

SLOVENIA

Slovenia is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional republic with a population of approximately two million. Power is shared between a directly elected president (head of state), a prime minister (head of government), and a bicameral parliament composed of the National Assembly (lower house) and the National Council (upper house). On October 10, the country held free and fair multiparty local elections. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

There were reports of trial delays and cursory procedures for review of asylum applications. Societal violence against women, trafficking in women and girls, discrimination against Roma, violence against gays and lesbians, and discrimination against former Yugoslav residents without legal status were also problems.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

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

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions generally met international standards. The government permitted independent human rights observers to perform monitoring visits, and such visits occurred monthly during the year.

The total number of prisoners as of November was 1,336, of whom 943 were convicted persons and 344 were detainees. There were 59 female and 12 juvenile prisoners.

Out of the 13 prisons in the country, only four have a capacity for holding more than 100 inmates. New facilities at Dob Prison increased its capacity by 174 places. The country has also adopted a "weekend prison" program for convicted persons serving sentences of up to three years, who are not convicted of sexual offenses, and who maintain regular employment during the week. No abuses of the weekend prison system were reported during the year.

The ombudsman reported that prison overcrowding was most severe at Dob Prison (at 175 percent of its capacity) but that the new facility relieved this problem. The second-most overcrowded facility is Ljubljana Prison, which held 240 inmates while having a capacity for 128.

In July the ombudsman investigated a complaint that an inmate in Maribor prison filed about the use of force against him. The ombudsman concluded that unnecessary force had resulted in minor injuries to the prisoner.

Prisoners and detainees had reasonable access to visitors and were permitted religious observance. Authorities permitted prisoners and detainees to submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship and to request investigation of credible allegations of inhumane conditions. Authorities investigated credible allegations of inhumane conditions and documented the results of such investigations in a publicly accessible manner. The government investigated and monitored prison and detention center conditions.

There is an ombudsman who can serve on behalf of prisoners and detainees to consider such matters as alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders to alleviate overcrowding, address the status and circumstances of confinement of juvenile offenders, and improve pretrial detention, bail, and recordkeeping procedures to ensure that prisoners do not serve beyond the maximum sentence for the offense with which they were charged.

The government permitted local and international human rights groups, the media, or the International Committee of the Red Cross to monitor prison conditions independently. No such monitoring occurred during the year.

During the year the government continued work to increase the capacity of a prison located in Dob, which during the year held 496 inmates, 183 more than its capacity.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

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

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Police are centrally organized under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior. The ministry oversees the drafting of basic guidelines, security policy, and regulations governing the work of the police. It monitors police performance, with an emphasis on protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The police provided effective law enforcement.

The law provides for a three-person government committee that includes two representatives of civil society organizations to review allegations of police abuse. The committee does not have authority to conduct independent investigations, and it relies on information that the Ministry of Interior or police investigators provided. The committee usually forwarded its findings to the State Prosecutor's Office.

As of September the police internal investigation division investigated 55 allegations of police, prosecutorial, and judicial misconduct.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention

Police generally apprehended persons taken into custody openly with warrants that either a prosecutor or judge issued. Authorities can detain persons for 48 hours before charging them. Authorities must also advise detainees in writing within 48 hours of the reasons for their arrest. Upon arrest, detainees have the right to contact legal counsel of their choice, and authorities generally respected this right in practice. The government provided indigent detainees with free counsel and generally allowed them prompt access to family members. The law also provides safeguards against self-incrimination.

Once authorities charge a suspect, pretrial detention may last for up to four months, depending on the severity of the alleged criminal act. An investigative judge must

certify the charges. Once trial procedures have begun, authorities may extend the total period of detention for up to two years. Authorities must release persons detained more than two years while awaiting trial or while their trial is ongoing pending conclusion of their trial. Lengthy pretrial detention was not a widespread problem, and authorities generally released defendants on bail except in the most serious criminal cases.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence in practice. The law provides the right to a trial without undue delay; however court backlogs continued at times to result in lengthy trial delays. As of June, there was a backlog of 266,221 cases. The government's "Lukenda" project continued to boost the efficiency of the judiciary, reducing court backlogs and lowering the average processing time from 14.1 months to 6.1 months. The government extended the Lukenda project until 2012.

Trial Procedures

The constitution and law provide for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. The judicial system was overburdened and lacked administrative support; resulting in frequent delays in the judicial process. In many cases ongoing criminal trials took from two to five years.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Regional Human Rights Courts Decisions

On July 13, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued a judgment that found against the country for one violation of Article 8 (right to a private and family life) and one violation of Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The decision in the case of Kuric v. Slovenia concerned the applicants' complaint that authorities prevented them from the possibility of acquiring Slovenian citizenship, and/or from preserving their status as permanent residents, as a result of which they have faced almost 20 years of extreme hardship. The applicants belonged to a group of citizens of the former Yugoslavia whose permanent residency status in Slovenia was erased in 1992. The ECHR concluded that it was necessary to legislate and regulate adequately the

situation of the individual applicants by issuing them with retroactive permanent residence permits.

These individuals, the "erased," began acquiring Slovenian permanent residency. The erased were frequently identified as stateless persons who lacked citizenship; however, most of the erased always had citizenship, but lacked permanent residency.

During the year the parliament adopted the Law on Settling the status of citizens of other countries, successor states of the former Yugoslavia in the Republic of Slovenia, on the basis of which the Ministry of Interior began issuing decrees on recognition of the status of permanent residency to persons whose status was erased in 1992. During the year the ministry issued decrees to several dozen individuals.

In 2009 the ECHR issued seven judgments that found at least one violation of the European convention by the state.

The government complied with ECHR judgments from 2009 during the year. All of them were related to the period in Slovenia before the adoption of the Act Regulating the Protection of the Right to a Fair Trial without Undue Delay (in 2006).

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The constitution and law provide for an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters, including damages for, or cessation of, human rights. As with criminal matters, court backlogs sometimes resulted in lengthy or delayed trials.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions in practice.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. Reports of indirect government influence on the media decreased during the year.

The penal code criminalizes the promotion of "national, race, or religious discord or intolerance or the promotion of superiority of one race over others." There were no reports that authorities charged any individuals or publications under this provision during the year.

Individuals could criticize the government publicly or privately without reprisal, and the government did not attempt to impede criticism.

The independent media were active and expressed a variety of views, and international media operated freely. Private investment and advertising supported the major print media; however, the government owned substantial stock in many companies that were shareholders in the major media houses.

The government operated a "media pluralization" fund intended to ensure that media reflected a diversity of viewpoints. The Commission for Pluralization of Media (under the Ministry of Culture) publishes tenders for co-financing different media projects through the Fund for Pluralization.

The law provides criminal penalties for defamation that harms a person's honor or name; there were no reports of any prosecutions for defamation during the year. In March there was one conviction issued by the Court of Ljubljana for defamation and the penalty was a fine of 5,000 euros (\$6,700). During the year the police investigated several cases of suspicion of defamation.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chat rooms. Individuals and groups could engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by electronic mail. Internet access was widely available. According to International Telecommunication Union statistics for 2009, approximately 65 percent of the country's inhabitants used the Internet.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

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

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights in practice.

c. Freedom of Religion

For a complete description of religious freedom, see the *2010 International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/rpt.

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

The constitution and law provide for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

The law prohibits forced exile, and the government did not employ it.

Protection of Refugees

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees.

Border police who apprehend persons who then seek asylum have the duty to process applications and transfer the person to an asylum home. There were some reports during the year that border police refused to perform this task.

The law permits asylum seekers to change their asylum applications if there are considerable changes in their circumstances; however, as of year's end, this provision had not been implemented.

The law provides asylum seekers with the right to appeal decisions on their applications, but authorities did not inform many asylum seekers of this right.

To expedite asylum cases and terminate quickly those asylum cases that applicants themselves abandon, asylum seekers must sign a statement renouncing their asylum claim during the 24 hours when they are in the "pre-reception" area of the asylum home, awaiting the filing of their asylum application. This precautionary document is only to allow officials to close cases when asylum seekers do not pursue their asylum claims--claims that would otherwise create a backlog of paperwork and procedure to close down. This precaution is not part of asylum law, but has been observed in practice by the Peace Institute of Ljubljana, which specializes in asylum cases.

If asylum seekers leave the pre-reception area before the application is filed, they are not considered asylum seekers and can be deported or detained in the Aliens Center. After an asylum application is filed, asylum seekers are free to go, but are expected to return to the asylum home every evening. If they are absent for more than three days, their asylum claim is deemed withdrawn, and the authorities consider the asylum seeker to have left Slovenia. If the claimant returns to the asylum home after the three-day period, his/her status changes to that of a nonresident alien, and he/she is subject to deportation.

Amnesty International (AI) and the UNHCR expressed concern that the law provides for accelerated asylum procedures with few safeguards and that its exclusion clauses and broad detention powers could lower the country's asylum standards.

There are no policies or laws that deny asylum based on country of origin.

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.

During the year the government did not provide temporary protection to persons who did not qualify as refugees.

Stateless Persons

Citizenship is derived from the parents with certain limitations when the child is born outside Slovenian territory. Naturalization is also possible. There were no reports of problems with immediate birth registration.

According to UNHCR data, there were 4,090 stateless persons in the country at the end of 2009. However, this number consisted entirely of nonethnic Slovenes (Bosnians, Croatians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Serbs), who were Yugoslav citizens living in the country at the time of its independence from Yugoslavia and whose residency status in Slovenia was "erased" in 1992 after they failed to apply for residency by the administrative deadline. Since they or their parents were born in other former Yugoslav republics, the government considered most of these "erased" persons to be citizens of other countries rather than stateless. As "illegal aliens," the government annulled their identity documents, and they had no rights to education, health care, housing, work permits, pensions, or other government benefits and programs.

In the second half of the year, the government began retroactively recognizing the residency status of the "erased" inhabitants of Slovenia on the basis of the Law on Settling of the Status of Citizens of Other Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Successor States. The government determined that "erased" persons who had left the country or were expelled while their status was undecided had forfeited their ability to prove continued ties to Slovenia and thus their ability to establish residency under the law. The law does not address the citizenship status of the "erased."

There were no reports of violence or discrimination against stateless persons.

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

The constitution and law provide citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections based on universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

On October 10, the country held free and fair local elections.

Political parties operated without restriction or outside interference.

There were 12 women in the 90-seat National Assembly and one woman in the 40-seat National Council. There were five women in the 18-member cabinet.

There were two members of minority groups in the National Assembly and none in the National Council or in the cabinet. The constitution provides the indigenous Italian and Hungarian minorities the right, as communities, to have at least one representative in the National Assembly. However, the law does not provide such rights to any other minority group.

Twenty distinct Romani communities, each designated indigenous at the local level, are entitled to a seat on their local municipal council. After four years of noncompliance, in January, Grosuplje became the final municipality in the country to comply with the law, electing a Roma to the city council.

Section 4 Official Corruption and Government Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively; however, officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices.

The public perceived corruption to be a widespread problem. Only the highest-level government officials--approximately 5,000 of the country's 80,000 public employees--were subject to financial disclosure laws. During the year the Independent Commission for the Prevention of Corruption received 1,271 cases of suspected corruption and found 266 out of the 824 cases they reviewed during the year to be credible (some of the 824 will likely have been cases from earlier years).

At year's end the investigation continued of several officials, including former prime minister Janez Jansa, former minister of defense Karl Erjavec, former chief of the military staff Albin Gutman, and private individuals in Finland and Slovenia for corruption related to the 2007 Ministry of Defense purchase of armored vehicles from a Finnish defense contractor.

The commission played an active role in educating the public and civil servants about corruption; however, it claimed it had neither adequate staff nor funding to fulfill its mandate and assess all cases of suspected corruption that it received during the year. Over the past year the commission forwarded 211 suspected cases of corruption to police and 38 to prosecutors and 79 cases to other state institutions, including cases received in 2009 but not processed until during the year.

During the year the Independent Commission for the Prevention of Corruption referred five credible reports of police corruption or corruption-related criminal

acts to police and the state prosecutor for further investigation. Three of them were found to be without sufficient grounds, one was forwarded to the Supreme State Prosecutor, and one remained under investigation by police. There were allegations of prosecutorial corruption relating to the investigation into bribery in an arms procurement case.

The law provides for free public access to all government information, and the government provided access for citizens and noncitizens alike, including foreign media. The government may deny public access only to classified information, personal data protected by privacy laws, and other narrowly defined exceptions.

The Office of the Government Information Commissioner reported an increase in complaints that state institutions were unresponsive. During the year the office received 231 complaints against decisions of state institutions and 360 complaints under the Law on Access to Public Information.

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

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials generally were cooperative and responsive to their views.

The constitution provides for an independent human rights ombudsman to monitor violations of human rights, especially when perpetrated by persons in positions of public authority. The ombudsman prepares an annual report on the human rights situation and provides the government with recommendations. Individuals can file complaints with the ombudsman as a means of seeking nonjudicial aid in the case of a human rights violation. In July the ombudsman presented the 2009 report to the president and prime minister.

Section 6 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions effectively.

Women

Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal. During the year SOS Helpline, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that provided anonymous emergency counseling and services to domestic violence victims, estimated that one in seven women was raped during her lifetime but that only 5 percent sought assistance or counseling. In particular, victims rarely reported spousal rape to authorities. Police actively investigated reports of rape and prosecuted offenders. The penalty for rape was one to 10 years in prison. There were 35 reported criminal acts of rape in the first half of the year, 40 reported criminal acts of sexual violence, 14 reported criminal acts of sexual abuse of the weak, and 149 criminal acts of sexual attack on a minor under the age of 15.

Although no accurate statistics were available, violence against women, including spousal abuse, occurred and was generally underreported. In the first half of the year, the police processed 3,422 cases of criminal acts against a spouse, a family member, and children (170 cases of kidnapping of minors, 1,337 cases of domestic violence, and 390 cases of parental negligence and child abuse). Police reported an increase in criminal acts of domestic violence, parental negligence, and child abuse, mainly due to changes in the law and improved expertise in responsible institutions. There were no laws specifically prohibiting domestic violence, however, and authorities prosecuted the crime using assault statutes, which provide for penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment in the case of aggravated and grievous bodily harm.

SOS Helpline estimated that 25 percent of women had experienced domestic violence. The NGOs SOS Helpline and Kljuc provided support hotlines, and SOS Helpline reported receiving 3,417 calls during the year. The government fully funded eight crisis centers for children and adolescents with a total of 68 beds, with one of those centers specializing in children who were six years old or less. The government also partially funded 29 shelters, safe houses, and maternity homes that offered 397 beds. Shelters, safe houses, and crisis centers specifically for women and children provided 258 beds in 19 locations, and maternity homes provided 139 beds in 10 locations. The government worked with NGOs on domestic violence cases, including providing shelters and social work centers. When police received reports of spousal abuse or violence, they generally intervened and prosecuted offenders. The police academy offered training on domestic violence.

The law prohibits sexual harassment in the entire workforce; however, it remained a widespread problem. Until the end of September, 16 criminal acts of sexual harassment were reported.

Couples and individuals have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children. They also have the information and means to do so free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. There was access at no cost to contraception and to skilled attendance during childbirth, including essential obstetric and postpartum care. The UN Population Fund estimated the 2008 maternal mortality rate at 18 deaths per 100,000 live births. Women were equally diagnosed and treated for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

The law provides for equal rights for women, and there is no official discrimination against women in family law, property law, or the judicial system. The Office of Equal Opportunities protected the legal rights of women. While the average length of unemployment was the same for men and women, women frequently held lower paying jobs. Women's earnings averaged 93 percent of those of men.

Children

Citizenship is derived from the parents with certain limitations. A child is granted Republic of Slovenia citizenship by birth provided that, upon birth, the child's mother and father are Slovenian citizens, upon birth, one of the child's parents is a Slovenian citizen and the child is born on the territory of the Republic of Slovenia, or upon birth, one of the child's parents is a Slovenian citizen while the other parent is unknown and/or of unknown citizenship, and the child is born in a foreign country. Naturalization is also possible. There were no reports of problems with immediate birth registration.

While education for children is compulsory through grade nine, school attendance and completion rates by Romani children remained low. Poverty, discrimination, lack of parental and familial permission or support, and language problems continued to be the main barriers to the participation of Romani children in education programs. AI reported that the Romani literacy rate was 10 percent. A number of Roma reported that their children attended segregated classes and that authorities selected them in disproportionate numbers to attend classes for students with special needs. The European Social Fund, working through the Ministry of Education, continued a program to fund 26 Romani educators to work with teachers and parents.

During the year the government implemented a bilingual primary school curriculum for Romani children developed in 2008. The government continued funding efforts to codify the Romani language.

Child abuse was a problem. During the year 201 criminal acts of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 15 were reported to authorities.

Child marriage occurred within the Romani community; however, it was not a widespread problem.

Trafficking in children, mainly teenage girls transiting the country, was a problem. The law provides special protection for children from exploitation and mistreatment, and the government generally enforced the law in practice.

The law penalizes the possession, sale, purchase, or propagation of child pornography. The law criminalizes statutory rape with a sentence of six months to five years, and sets the minimum age of consent for sexual relations at 15. If the victim is determined to be especially vulnerable, the sentence is set at a minimum of three years with no maximum. If the perpetrator is a teacher, the penalty is from one to eight years in prison.

The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information on international parental child abduction, please see the Department of State's annual report on compliance at http://travel.state.gov/abduction/resources/congressreport/congressreport_4308.html.

Anti-Semitism

There are approximately 300 Jews in the country. Jewish community representatives reported some prejudice, ignorance, and false stereotypes of Jews propagated within society, largely through public discourse. There were no reports of anti-Semitic violence or overt discrimination.

The government promoted antibias and tolerance education in the primary and secondary schools, and the Holocaust is a mandatory topic in the contemporary history curriculum. On January 27, Prime Minister Pahor attended "Shoah—We Remember," a memorial held in the country's only synagogue, which is located in Maribor. On September 5, the Jewish community, with the support of local government officials, held the fifth annual European Day of Jewish Culture

festival. President Turk was the honorary patron for the celebrations held in Ljubljana, Maribor, and Lendava.

Trafficking in Persons

For information on trafficking in persons, please see the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/g/tip.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other government services, and the government generally enforced these provisions in practice. The law mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities. The government implemented laws and programs to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to buildings, information, and communications, but modification of public and private structures to improve access continued at a slow pace, and many buildings were not accessible in practice. The Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs has primary responsibility for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law provides special rights and protections to indigenous Italian and Hungarian minorities, including the right to use their own national symbols and access to bilingual education. Each minority has the right for each to be represented as a community in parliament. Other minorities do not have comparable special rights and protections.

The government considered ethnic Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Kosovo Albanians, and Roma from Kosovo and Albania to be "new" minorities, and the special constitutional provisions for "autochthonous" (indigenous) minorities did not apply to them. The new minorities faced varying degrees of governmental and societal discrimination with respect to employment, housing, and education.

Many Roma lived apart from other communities in settlements that lacked such basic utilities as electricity, running water, sanitation, and access to transportation. According to Roma Association officials, 68 percent of Romani settlements were illegal. Organizations monitoring conditions in the Romani community have noted in recent years that Roma exclusion from the housing market was a problem and

that the unemployment rate among Roma reached 98 percent, and that illiteracy rates among Roma remain at 90 percent.

In March the government enacted a five-year national program of measures to improve educational opportunities, employment, and housing for the Roma. NGOs and community group representatives reported some prejudice, ignorance, and false stereotypes of Roma propagated within society, largely through public discourse. AI and the Roma Council reported that public school officials in Novo Mesto required Romani students to shower, using school facilities before classes, subjecting them to ridicule and humiliation.

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

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation; however, societal discrimination was widespread, and isolated cases of violence against homosexual persons occurred. Recent data on the problem's scope was not available. The NGO Society for the Integration of Homosexuals also reported that the police did not specify whether crimes were directed at homosexual persons, so hate crime data was unavailable.

On July 3, the 10th annual gay pride parade in Ljubljana took place with the support of local government officials, although there were reports that bystanders shouted homophobic slurs at participants and antigay graffiti and stickers were seen in various locations around the city. Organizers reported satisfactory police presence during the parade. One individual was assaulted prior to last year's gay pride parade, and in March three individuals were sentenced to 18 months in prison for the attack. At that sentencing, about 100 people in black masks gathered in front of the Ljubljana District Court to protest the "excessive punishment" of the attackers. The victim of the assault stated that the protesters were not friends of the accused, but rather associates of the extreme right.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

There were no reports of societal violence or discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Section 7 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law allows workers to form and join unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements, and workers exercised this right in practice.

All workers, including police and military personnel, are eligible to form and join labor organizations. Approximately 30 percent of the workforce was unionized.

The law provides for the right to strike without government interference, and workers exercised this right in practice. The law prohibits retaliation against strikers, and the government effectively enforced this provision in practice.

The law restricts the right of some public sector employees to strike, primarily the police and members of the military services, and provides for arbitration to ensure due process and protection of these workers' rights.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions and workers to conduct their activities without interference, and the government protected this right in practice. The law provides for the right to bargain collectively, and it was freely practiced; however, the law requires that 10 percent of the workers in an industry sector be union members before collective bargaining can be applied to the sector as a whole. Both general collective bargaining agreements and collective bargaining agreements that focused on a specific business segment covered all workers.

There were few reports of antiunion discrimination. During the year workers from the company Salonit Anhovo who became disabled from on-the-job contact with asbestos established a union, and the company immediately fired the union's first president, Stojko Simcic.

There are no special laws or exemptions from regular labor laws in the country's eight export economic zones and the one free customs zone at the port of Koper.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor; however, there were reports that such practices occurred. Women were trafficked for forced prostitution. Please see the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/g/tip.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

There are laws to protect children from exploitation in the workplace; the government effectively enforced these laws.

The minimum age for employment is 15; however, younger rural children often worked during the harvest season and performed other farm chores. The law limits working hours and sets occupational health and safety standards for children; the government effectively enforced these provisions in practice. Urban employers generally respected the age limits.

The Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs is responsible for monitoring labor practices and has inspection authority; police are responsible for investigating violations of the law. Enforcement practices were generally effective.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The national monthly gross minimum wage of approximately 734 euros (\$984) provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family. From September 27 to October 13, public employees, including police, held a strike to protest the salary freeze that the government introduced.

The law limits the workweek to 40 hours and provides for minimum annual leave of 20 days and a mandatory rest period of at least one day per week. Collective agreements regulated premium pay for overtime and were not standardized. The law limits maximum overtime to eight hours per week, 20 hours per month, and 170 hours per year. The Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs is responsible for monitoring labor practices and has inspection authority; police are responsible for investigating violations of the law. Authorities enforced the laws effectively, except in some cases involving migrant workers.

According to a complaint filed by the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (AFTUS) with the International Labor Organization (ILO) Committee of Experts, migrant workers were often orally notified to perform forced and excessive overtime in violation of labor law provisions limiting overtime and specifying methods to formally request it. The AFTUS also noted that foreign nationals in the country on employment permits were made more vulnerable to exploitation in terms of overtime, wages, rest periods, and annual leave by virtue of being tied to the employer who provided the permit.

According to the ILO's 2010 Report, inspectors also found numerous violations of the law with respect to migrant workers, especially in the construction industry, which employed approximately 50 percent of such workers. These workers came primarily from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro. Violations included the practice of employers' illegally trading foreign workers who were in the country on the basis of employment permits. The ILO and AFTUS also raised concerns that some migrant workers, especially seasonal laborers, lived in substandard housing conditions segregated from the national population and lacking minimum standards, in violation of the 2007 Principle of Equal Treatment Act.

The law requires employers to provide social security payments for all workers. The Legal Aid Society reported that employers of migrant workers sometimes did not deduct social security from paychecks, leaving unknowing workers without a future pension or access to social services.

Special commissions under the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs set standards for occupational health and safety for all workers. The ministry's Inspector General Department conducted more than 18,053 inspections in 2009, with 9,690 enforcement actions, including fines, prosecutions, and resolution of conditions resulting from those inspections. Workers had the legal right to remove themselves from dangerous work situations without jeopardy to their continued employment, and authorities effectively enforced this right.