U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Slovenia

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2007
Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
March 11, 2008

Slovenia is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional republic of approximately two million persons. 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 November 11, the country elected Danilo Turk president in a free and fair election. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. There were reports of trial delays, indirect government influence on the media, and cursory procedures for review of asylum applications. Societal violence against women, trafficking in women and girls, discrimination and violence against Roma and homosexuals, 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; on rare occasions police used excessive force such as kicks, punches, and shoves during arrest.

On January 9, a police commission investigating a report of minor injuries to three persons in a scuffle with police during November 2006 protests in Ambrus determined that the police used compulsory measures that were in "accordance with legislation and the principal of necessity" to the threat presented by the local residents. Authorities sent 100 special police to Ambrus after local residents blocked roads to prevent the return of the Strojan family, a Romani family who had occupied land in the village for some years and had been sheltered in another town due to tensions with local residents.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions generally met international standards, and the government permitted visits by independent human rights observers. A delegation of the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) visited the country's prisons and detention facilities in January and February 2006; the CPT had not published the delegation's findings by year's end.

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 and exercises special inspectorial authority in monitoring police performance, with an emphasis on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The police provided effective law enforcement.

During the year the independent commission for the prevention of corruption referred eight credible reports of police corruption to police and the state prosecutor for further investigation. No credible reports of prosecutorial corruption were reported.

The law provides procedures for the review of alleged police abuse by a three-person government committee that includes two representatives of civil society organizations. The committee does not have authority to conduct independent investigations, and it relied on information provided by ministry of interior or police investigators. Committee findings were usually forwarded to the state prosecutor's office and published; cooperation between the committee and the state prosecutor's office reportedly increased during the year.

In January the parliament passed legislation that established a new judicial police branch to investigate allegations of misconduct by police, prosecutors, and judges. The government began implementing the new system on November 1.

Arrest and Detention

Persons taken into police custody were generally apprehended openly with evidential warrants issued by either a prosecutor or judge. Persons can be detained for 48 hours before charges are brought. 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 provides indigent detainees with free counsel, and detainees were generally allowed prompt access to family members. The law also provides safeguards against self-incrimination.

Once charges are brought, pretrial detention may last for up to four months, depending on the severity of the criminal act, and must be certified by an investigative judge. Once trial procedures have begun, the total period of detention may be extended for up to two years. Persons detained more than two years while awaiting trial or while

their trial is ongoing must be released pending conclusion of their trial. Lengthy pretrial detention was not a widespread problem, and defendants generally were released 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; however, court backlogs sometimes resulted in lengthy delays in trials. Following more than 100 judgments by the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) against the government in 2006 for violating the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms due to excessive court delays and the denial of effective remedy, in April 2006 the government adopted a law on the right to a trial without undue delay, which came into force on January 1. In a May 3 decision, the ECHR stated that the new law provides for efficient legal remedies for the protection of the right to a trial within a reasonable period of time. As part of its ongoing project to eliminate backlogs, which totaled 568,982 cases as of June 30, the Ministry of Justice hired 125 additional judges and court clerks during the year.

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; as a result, the judicial process frequently was protracted. In many cases during the year, criminal trials lasted from two to five years.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The constitution and law provide for an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters. As with criminal matters, court backlogs sometimes resulted in lengthy trials.

Property Restitution

As of June 30, the government had resolved 37,776, or 95.4 percent, of the 39,617 property restitution claims that have been filed with authorities. Unresolved cases included those in which the courts had not reached a final decision and those pending appeal. Court backlogs, a lack of trained judicial and administrative personnel, amendments to the Denationalization Act, and inadequate land ownership records slowed claims processing. Some claimants have complained of a general lack of transparency, bias, and potential conflicts of interest on the part of adjudicators, and procedures that were inconsistent with the law. An effort to initiate a program for the restitution of Jewish communal property has encountered a number of delays.

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; however, there were reports of indirect government influence on the media.

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 criminal charges were brought against 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. The major print media were supported through private investment and advertising; however, the government owned substantial stock in many companies that were shareholders in the major media houses. There were reports that indirect political and economic pressures and partial government ownership of media companies influenced journalists and the media, and that self-censorship was practiced in some media outlets.

On August 31, the International Press Institute (IPI) issued a statement expressing concern that the government used business relationships and share holdings as leverage to induce independent media organizations to publish favorable news reports. Managers reportedly protected their own interests and the interests of those in government with whom they were affiliated.

In late September, hundreds of Slovenian journalists signed a petition that was distributed to international organizations, embassies, and international media houses. The petition accused the government of restricting media freedom through direct and indirect political and economic pressures and partial government ownership of media companies. On October 1, several editors and journalists published a letter that contradicted the petition. The letter asserted that the level of government influence in the media had not changed in recent years, but rather that journalists no longer found themselves in political agreement with the governing coalition. On October 12, the government issued a statement denying any undue influence over the media. The government stated that it does not have a significant ownership share in media institutions and has no means to leverage editorial decisions. On November 22, the European Federation of Journalists, Journalists Without Borders, and the IPI called on the government to establish an independent commission to investigate charges of government influence on the media. As of year's end, the government had not established a commission.

The 2006 Act on Media created a "media pluralization" fund to ensure that media reflected a greater diversity of viewpoints. Some media watchdog groups reported that a disproportionate level of pluralization funds have gone to Catholic Church media and media outlets favorably disposed towards the government.

In July 2006 several journalists covering a demonstration reported that police used excessive force against them, including pushing and shoving. In October 2006 a government investigatory panel found the subsequent complaint filed by the journalists to be justified but did not conclude that the journalists had been prevented from carrying out their work. The government did not reprimand the officers involved or take other corrective action.

The law provides criminal penalties for defamation that harms a person's honor or name, and one person was given a three-month prison sentence during the year. In 2006 the International Helsinki Federation called on the country to abolish "criminal defamation laws establishing prison sentences for those who have harmed a person's honor or name." The Constitutional Court ruled in 1999 that the law is consistent with the constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights.

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, and nearly one-half of citizens used the Internet at least once a month.

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

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respected this right in practice.

While there are no governmental restrictions on the Muslim community's freedom of worship, services were commonly held in private homes for lack of a larger venue. Although the city of Ljubljana worked actively with the Muslim community to establish a mosque, at year's end construction on a new site had not begun.

On July 9, the justice minister, who was the chair of the government Commission for Religious Communities, and Mufti Nedzad Grabus signed an agreement that acknowledges the Muslim community as an integral part of Slovenian society, more clearly defines the areas of its activities, and facilitates the implementation of its programs. It also gives the Muslim community the right to establish its own media and educational institutions, the right to preserve historical and cultural heritage, the right to conduct religious services in hospitals and for army and police forces, and places Muslim charities on equal footing with other charities.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

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 September 2, the Jewish community, supported by local government officials, held the second annual European Day of Jewish Culture festival, which was attended by the country's president and received broad media coverage.

For a more detailed discussion, see the *2007 International Religious Freedom Report*.

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

The constitution and law provide for these rights, and the government generally respected them in practice. 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 in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice the government provided some protection against refoulement, the return of persons to a country where there is reason to believe they feared persecution. During the year the government received 395 requests for refugee status or asylum and granted refugee status or asylum in nine cases.

During the year the government did not provide temporary protection to persons who may not have qualified as refugees under the 1951 convention or the 1967 protocol.

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 and asylum seekers.

In February 2006 the National Assembly amended the government's asylum procedures to allow border police to perform an initial screen of asylum seekers and to reject applications they deem to be "manifestly unfounded." The procedures could prevent the applications of some asylum seekers from receiving a thorough review. The law restricts refugees' ability to work in the country for one year. In December 2006 the Constitutional Court ruled that asylum seekers should be allowed to change their asylum application if there were considerable changes in their circumstances.

The law provides asylum seekers with the right to appeal decisions on their applications, but many asylum seekers were not informed of this right. The independent ombudsman for human rights, the UNHCR, and several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported that the government put excessive restrictions on refugees' freedom of movement by requiring asylum seekers to sign a statement renouncing their claim to asylum if they left the premises of the asylum center.

On December 21, the Law on International Protection came into force. The law is intended to bring the country into compliance with European Union asylum directives. However, the UNCHR, Amnesty International (AI), and other NGOs 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.

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

The constitution and law provide citizens 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 21, the country held the first round of free and fair presidential elections. A free and fair second round of voting on November 11 resulted in the election of Danilo Turk as president.

Political parties operated without restriction or outside interference.

There were 11 women in the 90-seat National Assembly and three women in the 40-seat National Council. There were three women in the 17−member cabinet.

There were two members of minority groups in the 90-seat National Assembly and none in the 40-seat National Council or in the cabinet. The constitution provides the

"autochthonous" (indigenous) Italian and Hungarian minorities the right, as a community, to have at least one representative in the parliament. However, the law does not provide such rights to any other minority group.

Twenty distinct Romani communities, each designated autochthonous at the local level, are entitled to a seat on their local municipal council. At year's end, one municipality--Grosuplje--remained in noncompliance with this law for a second straight year. Although both the government office of nationalities and the Romani community submitted proposals to freeze the municipality's budget until it complied with the law, the government had not taken any action on the proposals before year's end.

Government Corruption and Transparency

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

Corruption was perceived by the public to be a widespread problem. Only the highest-level government officials--approximately 5,000 of the country's 80,000 public servants--are subject to financial disclosure laws. The independent Commission for the Prevention of Corruption received 595 cases of suspected corruption and found 118 out of the 327 cases that were assessed during the year to be credible. The remaining cases were not assessed by year's end.

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. In April 2006 the Constitutional Court stayed legislation adopted two months earlier that would have terminated the commission and replaced it with a parliamentary anticorruption commission. The commission continued to operate during the year, but reported that its funding had consistently been reduced over the previous three years. During the year the commission forwarded 150 suspected cases of corruption to police and prosecutors and 84 cases to other state institutions, including cases received in 2006 but not processed until the next year.

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 that, while the overall number of complaints it received declined, the number of complaints related to the nonresponsiveness of state institutions increased. During the year the office received 221 complaints about nonresponsiveness of state institutions and 121 complaints under the Law on Access to Public Information, and publicly called on government ministries to cooperate more transparently.

Section 4 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, although some human rights groups complained of lengthy delays in government responses.

Section 5 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 provisions in practice. However, violence against women and children, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against homosexuals and Roma were problems.

Women

Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal; however, it was a problem. AI and SOS Phone, an 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. Spousal rape, in particular, was rarely reported to authorities. Police actively investigated reports of rape and prosecuted offenders. The penalty for rape was one to 10 years in prison. During the year there were 41 criminal acts of rape, 32 criminal acts of sexual violence, 14 criminal acts of sexual abuse of the weak, and 115 criminal acts of sexual attack on a minor under the age of 15 reported to authorities.

Although no accurate statistics were available, violence against women, including spousal abuse, occurred and was generally underreported. Although domestic violence is not specifically prohibited by law, it could be prosecuted under statutes criminalizing assault, which provide for penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment in the case of aggravated and grievous bodily harm. SOS Phone estimated that 25 percent of women had experienced domestic violence. In 2005 the UN Human Rights Committee announced its concern about the high rate of domestic violence and the lack of specific legal provisions and government programs to address the problem. The government partially funded 19 shelters or safe houses for battered women, (12 run by NGOs and seven by government organizations) that offered 305 total beds. Some domestic violence victims also sought assistance at maternity homes and social work centers, although staff at these locations were not always trained to work with victims of violence. When police received reports of spousal abuse or violence, they generally intervened and prosecuted offenders. The NGOs SOS Phone and Kljuc provided support hot lines, and SOS Phone reported receiving approximately 5,000 calls during the year. The police academy offered training on domestic violence. The 2006 Council of Europe report, *Combating Violence Against Women*, stated that the country had trained nursing staff in all hospitals to screen patients for domestic violence.

Prostitution is illegal, but the government did not actively enforce this prohibition. Antitrafficking authorities and NGOs informally estimated that as many as 80 bars and clubs across the country could be engaged in facilitating or promoting prostitution.

Sexual harassment remained a widespread problem. The law explicitly prohibits sexual harassment in the civil service, but not for the overall workforce. However, authorities could prosecute harassment under a provision of the criminal code prohibiting violation of sexual integrity through abuse of office; 22 criminal acts were reported during the year.

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 protects the legal rights of women. While the average length of unemployment was the same for men and women, women frequently held lower paying jobs. On average, women's earnings were 90 percent of those of men.

Children

The government was committed to protecting children's rights and welfare.

The government provides compulsory, free, and universal education for children through grade nine and up to four additional years of free, voluntary secondary school education. The Ministry of Education reported an attendance rate of nearly 100 percent of school−age children, with most children completing secondary school.

On October 1, the Center for Social Work Grosuplje, the Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs, and the retail company Mercator opened a safe house for children. The "Palcica" safe house provides shelter for children up to the age of six who are victims of domestic violence or whose parents have died suddenly.

A November 2006 AI report noted that Romani children were enrolled in 40 nursery schools throughout the country, but that school attendance varied widely by region

(39 percent of Romani children attend school in the southeastern Dolenjska region and 70 percent attend school in the northeastern Prekmurje region). Poverty, discrimination, and language 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 were selected by authorities in disproportionate numbers to attend classes for students with special needs. In 2004 the government provided funding for a regional program to desegregate and expand Romani education by training Romani educational facilitators and creating special enrichment programs in public kindergartens. Other school districts hired Romani facilitators at their own initiative and expense. A March 2006 report by the Council of Europe commissioner for human rights noted that de facto segregation continued to exist in the Brsljin school district in Novo Mesto. Education authorities were evaluating Brsljin's program.

The government has not developed a bilingual curriculum for Roma on the grounds that there is not a standardized Romani language. However, the government was currently funding research into codifying the language. Romani assistants worked in some schools, although many schools were unable to hire Roma coordinators, a higher-level position, due to administrative impediments.

Child abuse was a problem. During the year there were 115 criminal acts of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 15 reported to authorities. The law provides special protection for children from exploitation and mistreatment, and the government generally enforced the law in practice. The law criminalizes the sale, purchase, and propagation of child pornography.

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

Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits trafficking in persons. Slovenia is primarily a transit country for internationally trafficked victims. To a lesser extent, it is also a destination country and, almost negligibly, a country of origin.

A September 2006 Peace Institute study reported that, although the majority of trafficking victims were transiting from Southern, Eastern, and Central Europe through Slovenia, it was a source country for trafficking to countries such as Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and Germany. The study reported that victims were trafficked primarily for sexual exploitation and that traffickers lured victims through advertisements promising high wages, marriage, employment as entertainers and dancers, and employment without indication that it would involve the sex industry. Organized criminal groups, nightclub owners, and local pimps were primarily responsible for trafficking. Those at particular risk of being trafficked were teenage girls and young women who lived in impoverished areas with high unemployment. Many of these women were unaware of the trafficking problem and the risk that they might become trafficking victims.

Penalties for trafficking range from one to 10 years imprisonment. Authorities can also prosecute persons for rape, pimping, procurement of sexual acts, inducement to prostitution, sexual assault, slavery, and other related offenses.

The government apprehended, investigated, and prosecuted traffickers under a 2004 law criminalizing trafficking. Police investigated three cases of human trafficking and five cases of forced prostitution, and found four victims of forced prostitution and nine victims of human trafficking. During the year there were 13 criminal acts of trafficking reported to authorities. There were four trafficking convictions during the year for crimes committed in previous years. Regional police directorates had departments that investigated trafficking and organized crime. One prosecutor in each regional state prosecutor's office was dedicated to trafficking cases.

During the year the government continued to actively cooperate with NGOs and Interpol in project "Red Routes" by sharing information about traffickers and patterns of illegal migration. The Ministry of Interior Border Police Division also actively participated in Plan ILAEIRA, a Greek-led international transborder police cooperation project to combat trafficking. The government did not extradite any persons who were accused of trafficking in other countries.

The government's national coordinator for trafficking in persons served as the head of the interagency working group on trafficking in persons, which is responsible for the government's long-term national strategy to combat trafficking. The working group consisted of representatives of ministries, NGOs, international organizations, and the media, and met more than six times during the year. In June the group established a 2008-09 action plan against trafficking that included trafficking legislation, prevention, prosecution, victims' assistance, and projects.

The NGOs Karitas and Kljuc provided shelter and assistance to trafficking victims under a contract with the Ministry of Labor. Karitas provided short-term emergency housing, transportation, translation services, and counseling for victims. Kljuc organized programs for prevention, education, detection, prosecution, and long-term reintegration of trafficking victims.

The Ministry of Interior, the UNHCR, Kljuc, and the NGO Filantropia jointly administered a project that addressed trafficking and gender−based violence by providing information and assistance to asylum seekers at greatest risk of being trafficked, particularly single women and children separated from their parents. The project provided information to trafficking victims, who were identified during asylum procedures, on how they could find specialized assistance and protection. At-risk asylum seekers received a book with trafficking information and assistance contacts throughout Europe.

The government also continued the "Vijolica" and "CAP" programs, administered by Kljuc, to provide trafficking awareness classes for elementary and secondary school students.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical 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. Modification of public and private structures to improve access for persons with disabilities continued at a slow pace, and many buildings were not accessible in practice. The Ministry for Labor, Family, and Social Affairs has primary responsibility for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. In February 2006 the ministry established a working group to implement national guidelines for improving access to buildings, information, and communications for persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law provides special rights and protections to "autochthonous" (indigenous) Italian and Hungarian minorities, including the right to use their own national symbols and have bilingual education and the right for each to be represented as a community in parliament (see section 3). Other minorities do not have comparable special rights and protections.

Ethnic Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Kosovar Albanians, and Roma from Kosovo and Albania were considered "new" minorities; they were not protected by the special constitutional provisions for autochthonous minorities and faced some governmental and societal discrimination with respect to employment, housing, and education. A 2005 report by the UN Human Rights Committee and a November 2006 AI report noted that the Roma continue to suffer prejudice and discrimination, in particular with access to health services, education, and employment.

While implementation of the November 2006 law on protection of the Romani community resulted in the establishment of the Roma Council and the legalization of nearly 40 Romani settlements, some Roma and NGOs working with Romani communities reported that the new regulations are too abstract and have had little practical effect on average Roma. AI expressed concern that the law neglects to address the lack of social services available to Roma. Implementation of the law's plan to place advisors in employment service offices has also met with difficulties due to the absence of these positions from the national employment register, resulting in an administrative impediment to the hiring of qualified individuals.

In a 2006 report the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights expressed concern that discriminatory attitudes and practices against Roma persisted and that the distinction between "indigenous" Roma and "new" Roma could give rise to new discrimination. The report also cited the committee's concern that "nonindigenous" Roma do not enjoy protection of their cultural rights, such as education in their mother tongue, unlike members of other minorities who enjoy this right under bilateral international agreements.

Many Roma lived in settlements, apart from other communities, that lacked such basic utilities as electricity, running water, and sanitation, as well as access to transportation. According to government officials, 65 percent of the approximately 100 Romani settlements are illegal, and Roma reported that discrimination in employment complicated their housing situation. 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 was approximately 90 percent.

In October 2006 approximately 30 members of a Romani family living near the village of Ambrus left their homestead with assistance from government officials as the result of intense pressure from the local community, and temporarily relocated to a former army barracks in Postojna, which the government had improved to meet basic living standards. The government condemned the family's home in Ambrus because of illegal construction and demolished it in December 2006. The family has been subsequently housed by the government at a temporary location. On December 27, the minister of environment and spatial planning and the legal representative of the family signed an agreement that provides new land and housing for the family.

Human rights NGOs estimated that there are approximately 4,000 to 6,000 persons without legal status in the country as the result of the government's February 1992 erasure of the names of approximately 18,000 persons from the register of permanent residents. These persons were mostly Yugoslav citizens residing in the country at the time of independence who did not apply for citizenship in 1991–92. The deletion of these records has been characterized by some as an administrative decision and by others as a politically motivated act, based on a desire to exclude former Yugoslav nationals who did not actively seek Slovenian citizenship. Some of those affected complained that they had been legal residents at the time of the deletions and therefore saw no need to apply for citizenship. Others stated that they were not properly informed of the requirement to apply for citizenship. The deletion of records resulted in a loss of legal status and, as a consequence, the loss of housing, employment, health insurance, pension rights, and access to higher education for some.

In 2003 the Constitutional Court ruled portions of a law governing the legal status of former Yugoslav citizens to be unconstitutional because the law neither recognized the full period in which "erased" persons resided in the country nor provided them the opportunity to apply for permanent residency. At year's end the government had not completed legislation to resolve the court's concerns.

In July 2006 a group of 11 "erased" persons filed a complaint with the ECHR claiming several violations of their rights, including discriminatory treatment, denial of social benefits, a loss of legal status, and the lack of effective legal remedy due to the government's failure to implement the constitutional court ruling. In a 2006 report, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights urged the government to restore the status of permanent resident to all individuals concerned to allow them to reclaim access to social services, education, and employment.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation; however, societal discrimination was widespread, and isolated cases of violence against homosexuals occurred. Recent data on the problem's scope was not available. A 2004 Peace Institute poll of members of the gay and lesbian community found that 53 percent of respondents had experienced verbal, sexual, or physical harassment because of their sexual orientation. More recent polling data was not available.

On June 30, the seventh 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. However, at a gay pride event that evening, four persons attacked a gay man who subsequently required hospitalization. Police responded immediately and reported the assault as a homophobic attack, but were unable to locate the attacker. Gay pride activists reported that, despite being notified of the attack, the Slovene Press Agency did not report the assault.

In July 2006 a law legalizing homosexual civil unions came into force. Gay activists, however, filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court in November 2006 claiming that the law does not afford the same social, family, and inheritance rights as those granted to heterosexual married couples. The court had not issued a ruling on the complaint by year's end.

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

Section 6 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, except police and military personnel, are eligible to form and join labor organizations. Approximately 35 percent of the workforce was unionized.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions 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. All workers were covered by either a general collective bargaining agreement or a collective bargaining agreement that focused on a specific business segment.

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

There are no special laws or exemptions from regular labor laws in the country's sole export processing zone at Koper.

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.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

There are laws and policies to protect children from exploitation in the workplace and to set forth acceptable working conditions; the government effectively implemented and enforced these laws and policies in practice.

The minimum age for employment is 15; however, younger rural children often worked during the harvest season and on 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.

Trafficking in children for sexual exploitation was a problem.

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 minimum wage of approximately $785 (538 euros) provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family. 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. Premium pay for overtime was regulated by collective agreements and was not standardized, and maximum overtime was limited to eight hours per week, 20 hours per month, and 180 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. The laws were enforced effectively.

Special commissions under the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs set and enforced standards for occupational health and safety. Workers had the legal right to remove themselves from dangerous work situations without jeopardy to their continued employment; however, it was not clear to what extent they could do so in practice.

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