosecutor extend the suspect’s detention to 72 hours. Those suspected of terrorism or subversion may be held legally for 12 days without charge or access to counsel under the law. Such individuals are obligated to answer questions posed to them by security forces, and they are not authorized to contact anyone. By law the initial court appearance in terrorism matters is not public.

At the end of the 12-day period, the detainee has the right to request a medical examination by a physician of choice within the jurisdiction of the court. Otherwise the judicial police appoint a doctor. The certificate of the medical examination is then entered into the detainee's file.

Following the 12-day period, individuals involved in terrorism cases are placed under judicial control, which requires them to report weekly to a local police precinct and to reside at an agreed-upon address. Travel within the country is unrestricted. Travel abroad is not generally authorized.

Judges rarely refused prosecutorial requests for extending preventive detention, which by law can be appealed. Should the detention be overturned, the defendant has the right to request compensation.

There is no system of bail, but in nonfelony cases, suspects often were released on provisional liberty referred to as "judicial control" while awaiting trial. Under provisional liberty status, suspects are required to report weekly to the police station in their district and are forbidden to leave the country.

Most detainees have prompt access to a lawyer of their choice, and the government provides legal counsel to indigent detainees. The penal code requires that detainees in pretrial detention be informed immediately of their rights to communicate with family members, receive visitors, and be examined by a doctor of their choice at the end of detention. In addition any suspect can request a medical examination once on police premises or before facing the judge. In practice there were continued reports during the year that these rights were not extended to all detainees. Typically detainees had access to a doctor only at the end of detention. Some detainees were held incommunicado without access to their families or lawyers.

Pretrial Detention: Prolonged pretrial detention remained a problem. The law does not provide a person in detention the right to a prompt judicial determination of the legality of the detention. Those charged with acts against the security of the state, including terrorism, may be held in pretrial detention as long as 20 months, according to the penal code, and the prosecutor must show cause every four months for continuing pretrial detention. Hundreds of rioters in January charged with looting or public disorder were held in pretrial detention, usually for 24 hours, but sometimes for several days. Rioters, protesters, and activists were normally released without being charged.

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

While the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, the president exercises supreme judicial authority, and the executive branch limited judicial independence. The constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, but in practice authorities did not always respect legal provisions regarding defendants' rights. The High Judicial Council is responsible for judicial discipline and the appointment of all judges. President Bouteflika serves as the president of the council.

### **Trial Procedures**

Defendants are presumed innocent and have the right to be present and to consult with an attorney, provided at public expense if necessary. Most trials are public and all are nonjury. Defendants can confront or question witnesses against them or present witnesses and evidence on their behalf. Courts occasionally denied defendants and their attorneys access to government-held evidence, but there were fewer reports of such incidents than in past years. Defendants have the right to appeal. The testimony of men and women has equal weight under the law.

On July 18, a court in Tizi Ouzou sentenced Malik Madjnoun and Abdelhakim Chenoui to 12 years in prison for assassinating singer Lounes Matoub in 1998. Madjnoun and Chenoui had been held in jail 12 years awaiting trial but had yet to be released by year's end.

### **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

There were reports of dozens of individuals detained for political reasons, including peaceful assembly in Algiers. In virtually all of the instances, police detained activists participating in protests or marches and held them either in the backs of riot trucks on site or transported them to nearby police precincts. Police released the activists without charges once the protests had subsided.

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

The judiciary was neither independent nor impartial in civil matters and lacked independence in some human rights cases. Family connections and status of the parties involved could influence decisions. Individuals may bring lawsuits, and there are administrative processes related to amnesty, which may provide damages



to the victims or their families for human rights violations and compensation for alleged wrongs.

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

The constitution prohibits such actions, although in practice government authorities infringed on citizens' privacy rights. According to human rights activists, the government monitored the communications of political opponents, journalists, human rights groups, and suspected terrorists. Security officials reportedly searched homes without a warrant.

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

#### **a. Freedom of Speech and Press**

##### **Status of Freedom of Speech and Press**

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, the government restricted these rights in practice through accusations of defamation; informal pressure on publishers, editors, and journalists; and the continued closure of broadcast media to private entities. In September, the government passed a law decriminalizing press offenses.

Freedom of Speech: Individuals generally were able to criticize the government privately, although there could be occasional reprisals. In practice citizens practiced self-restraint in voicing public criticism. The government attempted to impede criticism by monitoring political meetings and in some cases not allowing nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to hold meetings. The law specifies that freedom of speech must respect "individual dignity, the imperatives of foreign policy, and the national defense." A 2006 presidential decree continued to criminalize speech about the conduct of the security forces during the internal conflict of the 1990s.

Freedom of Press: Many political parties, including legal Islamic parties, had access to the independent press and used it to express their views. Opposition parties also disseminated information via the Internet and published communiqués. Journalists expressed frustration over the near-impossibility of receiving information from public officials, and journalists and political cartoonists regularly criticized the government.

Radio and television were government-owned and frequently broadcasted coverage favorable to the government. Sources maintained that broadcast media did not grant sufficient access to opposition parties and critical NGOs. During nonelection periods opposition parties and spokesmen regularly were denied access to public radio or television. Political parties and independent candidates received the same amount of radio access time during the three-week campaign period prior to the 2009 presidential election.

### **Internet Freedom**

Access to the Internet generally was unimpeded, although the government monitored e-mail and Internet chat rooms. Individuals and groups could engage in the expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail. Individuals posted on YouTube thousands of videos of the early January protests and their aftermath. In addition to reporting information and showing actual events, several videos presented political opinions and popular reactions, expressing in some cases support for protesters and criticism of government policies, while others condemned acts of violence. Some media reports indicated that Facebook was blocked by the government's attempt to stifle communication among protesters during the early months of the year. Other users reported no difficulty accessing Facebook throughout the riots. Facebook administrators reported that they were investigating the complaints but did not release official findings. The minister of information and communication denied that the government blocked Facebook.

The law on cybercrime establishes procedures for using electronic data in prosecutions and outlines the responsibilities of service providers to cooperate with authorities.

By law Internet service providers face criminal penalties for the material and Web sites they host, especially if subject matters are "incompatible with morality or public opinion." The ministries of justice, interior, and information have oversight responsibilities. The cybercrime law provides sentences for six months to five years in prison and fines between 50,000 and 500,000 dinars (\$677 to \$6,770) for users who do not comply with the law, including the obligation to cooperate with law enforcement authorities against cybercrime.

### **Academic Freedom and Cultural Events**

Academic freedom generally was restricted. Academic seminars and colloquiums occurred with limited governmental interference, but there were delays in issuing

visas to international participants and instances where authorities denied international experts entrance.

In August government officials expelled Tunisian singer Bendir Man and reportedly banned him from returning to the country following August 11 and 12 concerts when he sang about democracy and dedicated a song to “all of the dictators in the Arab world,” including “yours, Bouteflika.”

### **b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association**

Although the constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, the government severely restricted the exercise of these rights in practice.

#### **Freedom of Assembly**

The constitution provides for the right of assembly, but government practice continued to curtail this right. A decree implemented in 2001 banning demonstrations in Algiers remained in effect and was put into practice during the year. Authorities required citizens and organizations to obtain permits from the government-appointed local governor before holding public meetings. The government continued to restrict licenses to political parties, NGOs, and other groups to hold indoor rallies and frequently granted permissions on the eve of the event, thereby impeding publicity and outreach. In December local government officials refused to authorize two conferences that the LADDH planned to hold in Algiers and Boumerdes to celebrate International Human Rights Day.

Every Saturday from February 12 to late April, government security forces prevented protesters with the political opposition group National Coordination for Change and Democracy (CNCD) from staging a march in Algiers. On several occasions, CNCD organizers submitted paperwork to local officials requesting permission to march, but the requests were denied on security grounds. In some cases police arrested protesters and injured some of them as a result of participation in unsanctioned protests.

Between 3,000 and 5,000 university students on April 12 staged the first successful public march in Algiers since 2001, despite police efforts to prevent it. Students were largely nonviolent, but there were approximately 100 injuries.

The LADDH reported continuing difficulties in obtaining permission to hold outdoor meetings and seminars. Groups opposing the Charter on Peace and Reconciliation also had difficulty securing permission to hold public gatherings.

### **Freedom of Association**

The constitution provides for the right of association, but the government severely restricted this right in practice.

The law grants the government wide-ranging oversight of and influence in the day-to-day activities of civil society organizations. The law's extensive requirements and uneven enforcement serve as major impediments to the development of civil society. It requires organizations to register with the government and obtain a license. Local organizations must register at the level of the provincial governor, and a national organization must register with the Interior Ministry. The law mandates that organizations must have at least 10 founding members on an executive board to register and provide professional and personal information about executive board members, articles of association, and minutes of the statutory meeting. Once registered, organizations must inform the government of their activities, funding sources, and personnel, including notification when there are personnel changes. If organizations fail to provide such information to the government, they are subject to fines between 2,000 and 5,000 dinars (\$27-\$68). The government has the right to suspend the activities of any NGO it deems to be acting illegally or against public order or public decency, although what constitutes a violation of public order or decency is not defined. If organizations continue to operate after being suspended, members can face between three months and two months in prison and fines between 50,000 and 100,000 dinars (\$677-1,350).

The Ministry of Interior must approve all political parties before they are considered legally established. The government restricted the registration of certain NGOs, associations, and political parties on security grounds but declined to provide evidence or legal justification for refusing to authorize other organizations that could not be disqualified on security grounds. The government frequently failed to grant in an expeditious fashion official recognition to NGOs, associations, religious groups, and political parties. The ministry may deny a license to or dissolve any group regarded as a threat to the government's authority or to public order. For example, the law implementing the 2006 amnesty prohibits political activities by anyone responsible for having used religion leading to the "national tragedy," that is, the 1990s civil conflict, thereby theoretically banning Islamic political parties.

The government issued licenses and subsidies to domestic associations, especially youth, medical, and neighborhood associations. The Interior Ministry regarded organizations unable to attain government licenses as illegal. Domestic NGOs encountered bureaucratic obstacles to receiving financial support from abroad. Although not illegal, financial support from abroad is conditioned by law on a series of authorizations from the ministries of interior and national solidarity. These authorizations remained difficult to obtain. According to the Ministry of Interior, there were 80,000 registered associations. Of that total, only a few hundred are functioning and credible independent national NGOs. SOS Disparus remained unrecognized and continued to operate facing government interference.

### **c. Freedom of Religion**

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at [www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt).

### **d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons**

The constitution provides for freedom of movement, but the government restricted the exercise of this right in practice.

The government generally 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, and other persons of concern.

In-Country Movement: The government maintained restrictions for security reasons on travel into the southern locales of El-Oued and Illizi, near hydrocarbon industry installations and the Libyan border, respectively. The government also prevented overland tourist travel between the southern cities of Djanet and Tamanrasset, citing the threat of terrorism. The government did not permit young men eligible for the draft but who had not yet completed their military service to leave the country without special authorization, although the government granted such authorization to students and persons with special family circumstances.

Foreign Travel: The family code does not permit those under 18 to travel abroad without a guardian's permission. Married women under 18 years of age may not travel abroad without permission from their husbands.

## Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The country's laws provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. However, there were no reports that the government granted refugee status and asylum to new refugee applicants during the year. According to the UNHCR, the government did not accept UNHCR-determined refugee status for individuals from sub-Saharan Africa fleeing conflict. Through August the office registered 510 cases, 570 individuals, and had 141 recognized refugees, mostly sub-Saharan African nationals. There were reports that the government deported some asylum seekers after trials without legal counsel given to the applicant. Refugees holding valid UNHCR documentation were less likely to be deported, but two recognized refugees were arrested on the basis of illegal entry and stay and were deported in the course of the year.

Nonrefoulement: In practice the government provided some protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, as was the case with the Sahrawi refugees. Authorities did not extend legal protections to asylum seekers from sub-Saharan Africa residing in Algiers. Nonetheless, authorities tolerated the presence of these asylum seekers in the country.

After violence in neighboring Libya, Algeria established a series of transit centers for refugees along its 1,000km border with Libya. Libyans were allowed to cross the border to purchase goods. Independent estimates of the number of refugees crossing into the country from Libya during the year ranged from 18,000 to 20,000, but government officials claimed an estimated 5,000 refugees entered from Libya. Refugees who crossed the border at official checkpoints normally spent two to three days at the transit centers, where they could contact their national embassies for help with repatriation. Independent observers found the transit centers to be in excellent condition with ample beds, proper medical treatment, restroom facilities, and free phone and laptop usage.

Refugees from Libya who entered Algeria illegally occasionally were arrested, held in detention centers for a period of one to two weeks for questioning, and then transported to Algeria's border with Mali and Niger, depending on the person's country of origin.

The government provided protection to an estimated 90,000 Sahrawi refugees who departed Western Sahara after Morocco took control of the territory in the 1970s. The UNHCR, World Food Program, Algerian Red Crescent, and other organizations also assisted Sahrawi refugees. Neither the government nor refugee leadership allowed the UNHCR to conduct a registration or complete a census of the Sahrawi refugees.

Access to Basic Services: Sahrawi refugees lived predominantly in camps near the city of Tindouf, administered by the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Saguia el Harma and Rio de Oro (Polisario). The remote location of the camps and lack of government presence resulted in lack of access to employment, basic services, education, police, and courts for Sahrawis.

### **Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government**

The constitution provides citizens the right to change their government peacefully through periodic elections based on universal suffrage. The constitutional change in 2008, allowing for the president to run for unlimited terms of office, greatly increased the difficulty for citizens to change their government peacefully. Restrictions on freedom of assembly and association, as well as restrictions on political party activities, also limit this right.

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

The constitution mandates presidential elections every five years. In 2008 President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced his intention to seek parliamentary approval for a set of constitutional amendments that included removal of presidential term limits. One month later the parliament approved the proposed amendments by a wide margin with minimal debate.

Recent Elections: In 2009 the government held a contested, multiparty presidential election in which the incumbent was elected to a third term. Official election statistics indicated that President Bouteflika won the election with 90.2 percent of the votes and a voter turnout of 74.6 percent. Opposition parties and defeated candidates estimated voter turnout was actually in the range of 18 to 55 percent. Some international experts commented that observers monitored only election-day procedures and were not on the ground to evaluate preelection activities. Two opposition parties, the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) and the Socialist Forces Front (FFS), boycotted the election. The LADDH pointed to a lack of

critical debate in the media and favorable treatment of the incumbent by state-owned media.

Political Parties: The Ministry of Interior did not approve any political parties during the year. In April Interior Minister Daho Ould Kablia indicated that the ministry had received 42 requests to authorize new political parties. In November Ould Kablia indicated that there were only five or six political parties that would meet the government's conditions for approval. Opposition candidates complained that the ministry regularly blocked registered parties from holding meetings and denied them access to larger and better-equipped government conference rooms while facilitating the activities of the pro-Bouteflika National Liberation Front (FLN).

A party must have received 4 percent of the vote, or at least 2,000 votes, in 25 wilayas (provinces) in one of the last three legislative elections to participate in national elections, making it very difficult in practice to create new political parties.

During the year the government banned independent groups, such as the March 19th Facebook group, from meeting and demonstrating. During the first four months of the year, police routinely prevented groups and individuals from staging protests or marches in Algiers by surrounding protesters with overwhelming numbers of police. Most notably, police prevented the CNCD from holding weekly marches in Algiers every Saturday from February until the group abandoned its efforts to march in April.

Membership in the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), a political party banned in 1992, remained illegal due to the party's ties to the violence of the 1990s, which is estimated to have claimed 200,000 lives. The law also bans political party ties to nonpolitical associations and regulates party financing and reporting requirements. According to the law political parties cannot receive direct or indirect financial or material support from any foreign parties. The law also stipulates that resources are collected from contributions of the party's members, donations, and revenue from its activities, in addition to possible state funding.

Participation of Women and Minorities: In accordance with the law, the government promoted political rights for women by encouraging increased female representation within elected assemblies. In November both houses of parliament passed a law setting the terms for expanding women's representation in elected assemblies. In future elections, women must make up between 20 and 50 percent



of candidates depending on the population and number of seats the wilaya holds in parliament's lower house.

There were three women in the cabinet. Women also held 30 of the 389 seats in the Popular Assembly of the Nation, the lower legislative chamber, and seven of the 144 seats in the Council of the Nation, the upper chamber. A woman led the Workers Party, and three major political parties--the FLN, National Rally for Democracy, and RCD--had women's divisions headed by women.

The ethnic Amazigh (Berber) population of approximately 10 million participated freely and actively in the political process and represented one-third of the government.

#### **Section 4. Official Corruption and Government Transparency**

The law provides criminal penalties of two to 10 years in prison for official corruption, and the government implemented the law more effectively than in previous years to address reports of continuing government corruption. World Bank governance data reflected the existence of a corruption problem.

Although a 2006 law established a national anticorruption program, it does not require elected and senior officials to declare their assets. The law does not provide parliamentary immunity in certain cases. Two presidential decrees published in 2006, however, make high-level government officials subject to financial disclosure laws. The decrees also stipulate the formation of an anticorruption agency, and the government announced its creation in August 2010 as well as new policies to strengthen the role of the accounting court.

Irregularities, including the excessive use of private agreements, often affected public procurement. According to the Ministry of Public Works, following the president's 2005 prohibition on the use of private agreements, including sole-source contracts, government agencies began implementing a public tender policy for all infrastructure and large government projects. For those public tenders, evaluations were not released to participating companies, and evaluation methods and techniques were not clearly defined. Some agencies, however, continued to use direct contracts for public works projects. In July 2010 a presidential decree mandated that all financial transactions involving more than 500,000 dinars (\$6,770) be conducted by credit card, check, or other noncash method in an effort to increase financial transparency, track illegal financing of terrorism, and reduce

the possibility of corruption. Since January customs officials suspended 109 agents for corruption and sent 20 cases for prosecution.

A notable corruption case in 2010 involved several private businessmen and senior executives at the country's national oil company, Sonatrach. The men apparently awarded contracts in violation of the public procurement code. In January 2010 police arrested several top company officials. Following the incident, in May 2010 then energy/mines minister Chakib Khelil was relieved of his position during a broad cabinet reshuffle. On May 4, a judge in Oran sentenced former Sonatrach chief executive officer (CEO) Mohamed Meziane to two years in prison with one year suspended. Sonatrach's former deputy chairman Abdelhafid Faghoul and three executives received eight-month suspended sentences for illegal contract letting and fraud.

In April 2010 an Algiers court ordered the arrest of the current and former directors of the Port of Algiers and four other port officials for misappropriation of public funds. On June 19, the Algiers Appeals Court sentenced former port CEOs Bourouai Abdelhak and Farrah Ali to six years in prison, while private businessmen Titache Redouane and Miloud Mohamed also received six years in prison for their roles. Four other port officials also received prison sentences of six years.

Although permitted under the constitution, authorities restricted access to government information, and there is no law facilitating access to information. Throughout the year the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the UN Development Program, improved access to information about the country's judicial system and developed a modern information management system for penitentiaries. As a result citizens were able to request personal legal records from the courts and receive the documents the same day.

In May 2010 the government created the Ministry of Prospective Planning and Statistics. However, lack of government transparency remained a serious problem. Although the government generally did not release many economic statistics, the new ministry released such figures. Most ministries had Web sites, but not all were regularly maintained to provide updated information. The Justice Ministry provided information on citizens' rights and legislation. In August the government launched a Web site, El Mouwatin, that contained a wide variety of information on municipal and national government services.

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

The government continued to restrict and to harass some local NGOs and impeded the work of international NGOs. Although some human rights groups, including the Algerian League of Human Rights (LADH) and LADDH, were allowed to move about freely, the most active and visible organizations reported interference by government authorities, including surveillance, monitoring of telephone calls, difficulty in securing meeting spaces, and difficulty in obtaining approval for international speakers to address sensitive issues.

The government was not responsive publicly to reports and recommendations from domestic and international human rights NGOs and interfered with attempts by some domestic and international human rights groups to investigate. Domestic NGOs must be licensed by the government and are prohibited from receiving funding from abroad without approval from the ministries of national solidarity and interior. However, more than 100 unlicensed NGOs, such as women's advocacy groups and charity organizations, operated openly. Unlicensed NGOs did not receive government assistance, and citizens were at times hesitant to associate with these organizations.

The most active independent human rights group was the LADDH, a legally recognized NGO with members throughout the country. The LADDH was not permitted access to government officials for human rights advocacy or research purposes or to prisons, except for normal lawyer-client consultations. The smaller LADH, a separate organization based in Constantine, was licensed, and members throughout the country monitored individual cases.

By law NGOs not legally recognized by the Interior Ministry can conduct human rights investigations. Sometimes, however, the government prevented even legally recognized NGOs from conducting investigations. For example, the LADDH did not have access to prisons or detention centers.

International NGOs continued to experience delays in obtaining visas, and outright refusals occurred. The government maintained that legislation did not allow branches of foreign NGOs to operate legally in the country.

UN and Other International Bodies: The government continued to deny requests for visits from the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (pending since 1997), the UN special rapporteur on torture (pending since 1997),

the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions (pending since 1998), the UN special rapporteur on human rights and counterterrorism (pending since 2006), and the UN special rapporteur on arbitrary detention (pending since 2009). The government accepted visits of UN special rapporteurs on violence against women in 2007 and freedom of religion or belief in 2002.

In April UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression Frank La Rue visited the country and initially could not meet with unrecognized or unlicensed movements, political parties, or NGOs. He rejected this condition and held successful meetings with civil society representatives. In a departing press conference, La Rue offered numerous, critical recommendations to the government, including a plea to allow the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to visit the country. Days after La Rue's departure, Interior Minister Dahou Ould Kablia said that the recommendations were "inappropriate" and added that "those who want to give us lessons must be careful not to do so."

Farouk Ksentini, president of the CNCPPDH, was appointed by the president and paid by the government. The CNCPPDH publishes an annual report that provides measured criticism of the government. Ksentini routinely criticized human rights-related reports from domestic and international NGOs and foreign governments.

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

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on birth, race, gender, language, and social status. In general the government enforced the nationality and family codes, although women continued to face legal and social discrimination.

### **Women**

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, spousal and nonspousal, occurred. The law criminalizes nonspousal rape but does not address spousal rape. Prison sentences for nonspousal rape range from one to five years. Claims filed by women for rape and sexual abuse continued to face judicial obstacles, and many women did not report incidents of rape because of societal pressures and bureaucratic problems in securing convictions. During the year women's rights activists reported a significant increase in reports of violence against women.

Spousal abuse occurred. The penal code states that a person must be incapacitated for 15 days or more and present a doctor's note certifying the injuries before filing charges for battery.

Domestic NGOs reported that physical violence against women increased. A report during the year from the national police reported that within the first six months of 2010, more than 4,000 women lodged domestic violence complaints with police. The report emphasized that social status or educational background did not prevent domestic violence. According to the police report, four women died in the first months of 2010 because of domestic violence. In December the national police reported that approximately 7,000 women were victims of domestic violence during the first nine months of 2011. There were 13 call centers to provide legal and psychological assistance.

During the year local women's NGOs, including SOS Femmes en Detresse, the Wassila Network, and Bent Fatma N'Soumer, spoke against violence in the family. SOS Femmes en Detresse and the Wassila Network provided judicial and psychological counseling to abused women. Women's rights groups experienced difficulty in drawing attention to spousal abuse as an important social problem, largely due to traditional societal attitudes. Several rape crisis centers run by women's groups operated, but they had few resources. The Working Women section of the General Union of Algerian Workers established a counseling center for women suffering from sexual harassment in the workplace. SOS Femmes en Detresse operated one call center in Algiers, but a second call center in Batna was closed. During the first eight months of the year, the Algiers call center received more than 1,400 calls.

Sexual Harassment: The punishment for sexual harassment is one to two years' imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 to 100,000 dinars (approximately \$677 to \$1,350). The punishment is doubled for a second offense. According to the final report of the UN rapporteur, women reported 99 cases of sexual harassment to the police between January and October 2010. The majority of reported cases of harassment occurred in the workplace. SOS Femmes en Detresse provided legal advice and counseling to 860 women; however, only 40 of the women seeking assistance filed formal complaints.

Reproductive Rights: The government did not impose restrictions on the right of couples and individuals to decide the number, timing, and spacing of their children. There were no restrictions on access to contraceptives, yet contraceptives were harder to obtain for single women or women in rural areas. In 2009 the Health

Ministry's Office of Family Planning conducted a public health awareness campaign. According to the office, 62 percent of women, mainly married, regularly used contraceptives. Government hospitals provided skilled attendance during childbirth as well as obstetric and postpartum care and equally diagnosed and treated women for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Due to restrictions women face under the family code, which places women under the guardianship of men, as well as the social influence of the country's religious movements, women encounter pressure in making independent decisions about their health and reproductive rights.

Discrimination: Although the constitution provides for gender equality, some aspects of the law and many traditional social practices discriminate against women. In addition, religious extremists advocated practices that restrict women's behavior, including freedom of movement. In some rural regions, women faced extreme social pressure to veil as a precondition for freedom of movement and employment. The family code contains elements of Sharia (Islamic law). The family code prohibits Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims, although this regulation was not always enforced. A woman may marry a foreigner and transmit citizenship and nationality to both her children and spouse. Muslim men may marry non-Muslim women.

Women can seek divorce for irreconcilable differences and violation of a prenuptial agreement. In a divorce the law provides for the wife to retain the family's home until children reach 18 years of age. Custody of children normally is awarded to the mother, but she may not make decisions on education or take the children out of the country without the father's authorization. In practice, more women retained the family's home if they had custody of the children.

The family code affirms the Islamic practice of allowing a man to marry as many as four wives. According to the family code, polygamy is only permitted upon the permission of the first wife and the determination of a judge as to the husband's financial ability to support an additional wife. In practice, however, this occurred in 1 to 2 percent of marriages.

Amendments to the family code supersede the Sharia requirement that a male sponsor consent to the marriage of a woman. Although this requirement has been formally retained and the sponsor continues to contract the marriage, the woman may choose any man that she wishes to be the sponsor. The sponsor represents the woman during the religious or civil ceremony. Some families subject women to virginity tests before marriage.

Women suffered from discrimination in inheritance claims and were entitled to a smaller portion of an estate than male children or a deceased husband's brothers. The law purports that such a distinction is justified because other provisions require that the husband's income and assets be used to support the family, while in principle the wife's remain her own. In practice women did not often have exclusive control over assets that they brought to a marriage or that they earned. Married women may take out business loans and use their own financial resources. Despite constitutional and legal provisions providing for gender equality, in practice women faced discrimination in employment. Leaders of women's organizations reported that discriminatory violations were common and that women were less likely to receive equal pay for equal work or receive promotions. In urban areas, there was social encouragement for women to pursue higher education and/or a career. Girls graduated from high school more frequently than did boys. According to 2010 statistics, women represented 55 percent of the medical profession, 60 percent of the media profession, 30 percent of the upper levels of the legal profession, and more than 60 percent of the education profession. In addition, 36 percent of judges were women. Women served at all levels in the judicial system, and female police officers were added to some precincts to assist women with abuse claims. Of nine million workers nationally, two million were female. Women may own businesses, enter into contracts, and pursue careers similar to those of men.

## **Children**

Birth registration: Citizenship and nationality are transmitted from the mother or father. Under the law, children born to a Muslim father are Muslim, regardless of the mother's religion.

Child Abuse: Child abuse is illegal but continued to be reported as a problem. NGOs specializing in children cited continued instances of domestic violence against children, which they attributed to a "culture of violence" stemming from civil strife in the 1990s, including social dislocations caused by the movement of rural families to the cities to escape terrorist violence. Experts assumed that many cases went unreported because of familial reticence. The National Foundation for Health Progress and Research Development (FOREM), a children's rights watchdog NGO with EU funding, estimated that approximately 10,000 children suffered some form of abuse, and 16 died from physical violence. FOREM also reported that 36 children were kidnapped in June. The national police report released in January stated that 5,418 children were victims of physical abuse in

2010; girls made up 2,072 of the victims. The same report revealed that 20 children died of severe physical abuse, and 177 were kidnapped in 2010.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The criminal code prohibits solicitation for prostitution and stipulates prison sentences of between 10 and 20 years when the offense is committed against a minor under the age of 18 years. According to the law, the age for consensual sex is 16 years. The law stipulates a prison sentence of between 10 and 20 years for rape when the victim is a minor, but this sentence was rarely carried out. The law prohibits pornography and establishes prison sentences of between two months and two years as well as fines up to 2,000 dinars (approximately \$27).

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information see the Department of State's report on compliance at [http://travel.state.gov/abduction/resources/congressreport/congressreport\\_4308.html](http://travel.state.gov/abduction/resources/congressreport/congressreport_4308.html).

### **Anti-Semitism**

The country's Jewish population numbered fewer than 2,000 persons, and there were no functioning synagogues. The government did not promote antibias education, and there is no hate crime legislation.

### **Trafficking in Persons**

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

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services, although in practice the government did not effectively enforce these provisions, and there was widespread social discrimination against persons with disabilities. Few government buildings were accessible to persons with disabilities. Public enterprises that downsized generally ignored a requirement that they reserve 1 percent of jobs for persons with disabilities. Social security provided payments for orthopedic equipment. The Ministry of National Solidarity provided some



financial support to health-care-oriented NGOs, but for many NGOs such financial support represented approximately 2 percent of their budgets.

The ministry maintained that there were two million individuals with disabilities in the country, of whom the largest percentages were classified as “chronically ill” or “other” (38 and 30 percent, respectively). However, according to the Algerian Federation of Wheelchair Associations, there were three million persons with disabilities living in the country. The government estimated that approximately 44 percent of disabled citizens had some form of motor disability, 32 percent had communication difficulties, and 24 percent suffered from a visual disability. The government classified approximately 193,000 individuals as “fully disabled” and claimed during the year to have appropriated 9.54 billion dinars (approximately \$129 million) for their welfare.

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

The penal code criminalizes public homosexual behavior for males and females, and there is no specific legal protection for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender (LGBT) persons. The law stipulates penalties that include imprisonment of two months to two years and fines of 500 to 2,000 dinars (approximately \$7 to \$27). If a minor is involved, the adult may face up to three years’ imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 dinars (approximately \$135).

According to the NGO Heartland Alliance, during the year a woman engaged in grassroots LGBT activism received several death threats and felt compelled to flee the country. There was societal discrimination against homosexual conduct. While some LGBT persons lived openly, the vast majority did not, and most feared reprisal from their families or harassment from authorities

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

HIV/AIDS was widely considered a shameful disease in the country. From 1985 to September 2011, 6,615 Algerians were either HIV-positive or living with AIDS, according to Ministry of Health statistics. During the year the Ministry of Health identified 514 new HIV cases. However, the National Foundation for Health Promotion and Research Development, an NGO, released a study during the year that reported there are 12,000 infected with HIV in the country. There were 61 centers offering free testing services to detect HIV/AIDS. Only 51 percent of women, both single and married, noted use of condoms to prevent infection. In

response to societal discrimination, during the year the Ministry of Health and the NGO AIDS Algerie launched an HIV/AIDS prevention campaign, stressing the need to prevent discrimination, especially in the workplace, against those with HIV/AIDS.

## **Section 7. Worker Rights**

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

The constitution allows workers who are citizens to join unions of their choice but requires workers to obtain government approval to form a union. The law requires that the Ministry of Labor approve or disapprove a union application within 30 days and allows for the creation of autonomous unions. However, the government may invalidate a union's legal status if its objectives are perceived by authorities as contrary to the established institutional system, public order, good morals, or the laws or regulations in force. The General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) was the only legally recognized labor confederation, representing a majority of public sector workers. The law allows workers to form independent unions, but the union needs 20 percent representation and must obtain prior authority from the government.

Unions have the right to form and join federations or confederations. Unions may also recruit members at the workplace. The law prohibits discrimination by employers against union members and organizers and provides mechanisms for resolving trade union complaints of antiunion practices by employers.

The law permits unions to affiliate with international labor bodies and develop relations with foreign labor groups. For example, the UGTA is a member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. However, the law prohibits unions from associating with political parties and also prohibits unions from receiving funds from foreign sources. The courts are empowered to dissolve unions that engaged in illegal activities.

The law provides for collective bargaining for all unions, and the government permitted the exercise of this right, in practice, for authorized unions; however, the UGTA remained the only union authorized to negotiate collective bargaining agreements. According to the UGTA, nine million workers were covered by collective bargaining agreements, not including foreign migrant laborers.

The law provides for the right to strike, and workers exercised this right in practice, subject to conditions. Striking requires a secret ballot of the whole workforce and the government can restrict strikes on a number of grounds, including economic crisis, obstruction of public services, or possibility of subversive actions. Furthermore, due to the emergency law in force, all public demonstrations, including protests and strikes, must receive prior government authorization. According to the law on industrial relations, workers may strike only after 14 days of mandatory conciliation or mediation. On occasion, the government offered to mediate disputes. The law states that decisions reached in mediation are binding on both parties. If no agreement is reached in mediation, the workers may strike legally after they vote by secret ballot to do so. The law requires that a minimum level of essential public services must be maintained during public-sector service strikes. The International Labor Organization (ILO) noted that the list of essential services is broad and includes services such as banking and radio/television. The ILO expressed concern regarding what it deemed excessive penalties ranging from eight days to two months imposed by the government on workers participating in peaceful strikes.

There were no new independent unions formed during the year. Many trade unions were not recognized as the government interfered with attempts to register. For instance, since 2002 the National Union of Vocational Training Workers (Syndicat National des Travailleurs de la Formation Professionnelle), was unable to register.

Attempts by new unions to form federations or confederations also were obstructed by delaying administrative maneuvers, such as delays in processing registration requests. Since 1996 the Autonomous Unions Confederation, which functions without official status, repeatedly attempted to organize the autonomous unions, without success. The government did not allow the Autonomous Union of Public Sector Workers (SNAPAP) to register as a national confederation. SNAPAP and other autonomous unions faced government interference throughout the year, including official obstruction of general assembly meetings and police harassment during sit-in protests. Furthermore, unions in multinational companies, specifically in oil and gas production, were nonexistent due to antiunion practices and threats and harassment by employers.

On May 8, unknown persons stole two computers from the Union House in Algiers, a place where the CNCD was created. In June the International Trade Union Confederation released a report on trade union rights denouncing the government's ability to deem strikes illegal. It also reported that the flexibility of

independent unions in the public sector is tightly controlled and that the creation of unions is hampered by excessive restrictions and government intervention. Several dozen strikes occurred throughout the country. Authorities rarely give permits for public gatherings. The authorities tolerated strikes but continued to enforce a ban on marches and demonstrations in Algiers that has been in effect since 2001.

From March 7 to May 23, physicians and medical residents carried out a strike demanding higher pay and the cancellation of the civil service duty, performed in difficult conditions. On April 4, Health Minister Djamel Ould Abbes called this strike movement “illegal and unacceptable.”

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

The constitution prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor; however, there were reports from the Ministry of Labor and NGOs that such practices occurred. Forced labor conditions existed for migrant workers that were not fully protected by labor law. Construction workers and female domestic workers were reportedly vulnerable.

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

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

The law prohibits participation by minors in dangerous, unhealthy, or harmful work or in work that is considered inappropriate because of social and religious considerations. The minimum legal age for employment is 16 years, but children that are younger may work as apprentices with permission from their parents or legal guardian. The law prohibits minors from working in dangerous or harmful work, but it does not establish a list of hazardous occupations prohibited to minors, nor does it cover work in the informal sector.

On June 11, UNICEF representative in Algiers stated that 340,000 children worked in various sectors in the country, adding that the phenomenon is taking on alarming proportions. Children faced forms of child labor primarily in agriculture and the construction sector, and in the informal sector as domestic servants. However, specific data was unavailable.

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing child labor laws, but enforcement was limited. The ministry conducted and in some cases investigated

companies suspected of hiring under aged workers. However, monitoring and enforcement practices for child labor were not consistent and were hampered by an insufficient number of inspectors. During the year the NGO FOREM implemented a public awareness campaign to encourage children to remain in school until 16 years of age, rather than participating in the workforce. Approximately 100,000 students dropped out of school annually to join the workforce, according to FOREM.

#### **d. Acceptable Conditions of Work**

The national minimum wage of 15,000 dinars (approximately \$203) per month was established in 2009 following a tripartite social pact between business, government and the official union. This did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. In September the tripartite agreed to increase the monthly minimum wage to 18,000 dinars (approximately \$244). Autonomous unions, which were not included in tripartite talks, reported the increase was inadequate and would not affect the majority of workers who already earn more than the minimum wage. Families making only 8,000 dinars (approximately \$108) per month are considered to be living in poverty.

The standard workweek was 40 hours, including one hour for lunch per day. Employees who worked longer than the standard workweek received premium pay on a sliding scale from time-and-a-half to double-time, depending on whether the overtime was worked on a normal workday, a weekend, or a holiday.

The law contains occupational health and safety standards, which were not fully enforced. There were no known reports of workers being dismissed for removing themselves from hazardous working conditions. If workers face such conditions, they reserve the right to renegotiate their contract or, failing that, resort to the courts. While this legal mechanism exists, the high demand for employment in the country gave an advantage to employers seeking to exploit employees. Economic migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere working in the country without legal immigration status were not protected by the country's labor standards, making them vulnerable to exploitation. Labor law does not adequately cover migrant workers, who primarily are employed in the construction and domestic help sectors.

In general the Ministry of Labor enforced labor standards, including ensuring compliance with the minimum wage regulation and safety standards. However, broad enforcement remained ineffective and insufficient.