

IRELAND

Ireland, with a population of approximately 4.1 million, is a multiparty parliamentary democracy with an executive branch headed by a prime minister, a bicameral parliament (Oireachtas), and a directly elected president. The country held free and fair parliamentary elections in 2007. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

During the year there were some reports of police abuse of authority and inadequate care for prisoners with mental disabilities. Domestic violence; mistreatment of children; trafficking in persons; and discrimination against racial minorities, immigrants, and Travellers were 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. The government actively cooperated with authorities of the United Kingdom in Northern Ireland in efforts to solve killings and disappearances, and to recover and identify remains related to the activities of armed political dissidents on both sides of the Ireland-Northern Ireland border.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

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

The law prohibits such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them. Reports by the ombudsman of the national police, which administers the prisons, as well as from the prison chaplain office found no incidents of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

Siochana (national police) Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) alleged 3,509 instances of incorrect behavior by the police, of which 1,178 were deemed

inadmissible. The GSOC also received 1,543 queries from the general public relating to the procedure for filing complaints. The largest number of allegations related to abuse of authority, followed by neglect of duty. Approximately 15 percent of the allegations were for nonfatal offenses against the person. The overall number of complaints and allegations against police officers decreased approximately 15-25 percent from the previous year.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

While prison conditions generally met international standards, there were some problems. The government allegedly inappropriately held some mentally ill prisoners in prisons rather than in mental health care facilities. The Irish Prison Service investigated the case of a mentally ill, homeless woman who was forcibly removed from prison despite saying she had nowhere to go.

Prison overcrowding was a problem. According to the 2009 Irish Prison Service annual report, prisons averaged a 95 percent occupancy rate, with several prisons exceeding their capacity.

Mountjoy Prison was built for 489 prisoners; the Inspector of Prisons has stated that it cannot safely accommodate more than 540 prisoners, but the stated “bed capacity” was 630. As of the end of July, it held 759 prisoners. There was structured activity for a maximum of 391 prisoners.

Vulnerable prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide were placed in safety observation cells for weeks at a time because there was no high-support unit at Mountjoy Prison, according to a report by the Mental Health Commission. The Mental Health Commission was concerned that observation cells were the only resources available to treat vulnerable prisoners at Mountjoy. The Mental Health Commission also criticized prison authorities for giving nursing staff the authority to place prisoners in cells without the standard four-hour review required at approved mental health facilities.

The Irish Prison Chaplains’ Annual Report criticized overcrowding at Limerick Prison, where, on July 23, there were 322 prisoners detained in a facility originally built for 185.

At times authorities held detainees awaiting trial in the same facilities as convicts. Although the country maintained facilities to provide for separation between

children and young adults, authorities held a small number of 17-year-olds with specific individual needs, including the need for higher security, with young adults.

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 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.

Human rights groups continued to criticize understaffing and poor infrastructure at the Central Mental Health Hospital in Dundrum, the country's only secure hospital for prisoners with mental disabilities.

The government permitted prison visits by domestic and international human rights observers, including the International Committee of the Red Cross. From January 25 to February 5, a delegation from the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) carried out a visit to prisons, detention centers, and psychiatric institutions in the county. The CPT's did not make the report on the visit by year's end.

The country does not have an ombudsman who can address such matters as alleviating overcrowding by offering alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders; monitoring the circumstances of confinement of juvenile offenders; and ensuring that prisoners do not serve beyond the maximum sentence for the charged offense by improving pretrial detention, bail, and recordkeeping procedures.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

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

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the national police and the army, which was authorized to act when necessary in support of the unarmed police. The government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces

during the year; however, there were isolated problems of abusive behavior, which the government investigated and punished.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention

An arrest requires a warrant except in situations requiring immediate action for the protection of the public. Authorities must inform detainees promptly of the charges against them and, with few exceptions, cannot hold them longer than 24 hours without charge. For crimes involving firearms, explosives, or membership in an unlawful organization, a judge may extend detention for an additional 24 hours upon the police superintendent's request. The law permits detention without charge for up to seven days in cases involving suspicion of drug trafficking; however, to hold such a suspect longer than 48 hours, police must seek a judge's approval.

Upon their arrest, the law permits detainees and prisoners prompt and unrestricted access to attorneys. If the detainee does not have an attorney, the court appoints one; for indigent detainees, the government provides. The law allows detainees prompt access to family members.

The law requires that authorities bring a detainee before a district court judge "as soon as possible" to determine bail status pending a hearing. The law allows a court to refuse bail to a person charged with a crime that carries a penalty of five years' imprisonment or more, or when deemed necessary to prevent the commission of another serious offense.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence in practice.

Trial Procedures

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

The director of public prosecutions prosecutes criminal cases. Courts generally used jury trials in criminal cases, and the accused may choose an attorney. Indigent defendants have the right to an attorney at public expense. Defendants enjoy the presumption of innocence and have the right to present evidence, question witnesses, and appeal.

The law explicitly allows "special courts" to be created when "ordinary courts are inadequate to secure the effective administration of justice and the preservation of public peace and order." A nonjury "special criminal court" tries all cases the director of public prosecutions certifies to be beyond the capabilities of an ordinary court. The judicial branch selects the three judges making up the special court, which usually includes one high court judge, one circuit court judge, and one district court judge. The panel reaches its verdicts by majority vote. The rules of evidence are generally the same as in regular courts, but the court accepts a sworn statement of a police chief superintendent identifying the accused as a member of an illegal organization as prima facie evidence of such membership. Special criminal court proceedings are generally public, but judges may exclude certain persons other than journalists. Both defendants and prosecutors may appeal special criminal court decisions to the court of criminal appeal.

The constitution allows the parliament to create tribunals, with limited powers, to investigate designated matters, usually cases of government corruption. They do not try cases; however, if warranted, their findings may be the basis for formal charges. In each instance, the legislation creating the tribunal sets out its powers and rules of procedure. Authorities established some tribunals to last indefinitely and established others only for a specific task.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Regional Human Rights Court Decisions

On September 10, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued a judgment in the case of *McFarland v. Ireland* that found that the state had violated articles 6 (right to a fair trial) and 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The ECHR ordered the government to pay the applicant, Brendan McFarlane, 5,500 euros (\$7,370) in non-pecuniary damages and 10,000 euros (\$13,400) in court costs.

The applicant, Brendan McFarlane, lodged the complaint on grounds of alleged false imprisonment related to his 1998 arrest for unlawful possession of firearms. McFarlane claimed that delayed proceedings and lack of access to certain evidence had deprived him of his right to a fair trial. His complaint to the European Court of Justice stated that because of delays, key evidence in his defense was lost.

The government has said that it intends to comply with the judgment, and has three months to pay the non-pecuniary damages.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The independent and impartial judicial system hears civil cases and appeals on civil matters, including damage claims resulting from human rights violations; such claims may be brought before all appropriate courts, including the Supreme Court.

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

The constitution prohibits 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 provides for freedom of speech, and the government generally respected this right in practice.

The constitution provides for freedom of the press with the qualification that it not "undermine public order or morality or the authority of the state." The constitution prohibits the publication or utterance of "blasphemous, seditious, or indecent" material. The law provides that a person can be found guilty of blasphemy if "he or she publishes or utters matter that is grossly abusive or insulting in relation to matters held sacred by any religion, thereby causing outrage among a substantial number of the adherents of that religion." The maximum penalty for this offense is a 25,000 euro (\$33,500) fine.

The law proscribes words or behaviors that are likely to generate hatred against persons in the country or elsewhere because of their race, nationality, religion, national origins, or sexual orientation. There were no reports that authorities invoked these provisions during the year.

The law empowers the government to prohibit the state-owned radio and television network from broadcasting any material "likely to promote or incite to crime or

which would tend to undermine the authority of the state." Authorities did not invoke this prohibition during the year.

The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without government restriction.

The Censorship of Publications Board has the authority to censor books and magazines it finds indecent or obscene. The board did not exercise this authority during the year.

The Irish Film Classification Office (IFCO) must classify films and videos before they can be shown or sold; it must cut or prohibit any film that is "indecent, obscene, or blasphemous" or which tends to "inculcate principles contrary to public morality or subversive of public morality." During the year the IFCO did not prohibit any films or videos.

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 e-mail. According to International Telecommunication Union statistics, during the year approximately 66 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 provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected this right. The law allows the state to "prevent or control meetings" that authorities believe would breach the peace or to be a danger or nuisance to the general public.

c. Freedom of Religion

For a complete description of religious freedom, please 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 laws 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 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 country's laws provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees.

A refugee in Irish law is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country..." The law provides that a social group can include membership of a trade union or a group of people whose defining characteristic is sexual orientation.

Refugee status is granted if an applicant meets the requirements set out in the above definition. If granted, this status provides protection against return to the person's country of origin or residence, and includes the right to family reunification of immediate family members. Recognized refugees are entitled to work or operate a business and to access medical, social welfare and education services on the same basis as Irish citizens. They are also provided with a residence permit.

In practice the government provided 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.

The government operated a resettlement program that accommodates up to 200 persons per year on referral from the UNHCR or identified through selection missions to existing UNHCR refugee operations.

There were no reports of discrimination against refugees, restrictions on their ability to work, or access to education and law enforcement.

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

The constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Observers reported that the 2007 parliamentary elections were free and fair. Political parties could operate without restriction or outside interference.

There were 22 women in the 166-seat house of representatives (Dail Eireann) and 12 women in the 60-seat senate (Seanad Eireann). The president of the republic was a woman, as were three of the 15 government ministers. There were five women on the 34-member High Court and two on the eight-member Supreme Court.

There were no minorities in the lower house, the senate, or the cabinet.

Section 4 Official Corruption and Government Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. During the year there were some allegations of government corruption; there were no confirmed reports of police corruption.

Public officials were subject to financial disclosure laws. The Revenue Commission in the Department of Finance is responsible for identifying and combating government corruption.

The law provides for public access to government information and requires government agencies to publish information on their activities and make such

information available to citizens, noncitizens, and foreign media upon request. Authorities generally granted public information requests and did not charge prohibitive fees. There were mechanisms for appealing denials.

There were no reports of any corporation based in or operating under the jurisdiction of Ireland that through illicit trade in natural resources, supported armed groups accused of committing abuses.

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 were cooperative and responsive to their views.

The country has an ombudsman for the press and a human rights commission.

The Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) was established under statute in 2000 to promote and protect those rights, liberties, and freedoms guaranteed under the constitution and under international agreements, treaties, and conventions to which the country is a party for all persons living or present in Ireland.

The IHRC fulfills its statutory mandate by:

- Promoting awareness about human rights
- Promoting and providing human rights education and training
- Recommending to government how human rights standards should be reflected in legislation, policy, and practice
- Promoting debate around human rights issues as part of the legislative process
- Appearing before the High Court and Supreme Court to assist the courts with the interpretation of human rights standards in specific cases
- Carrying out inquiries into human rights concerns
- Publishing and promoting research and reports on human rights

Section 6 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership in the Traveller community, and the government sought to enforce the law; however, discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities, including immigrants and Travellers, remained a problem.

Women

The law criminalizes rape, including rape within marriage, and the government enforced it. The law provides for free legal advice to victims of serious sexual assault. There were 2,250 sexual offenses reported to authorities, including 436 rapes. The police and judicial authorities showed no reluctance to investigate and prosecute rape or sexual assaults. Most of the persons convicted received prison sentences of between five and 12 years.

The law criminalizes domestic violence, but such violence continued to be a problem. The law authorizes prosecution of a violent family member and provides victims with safety orders that prohibit a person from engaging in violent actions or threats and orders that bar an offender from entering the family home for up to three years. Victims may apply for interim protection while courts process their cases. Violations of these orders are punishable by a fine of up to 1,900 euros (\$2,546).

The police have the power to arrest and prosecute any person for illegal violent acts, including those committed against a family member. Under the law there are two main kinds of protection available: a safety order and a barring order.

A safety order is an order of the court prohibiting the violent person from further violence or threats of violence. A barring order is an order requiring the violent person to leave the family home, to refrain from further violence or threats of violence, and not to come into the close proximity of the family home.

There were over 14,000 incidents of domestic violence disclosed to the Women's Aid Helpline. These included 8,629 incidents of emotional abuse, 3,479 incidents of physical abuse, and 1,679 incidents of financial abuse.

The government funded centers throughout the country for victims of domestic abuse. Several NGOs complained about a lack of bed spaces in domestic refuge shelters.

The law obliges employers to prevent sexual harassment and prohibits dismissing an employee for making a complaint of sexual harassment. The Equality Authority investigates claims of unfair dismissal and may require an employer to reinstate the employee or pay the employee up to 104 weeks' pay. Authorities effectively enforced the law in the cases of reported sexual harassment.

Couples and individuals have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. Women had access to contraception and skilled attendance during childbirth. According to information compiled by international organizations, the maternal mortality rate in 2009 was approximately three deaths per 100,000 live births. The neonatal mortality rate was approximately four deaths per 1,000 live births. Women were not subject to coercive family planning. Men and women were diagnosed and treated equally for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. There are no legal barriers that prevent women from taking advantage of these services.

Women enjoy the same legal rights as men, including rights under family law, property law, and in the judicial system. However, inequalities in pay and promotions persisted in both the public and private sectors. The average earnings of a woman were 78 percent of those of a man doing similar work. Women constituted 43 percent of the labor force but were underrepresented in senior management positions.

Children

A person born on the island of Ireland, including Northern Ireland, after January 1, 2005 is automatically an Irish citizen if at least one parent is an Irish citizen, a British citizen, a resident of either the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland entitled to reside in either without time limit, or a legal resident of the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland for three out of the four years preceding the child's birth (excluding time spent as a student or an asylum seeker).

In 2009 the Dublin Rape Crisis Center reported that 52.8 percent of the calls to its crisis line involved child sexual abuse. The law requires government health boards to identify and help children who are not receiving adequate care and gives police the authority to remove children from the family if there is an immediate and serious risk to their health or welfare.

Unaccompanied minors entering the country continued to be a matter of concern. During the year, 11 unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the country went missing from government care, according to figures released by the Health Service Executive. The missing children are all under 18 years old and arrived in the country without parents or guardians. Six of the 11 children were later found. Unaccompanied children who seek asylum are considered vulnerable to exploitation because they do not have parents or guardians in the country.

Numerous NGOs offered support for abuse victims, as well as resources for parents and professionals who work with children. The construction of a national children's hospital in Dublin was delayed because of budgetary constraints.

The Ombudsman for Children investigates complaints from children or persons acting on their behalf against various governmental and nongovernmental bodies and promotes child welfare. The ombudsman provides an independent complaints handling service in regard to public bodies, as well as promoting children's rights through participation and communication activities.

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 on compliance at http://travel.state.gov/abduction/resources/congressreport/congressreport_4308.htm as well as country-specific information at http://travel.state.gov/abduction/country/country_3781.html.

Anti-Semitism

According to the 2006 census, the Jewish community numbered 1,930 persons. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts during the year.

In August an anti-Semitic Facebook site was taken down by the company. The name of the site was "The Invasion of Jews in Midleton" and contained negative anti-Semitic stereotypes and jokes about the Holocaust. Representatives of the Jewish community reported being saddened and startled by the incident.

There were no developments and none were expected in the cases of the 2008 anti-Semitic voice message left on the answering machine of the Dublin Hebrew Congregation or the May 2008 painting of anti-Semitic slogans and a swastika on the home of a Jewish couple in Tuam.

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, and the provision of other state services or other areas; and the government effectively enforced these provisions. The government effectively implemented laws and programs to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to buildings, information, and communications. The government does not restrict the right of persons with disabilities to vote or participate in civic affairs. The National Disability Authority has responsibility for setting and implementing disability standards, as well as directing disability policy.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law prohibits discrimination based on language or social status, and the government enforced the law; however, societal discrimination and violence against immigrants, and racial and ethnic minorities continued to be a problem.

There were racially motivated incidents involving physical violence, intimidation, graffiti, and verbal slurs. NGOs reported problems with landlords refusing to rent property to immigrants who were not born in Ireland. NGOs also reported that immigrants, particularly Africans, suffered unemployment disproportionately during the economic downturn.

According to the 2006 census, 22,369 persons identified themselves as members of an indigenous nomadic group called "Travellers," with a distinct history and culture. The government recognizes Travellers as a social group rather than a distinct ethnic group. Travellers faced societal discrimination and were denied access to premises, goods, facilities, and services, despite applicable antidiscrimination laws and longstanding government policies to redress imbalances.

Despite national regulations, Travellers frequently experienced difficulties enrolling their children in school. Of the estimated 5,000 Traveller families, approximately 1,000 lived at sites without electricity or sanitary facilities. Many

Travellers depended on social welfare for survival, and their participation in the economy was limited by discrimination and lack of education.

The law obliges local officials to develop accommodations for Travellers and to solicit Traveller input into the process. Traveller NGOs asserted that many communities provided Travellers with housing, such as government-owned apartments or townhouses, which was inconsistent with the nomadic Traveller lifestyle, or provided transient caravan-camping sites that did not include basic amenities such as sanitary facilities, electricity, and water.

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

Most cities and many towns celebrated gay pride with parades and festivals. The government endorsed these activities and provided sufficient protection.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

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

Section 7 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law provides workers with the right to form and join independent unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements, and these rights were respected in practice. Approximately 33 percent of workers in the private sector and 95 percent in the public sector were unionized. Among foreign-owned firms, an estimated 80 percent of workers did not belong to unions, although pay and benefits were usually more attractive compared with domestic firms. Police and military personnel may form associations, but technically not unions, to represent them in matters of pay, working conditions, and general welfare. The law allows unions to conduct their activities without government interference, and this right was exercised in practice. The law provides for the right to strike, except for police and military personnel, and workers exercised this right in both the public and private sectors.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Labor unions have the right to pursue collective bargaining and in most instances did so freely; however, the law did not require employers to engage in collective bargaining, and they did not encourage it.

There were no reports of antiunion discrimination.

There are no special laws or exemptions from regular labor laws in the export processing zone at the Shannon airport.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that such practices occurred. NGOs reported that men and women were trafficked into the country for work in the construction industry, commercial fishing, as domestic servants in private homes, or in agriculture. Trafficked women and girls were forced into prostitution. NGOs believed a number of Romani children have been trafficked for the purpose of forced begging; however, given the difficulty in understanding Romani family structures, they could not confirm that the children were not with a natural parent. Officials asserted that while trafficking and labor exploitation occurred, the magnitude of the problem was small.

The government partnered with the International Labor Organization in its antitrafficking initiative and formed a labor exploitation working group involving members from trade unions and employer organizations.

Also 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

The government implemented laws and policies to protect children from exploitation in the workplace, and the government effectively enforced these laws. Children were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and work in restaurants and domestic service. Also see the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/g/tip.

Under the law, employers may not hire children under the age of 16 in a regular, full-time job. Employers may hire 14- or 15-year-olds for light work on school holidays as part of an approved work experience or educational program.

Employers may hire children over the age of 15 on a part-time basis during the school year. The law establishes rest intervals and maximum working hours, prohibits the employment of 18-year-olds for late night work, and requires employers to keep detailed records on workers under 18 years of age. The Office of the Labor Inspectorate at the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment is responsible for enforcement and was generally effective.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The national minimum hourly wage, which was 8.65 euros (\$11.60) for most of the reporting period, was reduced to 7.65 euros (\$10.25) in December as a budgetary austerity measure. Low-income families were entitled to such benefits as subsidized housing, medical coverage, and children's allowances to compensate for low wages. Legally resident foreign migrant workers are also eligible for this type of assistance. During the year reports persisted that the pay of foreign migrant workers was at times below the minimum wage, particularly in the rural agricultural and construction sectors. Laws establishing and regulating wage levels do not explicitly cover foreign migrant workers.

The government operated a labor-monitoring agency independent of the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment. The agency was active and effective.

The standard workweek is 39 hours. The law limits working hours in the industrial sector to nine hours per day and 48 hours per week. The law limits overtime work to two hours per day, 12 hours per week, and 240 hours per year. The government effectively enforced these standards. Although there is no statutory entitlement, premium pay for overtime could be arranged between employer and employee.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment is responsible for enforcing occupational safety laws, and these laws provided adequate and comprehensive protection. There were no complaints from either labor or management during the year regarding shortcomings in enforcement. Regulations provide workers with the right to remove themselves from dangerous work situations that present a "serious, imminent, and unavoidable risk" without jeopardy to their continued employment, and authorities effectively enforced this right.