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Cyprus

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Since 1974 the southern part of Cyprus has been under the control of the government of the Republic of Cyprus (ROC), while the northern part, administered by Turkish Cypriots, proclaimed itself the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)" in 1983. The United States does not recognize the "TRNC," nor does any country other than Turkey. A substantial number of Turkish troops remain on the island. A buffer zone, or "green line," patrolled by the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) separates the two parts.

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

The Republic of Cyprus is a constitutional republic and multiparty presidential democracy. The area under control of the government has approximately 786,800 inhabitants. In May 2006, 56 representatives were elected to the 80-seat Vouli Antiprosopon (House of Representatives) in free and fair elections. This election marked the first time since 1963 that Turkish Cypriots residing in the government-controlled area were permitted to vote in elections and run for office. President Tassos Papadopoulos was elected in 2003 in free and fair elections. Civilian authorities 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 some reports of police abuse and degrading treatment of persons in police custody and of asylum seekers. Violence against women, including spousal abuse, was common, and there were several incidents of violence against children reported. There were some incidents of discrimination against members of minority ethnic and national groups. Trafficking of women to the island, particularly for sexual exploitation, continued to be a problem.

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 during the year.

In 2005 the chief of police reported that the 2005 killing by the police of a Syrian asylum seeker was in self-defense. An independent investigation of the incident was completed during the year, and the Attorney General's Office was reviewing the outcome at year's end. The coroner's investigation was ongoing at year's end.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

The government participated in the autonomous, tripartite (UN, Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot) UN Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) in Cyprus as part of its continuing efforts to account for persons missing as a result of the intercommunal violence in 1963–64 and the conflict in 1974.

In August 2006 the CMP launched its project to exhume, identify, and return remains. As of December the CMP identified and returned to their families for burial the remains of 38 Greek Cypriots. Exhumations continued in different parts of the island. According to the CMP, 1,430 Greek Cypriots and 483 Turkish Cypriots remained missing.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices; however, there were reports that police abused detainees.

There continued to be reports that police engaged in heavy–handed tactics and degrading treatment of suspects.

In January three Syrian immigrants (Imbrahim Kasem, Ahmad Kasem, and Ahmad Kasem) alleged that 10 police officers beat them shortly after they visited their former employer to demand payment of money due. They claimed that their car was intercepted by the officers, who beat them as they lay face down on the ground. Police then took them to Paphos police station, where they allegedly continued to beat them for several hours. A fourth Syrian immigrant, who was in the car at the time of the alleged beating, managed to escape. The immigrant support group Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism (KISA) filed a complaint with the Attorney General's Office and asked for an investigation. The police charged the three individuals with resisting arrest and hindering police officers from carrying out their duties. Authorities charged two with residing illegally in Cyprus and charged the driver of the car with reckless driving and driving without a license and insurance. Authorities released all three. KISA claimed that, had the three appeared in court, the judge would have seen their injuries and ordered an investigation. Independent investigators appointed by the attorney general decided that the criminal charges filed by the police against the immigrants should be withdrawn and that the immigrants should be deported. The independent investigators also decided that the case against the police officers involved in the incident should be "filed."

In January 2006 members of the police antinarcotics unit (YKAN) allegedly beat a Turkish Cypriot suspect during the execution of a search warrant at his house in Larnaca. A criminal investigation ordered by the chief of the police concluded that the police used the necessary force under the circumstances. Based on the results of the investigation, the attorney general declined criminal prosecution.

In March 2006 a police officer allegedly beat prisoner Georgios Georghiou in his cell. Authorities charged the officer with assault causing actual bodily harm. The case was set for a February 20 hearing. Police initiated disciplinary procedures against the officer, but they were interrupted in August 2006 when the ombudsman asked to review the case. In November 2006 the ombudsman's investigation was terminated because criminal charges were brought against the accused police officer. During the court hearing, Georghiou stated that he had no complaint against the police, and the court withdrew the charges against the officer. Following this development, the chief of police ordered the discontinuation of the disciplinary action.

In 2005 plainclothes police officers stopped two cars in Nicosia and proceeded to handcuff and beat the drivers, 27–year–old students Marcos Papageorghiou and Yiannos Nicolaou. Authorities charged 11 police officers with numerous offenses, including assault and torture. The hearing of the case started in September 2006 and

was ongoing at year's end.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Conditions in prisons, detention centers, and other government institutions generally met international standards, although there were some problems.

On January 18, a Polish detainee was found dead in his cell in Ayia Napa Police station. The police officer on duty found him hanging from a bed sheet. The police ordered an internal investigation, which concluded that there was no negligence or irregularity on the part of the police officers on duty.

In February 2006 police reported that final toxicological results showed that the 2005 death of prisoner Jevor Hakorian in police custody was caused by drug use and suffocation induced by the swallowing of stomach fluids. During the year the coroner's report was completed and confirmed the toxicological results. It also stated that there was no evidence of criminal liability.

Unlike in previous years, there were no complaints received by the ombudsman or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that police subjected foreign inmates to physical abuse. However, in 2006 and during the year the ombudsman received several complaints from Turkish Cypriots and third-country nationals that they were subjected to discriminatory treatment by prison officials. The complaints concerned rejection of their request for admission into the "open prison," a special detention section outside of the strictly guarded prison area where low-risk prisoners receive special privileges. As a result of the ombudsman's intervention, the prison director issued a new policy stipulating that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots are equally eligible for admission into the "open prison." The director did not grant third-country nationals the same privileges due to security reasons and because purpose of the "open prison" is to ease reintegration of prisoners into Cypriot society. Turkish Cypriot and foreign prisoners also complained to the ombudsman that prison personnel assaulted them verbally "in relation to their ethnic origin or nationality." Following the ombudsman's intervention, the prison director instructed prison staff to treat every prisoner with respect and fair treatment. At year's end the ombudsman continued to examine complaints from Greek Cypriot prisoners that prison officials tolerated, and in some cases supported, violence among inmates.

During the year overcrowding remained Nicosia's Central Prison's greatest problem despite renovation and expansion. The prison's capacity was 350, although at times it held up to 691 inmates. Approximately 76 percent of the detainees were foreigners imprisoned for entering or living in the country illegally, theft and/or drug trafficking. The ombudsman reported that due to overcrowding, it is often not possible to separate convicted criminals from pretrial detainees or long-term from short-term prisoners. The government provided assistance for the rehabilitation of drug abusers through the use of multidisciplinary therapeutic teams consisting of a psychiatrist, a psychologist, two occupational therapists, a social worker, and four nurses. The Social Welfare Services offered limited support for the reintegration for former inmates.

A March 2006 report by the Council of Europe's (COE) commissioner for human rights noted that, while prison conditions were generally satisfactory, overcrowding remained a problem. The report also expressed concern over the government's failure to provide facilities and resources for the psychiatric treatment of prisoners. The report noted government efforts to improve the professional training of the prison staff and the abolition of imprisonment for nonpayment of civil debt.

A May 2006 report by the COE's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) expressed concern with the extensive use of detention for both migrants and asylum seekers and the conduct of law enforcement officials, including alleged cases of mistreatment.

The government permitted prison visits by independent human rights observers, and such visits, unrestricted and unannounced, occurred during the year. During the year the ombudsman, the law commissioner, and the commissioner for the protection of personal data visited the prison on a regular basis. The parliamentary human rights committee also visited the prison compound to examine the living conditions of the detainees.

In September 2006 Cyprus Mental Health Commission President Christodoulos Messis criticized conditions at the Athalassa Psychiatric Hospital as being "unacceptable."

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

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

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The Cyprus police enforce the law and address criminal activity. The Greek Cypriot National Guard (GCNG), backed by a contingent of Greek military forces, protects national security. The GCNG reports to the Ministry of Defense, which in turn reports to the president. The police report to the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. The president appoints the chief of police. The police force is composed of a headquarters with six functional departments, six geographic district divisions, including one inactive district for the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, and seven police units that provide specialized services. Although there were reported cases of misconduct, there were no serious cases of police corruption or bribery.

In April 2006 the Council of Ministers appointed an independent committee to investigate complaints of police bribery, corruption, unlawful financial gain, violation of human rights, abuse of power, preferential treatment, and conduct unbecoming of police officers. Previously, the assistant chief of police for administration handled investigations and recommended appropriate disciplinary measures to the chief of police. In August 2006 the committee chair complained that the body could not handle the workload and suggested that it instead supervise investigations to be carried out by the police. A July amendment to the law gave the committee the right to appoint independent investigators from a list submitted by the attorney general. As a result, the investigation of cases was expedited. From January 1 to September 30, the committee received 69 complaints. In 34 cases members of the committee or independent investigators appointed and supervised by the committee investigated the cases, resulting in the attorney general and the police chief requesting further action. In 11 cases the committee asked the attorney general to appoint criminal investigators to carry out the investigation. In 14 cases the committee rejected the complaints because they did not fall under the jurisdiction of the committee. In one case, the complaint was withdrawn. In nine cases, complaints remained pending due to inadequate information provided by the complainants. The committee chair confirmed that the attorney general adopted all the recommendations made by the committee.

There were 32 criminal investigations against 49 members of the police during the year. Fourteen of the cases were presented to a court and were pending adjudication at year's end. During the year the attorney general ordered criminal investigations into 11 cases of alleged police misconduct against civilians. Out of the ten investigations completed during the year, three were still being evaluated, one resulted in the initiation of criminal proceedings, and in the remaining six the attorney general decided that no criminal proceedings were warranted.

Arrest and Detention

The law requires judicially issued arrest warrants, and authorities recognized this requirement in practice. Persons may not be detained for more than one day without referral of the case to a court for extension of detention. Most periods of investigative detention did not exceed 10 days before formal charges were filed. The attorney general generally made efforts to keep pretrial detention to a minimum, especially in cases of serious crimes; however, aliens arrested for illegal entry without identification were detained indefinitely when authorities did not know where to deport them. Attorneys generally had access to detainees. Bail was permitted. The government claimed the right to deport foreign nationals for reasons of public interest whether or not they had been charged with or convicted of a crime.

At year's end there were 69 persons in detention awaiting trial.

On September 10, a group of eight long-term detainees, comprised of seven Iranians and one Afghani, climbed onto the roof of Nicosia's Central Prison and threatened to commit suicide if they were not immediately released. They ended their protest a day later when the minister of interior assured them that, with the ombudsman, he

would examine their demands and come up with concrete decisions. Since then the government deported one detainee and released another. The government promised to release the remaining six detainees pending their acceptance of a proposal sponsored by the minister of interior. Details of the proposal were not available. All eight had applied for asylum, and had been rejected, but remained on the island without a residency permit. They were consequently arrested for deportation; however, their deportation was not possible, as they all had destroyed their travel documents. Some of the detainees had been in detention for almost three years. In a 2005 report, the ombudsman described the detention of foreigners when there was no prospect for deportation as "arbitrary and unjustified." She had recommended that detention be restricted to a maximum of 15 days, after which detainees should be conditionally released. The government did not adopt her recommendations by year's end.

The government arrested persons crossing the green line in possession of evidence of purchasing or developing Greek Cypriot property in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. In June 2006 the government arrested Turkish Cypriot architect Osman Sarper, crossing from the north to the south, who was allegedly found to be in possession of architectural blueprints for structures being built on Greek Cypriot properties in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. Authorities charged him with intent to commit a crime, illegal possession and use of property, and attempt to conceal a crime and released him on bail. Sarper failed to appear, citing a medical condition, in three successive hearings. On September 27, the attorney general suspended charges against Sarper due to his condition. A psychiatric examination subsequently showed that he was suffering from manic depression.

In October 2006 the government passed a law making the purchase, rent, or sale of property without consent of the registered owner a felony. In November 2006 the government arrested a foreign couple in possession of a contract for the purchase of Greek Cypriot property in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. The wife, who had signed the documents, was charged with conspiracy to commit a felony and faced up to seven years' imprisonment. In November 2006 authorities released her on a bail of approximately $120,000 (50,000 pounds). In December 2006 her trial began but was discontinued shortly afterwards because the prosecution could not sufficiently prove that the accused was aware that the Greek Cypriot owners had not given their consent for the sale of their property.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law and constitution provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected this provision in practice.

Most criminal and civil cases begin in district courts, from which appeals may be made to the Supreme Court. There are no special courts for security or political offenses. There are military tribunals that have jurisdiction over members of the GCNG.

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. The constitution provides for public trials, albeit not by jury, and defendants have the right to be present and to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. An attorney is provided for those who cannot afford one, and defendants are allowed the right to question witnesses against them and present evidence or witnesses on their behalf. The law also guarantees that defendants and their attorneys have access to government-held evidence related to their cases. Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and have a right of appeal. The government generally respected these rights in practice.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent and impartial judiciary for civil matters, permitting claimants to bring lawsuits seeking damages for human rights violations, and citizens successfully availed themselves of it.

Property Restitution

Turkish Cypriots have filed a total of 43 cases in the courts to reclaim property located in the government-controlled area, eight of which were new cases filed during the year. During the year the courts dismissed five property cases because they concerned Turkish Cypriot properties that are under the guardianship of the Ministry of Interior. According to the law, these properties cannot be returned unless the owners resettle permanently in the government-controlled area. The applicants filed appeals and the cases were pending before the Supreme Court at year's end.

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

The law 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 law provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respected these rights in practice.

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

Opposition newspapers frequently criticized authorities. Independent newspapers and periodicals proliferated. Several private television and radio stations competed effectively with government-controlled stations. International broadcasts were available without interference throughout the island, including telecasts from Turkey and Greece.

In 2006 there were multiple reports that ultranationalist Greek Cypriot groups verbally harassed Turkish Cypriot journalists.

In early November 2006 the Council of Ministers rejected a 2005 decision by the Board of Cyprus News Agency to appoint Christoforos Christoforou as its new director. Some newspapers and opposition parties attributed the rejection to Christoforou's authorship of articles criticizing government policies regarding the UN efforts in 2004 to reunify the island. The Cyprus Journalists' Union called on the government to reverse its decision and approve the appointment. Christoforou appealed to the Supreme Court. Court proceedings began in August and were ongoing at year's end.

The government imposed significant restrictions on Turkish (as opposed to Turkish Cypriot) journalists crossing the green line to cover news events in the government-controlled area.

During the year Turkish Cypriot advertisers repeated claims initially made in 2004 by the vice chairman of the Turkish Cypriot Advertisers Association that Greek Cypriot newspapers refused to carry advertisements for businesses located in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots.

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 e-mail. The Internet was easily accessible and widely available to the public.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were generally no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events; however, certain oversight efforts threatened academic independence and activities.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The law and constitution provide for freedom of assembly, and the government respected it in practice.

Freedom of Association

The law and constitution provide for freedom of association, and the government generally respected it in practice. However, there were examples of the exertion of government pressure on NGOs and universities. Parliamentary hearings in 2006 purportedly aimed at providing government oversight over NGOs, particularly those involved in bicommunal programs, threatened the independence and activities of such civil society groups and academic institutions as well. The hearings ceased in 2006, and no action resulted from them.

The government continued to exert political pressure on universities to refrain from any contact with universities in the Turkish Cypriot community because the government considered universities in the Turkish Cypriot community to be "illegal." Academic freedom was, accordingly, restricted. In early 2007, Eastern Mediterranean University organized a peace journalism conference and invited representatives from universities in the government-controlled area. The government sent a circular to rectors on the "illegal" status of Turkish Cypriot universities, and most Greek Cypriot participants declined to participate in the conference.

In his June report the UN secretary general noted with regret that he was "unable to report any meaningful improvement in the atmosphere in which Cypriots from both sides are allowed to engage in bicommunal contacts"

c. Freedom of Religion

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

The law and constitution specify that the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus, which is not under the authority of the mainland Greek Orthodox Church, has the exclusive right to regulate and administer its internal affairs and property in accordance with its holy canons and charter. The law also states that the Turkish Cypriot religious trust, the Vakif, the Muslim institution that regulates religious activity for Turkish Cypriots, has the exclusive right to regulate and administer its internal affairs and property in accordance with Vakif laws and principles. No legislative, executive, or other act may contravene or interfere with the Orthodox Church or the Vakif. Armenian Orthodox, Maronite Christians, and Roman Catholics ("Latins") are also recognized by the law and constitution. On January 9, the Ministry of Defense announced it would lift an exemption that allowed these three "official religious groups" to avoid compulsory military service on religious grounds. After some initial resistance by the Maronites, the groups accepted the lifting of the exemption as a public obligation.

The government required other religious groups to register as nonprofit companies if they desired to maintain a bank account or engage in other financial transactions.

Missionaries have the legal right to proselytize, but the government closely monitored missionary activities. It is illegal for a missionary to use "physical or moral compulsion" to make religious conversions. Police may investigate missionary activity based on a citizen's complaint. Police can also open an investigation if missionaries are suspected of involvement in illegal activities threatening the security of the government, constitutional or public order, or public health and morals. No detentions or arrests were reported under these laws during the year.

The government required children in public primary and secondary schools to take instruction in the Greek Orthodox religion. Parents of other religions may request that their children be excused from such instruction and from attending religious services.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

In May 2006 an NGO reported that it had filed complaints with the ombudsman's office and an independent investigatory committee regarding police treatment of Muslim asylum seekers. Some asylum seekers reportedly had difficulty securing employment, and one asylee alleged that he could not secure housing because of religious discrimination. Late in 2007, the ombudsman submitted a report to the government proposing reconsideration of the whole policy concerning the right of employment for asylum seekers. The ombudsman reported no receipt of complaints relating to discrimination on religious grounds.

In November 2006, 15 to 20 Greek Cypriot teenagers, believed to be members of the ultranationalist group National Voice of Youth with a Greek Soul, entered the grounds of The English School and attacked a group of the school's Turkish Cypriot students, causing minor injuries. Criminal charges were brought against 13 suspects in the case. Ten of the accused pleaded guilty to the offenses; nine of them, all minors, were sentenced to perform social work for 12 months. The sentencing of the tenth was adjourned pending presentation to the court of all facts relevant to sentencing. The court scheduled a hearing in January 2008 for the three remaining suspects.

Although Turkish Cypriots claimed that unused mosques in the government-controlled area had been vandalized, the government routinely carried out maintenance and repair of mosques in the area under its administration. At year's end authorities had not identified any suspects in a 2005 vandalism of a Turkish Cypriot cemetery in Larnaca.

There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts. The Jewish community included approximately 300 expatriate residents and fewer than 10 Cypriots.

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 law provides for freedom of movement within government-controlled areas, 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 persons entitled to subsidiary protection.

The government did not restrict Greek Cypriots from traveling to the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, but it generally discouraged them from spending the night at Greek Cypriot properties, gambling in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, or buying or developing property there. The government in many cases prohibited Turkish nationals from crossing from the area administered by Turkish Cypriots to the government-controlled area in the south.

The government allowed European Union (EU) citizens and citizens of other countries not subject to a visa requirement who entered Cyprus from ports of entry in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots to cross the green line into the government‒controlled area; however, the government maintained that all ports of entry in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots are illegal.

Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were required to show identification cards when crossing the green line. Members of each community were required to obtain insurance coverage in the community where they planned to drive their vehicles. Turkish Cypriots flew in and out of Larnaca and Paphos airports without obstruction.

The government arrested persons crossing the green line in possession of contracts or blueprints related to purchasing or developing Greek Cypriot property in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots.

The government issued 5,028 passports to Turkish Cypriots during the year.

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

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Although Greek Cypriots who were displaced as a result of the 1974 division of the island fall under the UN definition of IDPs, the government considered them refugees. At the end of 2006 these individuals and their descendants numbered approximately 238,000. Depending on their income, IDPs and their descendants are eligible for financial assistance from the government. They have been resettled, have access to humanitarian organizations, and are not subject to attack, targeting, or return under dangerous conditions.

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 protection against "refoulement," the return of persons to a country where there is reason to believe they feared persecution, although one NGO claimed that some asylum seekers were deported before final adjudication of their application by the proper authorities. The ombudsman confirmed that there have been cases of unjustified deportations of asylum seekers. At the same time, the ombudsman's office reported that, acting on its recommendations, the government asylum department took action in many cases to ensure respect of the rights of the asylum seekers and refugees. The government granted refugee and asylum status to individuals during the year.

Those individuals determined to be refugees were permitted to stay and given temporary work permits but were not granted permanent resettlement rights. During the year no refugees were deported, and authorities granted refugee status to 36 persons.

The government provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 convention and the 1967 protocol and provided temporary protection to 185 persons during the year. According to the ombudsman and NGOs, the inmates in detention centers were exclusively foreign and often asylum seekers who were arrested for illegal entry. Similar to the previous years, the NGO KISA maintained that police violated the law and the human rights of asylum seekers by carrying out illegal arrests, detentions, and deportations. The group claimed that authorities treated asylum seekers as illegal immigrants or economic migrants and jailed or deported them. Another local NGO Apanemi reported that several asylum seekers made complaints to the ombudsman alleging that they were physically and psychologically abused by police, and one third NGO reported that asylum seekers complained about the denial of state medical care. During the year NGOs and asylum seekers also filed complaints with the ombudsman alleging that the state was permitting the exploitation of asylum seekers as cheap labor by restricting their employment to the farming sector.

In 2005 the ombudsman recommended that the government increase access to lawyers for detained asylum seekers, and in 2004 she recommended that the government provide detained asylum seekers increased access to places where they could apply for asylum. Legislation adopted in 2005 provides the right of persons under detention to communicate with lawyers, the UNCHR, and NGOs.

In May 2006 Asian and Middle Eastern detainees, some of whom were asylum seekers and all of whom were being held as illegal immigrants, set fire to their cells in Nicosia Central Prison in protest of their long detention, more than 20 months for some. Five detainees and two police officers were sent to the hospital with injuries.

In February the Supreme Court rejected the 2005 appeal of the Somali asylum seeker who claimed that he was illegally arrested and deported to Israel despite a pending asylum application.

A number of persons, mostly Iranians, who destroyed their travel documents and denounced their nationality or refused to divulge their country of origin, remained in long-term detention in Nicosia Central Prison. All were former asylum seekers whose applications were denied and were consequently arrested on detention and deportation orders for residing in the country illegally.

Seven of the eight long-term detainees who staged a protest in Nicosia Central Prison on September 10 were Iranians who had destroyed their travel documents to prevent their deportation to Iran.

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

The law and constitution 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. Only Turkish Cypriots residing permanently in the government-controlled area are permitted to vote and run for office.

Elections and Political Participation

In May 2006 elections were held for the 56 seats assigned to Greek Cypriots in the 80-seat House of Representatives. In April 2006 two leading members of the group of 78 Turkish Cypriots not residing in the government-controlled area who had been denied the opportunity to run, Ali Erel and Mustafa Damdelen, sued the government for failure to fully reinstate the Turkish Cypriot community's rights to vote and run for office. On April 30, the Supreme Court dismissed their application. On September 3, Erel and Damdelen applied to the ECHR for redress.

In December 2006 free and fair elections for local authorities were held.

Women held eight of the 56 seats filled in the House of Representatives and two of the 11 ministerial posts. They also held senior positions in the judicial branch.

There were no members of minorities in the House of Representatives, and the 24 seats assigned to Turkish Cypriots went unfilled. However, the small Armenian Orthodox, Maronite Christian, and Roman Catholic ("Latin") communities elected special nonvoting observer representatives from their respective communities to the

House of Representatives.

Government Corruption and Transparency

There were isolated reports of government corruption. In June the minister of interior ordered an investigation into allegations that civil servants or government officials had tipped off land developers about future changes in development zones in the Akamas area. As a result developers bought large pieces of farm land in the area that were later included in the development zones and whose value increased 20-fold. In December authorities arrested and charged an official of the road transport department with soliciting a bribe in order to expedite the registration of an imported used motor vehicle. In November 2006 a local newspaper published the names of politicians who allegedly had asked the Ministry of Defense for favorable transfers of National Guard recruits. The list included prominent officials such as the president of the House of Representatives, members of the Council of Ministers, party leaders, and members of parliament. The president asked the minister of defense to investigate whether such requests constituted nepotism. At year's end it was unclear if the investigation had been undertaken, and no results had been publicly announced.

In August the 2004 charge against European Parliament member Marios Matsakis for illegal possession of historical artifacts was dropped.

The constitution provides for the right of access to government information; however, there are no specific laws that assure public access. Civil servants were not allowed to give access to government documents without first obtaining permission from the relevant minister. There were no reported cases during the year of persons being denied access to government information.

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. There is a government ombudsman, whose portfolio includes human rights, and a legislative committee on human rights.

The NGO KISA complained in February that the police applied discriminatory and intimidating tactics against it and its chairman, Doros Polykarpou, for the activities of the organization. In 2002 and 2006 the police filed two criminal cases against KISA and Polykarpou for a fundraising drive that KISA carried out in 2001 to cover the expenses of a migrant worker's medical emergency. KISA's application for a permit to carry out the drive was rejected because there is no legislation regulating the issue of money collections for health reasons. The first case resulted in a fine. In December 2006 police filed the second criminal case against Polykarpou for "disobeying a court order and receiving stolen goods," for having spent the money raised in the 2001 drive. In April the attorney general rejected an appeal by KISA to discontinue criminal proceedings against Polycarpou. The trial started in October and was ongoing at year's end.

A number of NGOs considered themselves to be human rights groups; most, however, were concerned exclusively with alleged violations of the rights of Greek Cypriots by Turkey. Other NGOs included groups promoting migrant support and awareness of domestic violence and those concerned with allegations of police brutality. Domestic NGOs were numerous but had limited impact on public opinion or specific legislation. Few international NGOs were active in Cyprus.

Referring in part to the parliamentary hearings in 2006, the UN secretary general's December 2006 report on country operations stated, "[T]here has been a disturbing trend impinging on the ability of organizations and individuals to carry out activities and projects designed to contribute to bicommunal contacts and cooperation throughout the island. As a result, the UN, particularly the UN Development Program, has been hampered in its ability to support and implement such projects benefiting both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in areas of common concern."

The UN, through the CMP, continued its efforts to account for persons missing after the intercommunal violence in 1963–64 and the conflict of 1974.

During the year the ombudsman received complaints from citizens and foreigners living on the island who believed their rights had been violated by the government. During her independent investigations, the ombudsman generally enjoyed good cooperation with other government bodies. The ombudsman's annual reports focused on police brutality, treatment of patients at state hospitals and of asylum seekers and foreign workers, and gender equality in the workplace. The office of the ombudsman was well respected and considered effective; however, the government had not implemented many of its recommendations.

The legislative committee on human rights, which was generally considered by most local NGOs as effective, is made up of 10 members of the House of Representatives who serve five–year terms. The committee discusses wide–ranging human rights issues, including trafficking in persons, prison conditions, and the rights of foreign workers. The executive branch did not exercise control over the committee.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the government generally effectively enforced it. However, violence against women, child abuse, trafficking in persons, discrimination against Turkish Cypriots living in the government–controlled area, and discrimination against Roma and members of minority ethnic and national groups were problems.

Women

The law criminalizes rape and spousal rape with a maximum sentence of life in prison. Most convicted offenders received considerably less than the maximum sentence. The police indicated that 114 cases of sexual assault were reported during the year.

Violence against women, including spousal abuse, was common. The law establishes clear mechanisms to report and prosecute family violence and provides that the testimony of minors and experts, such as psychologists, may be used as evidence to prosecute abusers. The law provides for prison terms for the abuse of family members. Doctors, hospital workers, and education professionals are required to report all suspected cases of domestic violence to the police. However, many victims refused to testify in court, and by law spouses cannot be compelled to testify against each other. In cases of domestic violence where the spousal victim was the only witness and refused to testify, the courts were forced to drop the case.

An NGO working with domestic abuse victims estimated a 62 percent increase in the number of telephone calls to its hot line compared to 2006. The NGO reported that 1052 individuals, of whom 80.5 percent were women, 13.5 percent children, and 6 percent men, called claiming to be victims of domestic violence. The NGO also operated a shelter in Nicosia that served 119 victims of domestic violence during the same period.

The law does not prohibit "voluntary" prostitution; however, it is illegal to live off the profits of prostitution, and police routinely arrested pimps under this section of the criminal code. Procuring a woman for prostitution is a misdemeanor. The police reported the arrest and investigation of 27 individuals on prostitution-related charges. At year's end authorities continued to investigate three of those cases and prosecuted 24.

The law prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace, but there were reports that it was a widespread problem with most incidents going unreported to authorities. In 2006 authorities investigated and prosecuted one of the country's ambassadors, Costas Papademas, for sexually harassing two female employees at the overseas mission he headed. In December 2006 the court found him guilty, and sentenced him to seven months' imprisonment. However, on May 24, the Supreme Court acquitted Papademas, ruling that the main witnesses' testimony was unreliable. He served four months in prison in the interim. Although the case was widely reported in the press, reaction to his acquittal was muted.

Women generally have the same legal status as men under family law, property law, and in the judicial system. The National Mechanism for Women's Rights under the Ministry of Justice and Public Order is tasked with the promotion, protection, and coordination of women's rights. Laws requiring equal pay for men and women performing the same work were enforced effectively at the white-collar level, but, despite a strong legal framework, the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance's enforcement was ineffective at the blue-collar level. Research from one NGO suggested that remuneration for female blue-collar workers was 25 to 30 percent less than for their male counterparts.

During the year an NGO representing divorced mothers worked with police to encourage efforts to collect delinquent child support payments. The courts may garnish wages and assets and ultimately imprison persons to enforce child support payments.

Children

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

The government provided free education through the age of 18. Education was compulsory up to the age of 15, or nine years of education. Approximately 60 percent of children completed some form of university or other post-secondary education.

Child abuse was a problem. The Welfare Department stated that the majority of cases, which increased over previous years, were linked to domestic violence, alcohol abuse, and psychological illness. The police reported that, as of the end of August, there were 18 criminal prosecutions pending before the courts for child abuse or sexual exploitation. In 2006 the police investigated a total of 114 cases of child abuse.

Trafficking in Persons

In July the government enacted a law prohibiting all forms of trafficking in persons; however, there were widespread reports that persons were trafficked through and within the country. There were also allegations of police corruption related to trafficking.

Cyprus was primarily a destination point for women trafficked for sexual exploitation, and authorities were aware of and generally tolerated the situation despite adoption in 2005 of a plan of action to combat trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation of children. STOP International alleged that Cyprus was being used as a transit point for trafficking, but there were no definitive reports of the country being used as a transit point for trafficking. The country was a destination for women trafficked from Eastern Europe, primarily Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Russia, Poland, and Bulgaria, as well as from the Philippines, China, Morocco and the Dominican Republic. There was evidence that female victims coming from China on student visas engaged in prostitution and, in some cases, were victims of sexual exploitation. NGOs reported that female domestic workers from India and Sri Lanka were forced to work long hours. There were no reliable statistics on the number of trafficking victims; however, 54 women pressed charges during the year.

Traffickers fraudulently recruited victims using the "artiste" employment permit category and often rotated victims among different cabarets and cities. In some cases, women reportedly were arbitrarily denied part or all of their salaries, forced to surrender their passports, and pressed into providing sexual services for clients. Some NGOs alleged that government officials with oversight and policing responsibility over the sex industry themselves frequented cabarets and nightclubs.

It is a felony to engage in the exploitation and trafficking of persons. The court may order persons convicted of trafficking to pay part or all of the expenses incurred for the provision of protection, temporary shelter, medical care, and psychiatric care for victims, as well as compensation to the victim, including repatriation expenses. The ministries of interior, labor and social insurance, justice, health, and education and the attorney general, share responsibility for combating trafficking, with the Ministry of Interior as the lead.

During the year police arrested 105 individuals involved in cases related to prostitution and sexual exploitation. Of those, 78 were arrested specifically on trafficking charges. Police statistics showed that 90 cases were prosecuted and 15 were still under investigation at year's end for possible prosecution. Of the 90 prosecutions, six resulted in acquittals, four were dropped by prosecutors, 15 were suspended by the attorney general with the option to re-indict the defendant/s if new evidence arises, seven were dismissed, four were otherwise processed, and 45 were pending trial. The remaining nine concluded in convictions with prison sentences ranging from one to six months.

The police participated and assisted in 23 international trafficking investigations.

The new antitrafficking legislation expanded victims' rights. According to the new law, identified victims of trafficking are granted at minimum, a one-month residency permit to give them time to recover from their experience and to decide whether or not they wish to cooperate with the police in the investigation of the crime and to testify at trial. The law obligates the government to provide protection and support for trafficking victims, including financial assistance, shelter, medical and psychiatric care and psychological support, as well as legal aid and access to government-funded training and educational programs. The government is obligated to facilitate the victims' repatriation under safe and dignified conditions.

By year's end police had identified 54 victims of trafficking, all of whom pressed charges against their traffickers. As of October 31, government welfare services had provided financial aid, counseling, and temporary shelter to 87 victims.

The government maintained that most women who qualified as trafficking victims chose to return voluntarily to their home countries without testifying in court. There were reports that cabaret owners and agents for dancers pressured women to withdraw complaints to police or not to follow through with their intention to testify in court. Of the 54 women who requested police protection during the year, the government reported that 21 returned to their home countries and 28 were waiting to testify at trials. The remaining five were residing in Cyprus at year's end, either because they were EU citizens or testified in court and awaiting completion of the trials. On average victims waited for about one year before the commencement of their trials.

NGOs that protect the rights of women and immigrant workers were available to assist trafficking victims and reported that they received one to two requests for assistance per month.

The NGO Stigma in Limassol operated a shelter for trafficking victims. A Russian-speaking psychiatrist was available to assist victims. During the year a total of 30 trafficking victims stayed in the shelter. All of them cooperated with the police, and 21 of them testified in court against their traffickers. Although the remaining nine victims gave testimony to the police, the testimony was not deemed substantive enough to build a legal case for prosecution against the traffickers. Only one of the court cases was completed and the defendant was acquitted. The two victims that testified in the completed trial remained in the country. One married a Cypriot, and the second one applied for asylum but was rejected and remained in the country illegally. According to Stigma, two other victims were bribed by the traffickers and left the country while the trial was still in process. Another victim was declared by the court as a hostile witness because she changed the testimony she gave to the police. She was sentenced to two months in prison and deported. Another victim that was in the country waiting to testify in court returned home while the trial was still in process. No formal referral process existed between the police and the shelter. Until the opening of the government-run shelter on November 26, social welfare services typically housed victims in government-subsidized homes for the elderly or in hotels.

An 18-year-old Ukrainian who in 2005 was fraudulently recruited to work in a rural cabaret and forced to have sex with clients testified in court against her employer. During the year the trial ended, and the accused was acquitted. The individual married a Cypriot and resides permanently in Cyprus.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or in the provision of other state services, and in practice the government generally enforced these provisions. The law mandates that public buildings and tourist facilities built after 1999 be accessible to all; however, government enforcement of the law was ineffective, and older buildings frequently lacked access for persons with disabilities. There were no appropriate institutions for adults who suffer from mental disabilities and are in need of long-term care.

The amended People with Disabilities Law, which extended the ombudsman's authority to cover discrimination based on disabilities in both the private and public sectors, had not been fully implemented by year's end. Problems facing persons with disabilities included narrow or nonexistent sidewalks, lack of transport, and absence of parking spaces, accessible toilets, and elevators. The government budget reportedly included approximately $90,000 (40,000 pounds) to improve access to government buildings.

There were no long−term care facilities specifically for persons with mental disabilities, but many such persons were housed at the Athalassa psychiatric hospital. In September an association representing the parents of children with Down's syndrome complained that the government did not respond to their repeated calls for the creation of a specialized center for the treatment of their children, particularly those in need of temporary hospitalization. Some were housed at Athalassa psychiatric hospital, where they allegedly received inadequate care. The parents claimed that the children were naked, locked in their wards for too many hours each day, and were under the influence of sedative medication. The hospital rejected their allegations.

In September 2006 Cyprus Mental Health Commission President Dr. Christodoulos Messis criticized Athalassa psychiatric hospital, calling it "unacceptable."

The Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance's Service for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled was responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. In addition the minister chaired the Pancyprian Council for Persons with Disabilities, which included representatives of government services, organizations representing persons with disabilities, as well as employer and employee organizations. The council monitored action for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and served as a forum for persons with disabilities to contribute to public policy.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

There were reported incidents of government and societal discrimination against members of minority national and ethnic groups, particularly Turkish Cypriots and Roma.

The 1975 Vienna III Agreement remains the legal source of authority regarding the treatment of Turkish Cypriots living in the government−controlled area. The government generally effectively enforced the agreement, which provides for the voluntary transfer of populations, free and unhindered access by UNFICYP to Turkish Cypriots living in the south, and facilities for education, medical care, and religious activities.

Some Turkish Cypriots living in the government−controlled area reportedly faced difficulties obtaining identification cards and other government documents, particularly if they were born after 1974. Turkish Cypriots made few formal complaints to UNFICYP about their living conditions in the south. Complaints most often concerned the lack of affordable accommodation.

After complaining repeatedly about the lack of a Turkish-language school in Limassol, the Turkish Cypriot teachers' union filed suit, seeking a declaration from the Supreme Court that a decision taken by the Council of Ministers in 2005 to operate a mixed elementary school in Limassol with a specialized program and staff to serve the needs of the Turkish-speaking students, was null and void. The union argued that, under the 1960 constitution, the Council of Ministers has no competence in matters of education of Turkish Cypriots. The Supreme Court trial began in May 2006. The court last adjourned the trial on October 12 and did not set a new trial date. The government stated that, according to surveys of Turkish Cypriots in the government-controlled area, none had requested a Turkish-language school.

A local NGO continued to report complaints that the government ignored the law mandating automatic citizenship for children of Turkish Cypriots married to Turkish citizens. Instead of granting citizenship automatically, the Ministry of Interior routinely sought approval from the Council of Ministers before confirming the citizenship of such children. In 2006 the Council of Ministers approved 113 cases.

In September the Turkish Cypriot press reported that a Greek Cypriot individual verbally harassed and threatened Turkish Cypriot Mustafa Guven and his family while driving their car in the government-controlled part of Nicosia. The Greek Cypriot individual allegedly caused extensive damage to Guven's car with a metal bar. In 2006 such incidents occurred repeatedly, specifically at bicommunal activities, including the January 2006 "Together for Peace" and the February 2006 "Cyprus Literature Union" events. In 2006 there was also a physical attack on Turkish Cypriot students in Nicosia by a group of Greek Cypriot teenagers.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Despite legal protections, homosexuals faced significant societal discrimination, and few homosexuals in the country were open about their sexual orientation. One NGO reported that there were complaints of discrimination toward homosexuals and persons with HIV/AIDS. NGOs were reluctant to initiate awareness campaigns.

Incitement to Acts of Discrimination

The government continued to use textbooks at the primary and secondary school levels that included language biased against Turkish Cypriots and Turks or that refrained from mentioning the Turkish-Cypriot community altogether from 1971 to 1975. This was a particularly serious concern with history textbooks. Anecdotal evidence indicated that teachers used handouts and held discussions that included inflammatory language in the classroom.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

All workers, except for members of the police and military forces, have the legal right to form and join unions of their own choosing without prior authorization, and workers did so in practice. Police officers were permitted to join only associations that have the right to bargain collectively but not to go on strike. More than 70 percent of the workforce belonged to independent unions. Antiunion discrimination is illegal, but union leaders contended that private sector employers were able to discourage union activity because the enforcement of labor regulations was sporadic and penalties for antiunion practices were minimal.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference, and the government generally protected this right in practice. The law provides for collective bargaining, and workers exercised this right in practice; however, collective bargaining agreements were not legally enforceable. Collective bargaining agreements covered all workers, citizen and foreign, with the exception of housekeepers and cabaret workers; approximately 60 percent of workers were covered by such agreements. All workers have the right to strike; however, authorities have the power to curtail strikes in "essential services," although this power was used rarely in practice. The law provides that members of the armed forces, the police, and the gendarmerie do not have the right to strike, but the right to strike is recognized for all other providers of essential services. There have been strikes in the past at government−run hospitals and airports, as well as by police; the government did not take any actions against these workers. An agreement between the government and essential services personnel provides for dispute resolution and protects workers in the sector.

There are no special laws for or exemptions from regular labor laws in the export processing zone at the port of Larnaca.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The government prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that women were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and that women were trafficked for domestic labor.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits the employment of children, defined as persons under 15, except in certain cases such as a combined work-training scheme for children who have attained the age of 14, and employment in cultural, artistic, sports or advertising activities subject to certain rules. The law permits the employment of adolescents, defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 18, subject to certain rules and restrictions.

The government effectively enforced laws and policies to protect children from exploitation in the workplace; however, there were reports that children were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. The minimum age for employment in an "industrial undertaking" is 16. Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance inspectors are responsible for enforcing the child labor laws and did so effectively. There were isolated examples of children under 16 working for family businesses.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The minimum wage was approximately $1,010 (409 pounds) per month for shop assistants, practical nurses, clerks, hairdressers, and nursery assistants. The minimum wage rose to approximately $1,072 (434 pounds) after six months' employment. Neither amount provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family. All other occupations, including unskilled workers, were covered under collective bargaining agreements between unions and employers within the same economic sector. The wages set in these agreements were significantly higher than the minimum wage. Migration services of the Ministry of Interior set the starting salary for foreigners working as housekeepers at approximately $370 (150 pounds) per month, plus approximately $100 (40 pounds) for lodging if the worker was not a live-in, and an additional 16 percent, which employers were required to pay directly to the government in the form of social insurance. Foreign workers were allowed to claim pensions, and in some cases there were bilateral agreements that allowed workers to claim credit in their home countries. Unions and labor confederations generally effectively enforced negotiated wage rates (collectively bargained rates), which were generally much higher than the minimum wage. Migration services were responsible for enforcing the minimum wage for foreign workers but did not actively do so.

The legal maximum workweek was 48 hours, including overtime. Unions and employers within the same economic sector collectively determined the actual working hours. In the private sector, white-collar employees typically worked 39 hours a week, and blue-collar employees worked 38 hours a week. In the public sector, the workweek was 38 hours in the winter and 35 hours in the summer. The law does not require premium pay for overtime or mandatory rest periods; this is usually stipulated in the contracts of workers and in the collective agreements in larger sectors. The same conditions applied to foreign workers. Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance inspectors are responsible for effectively enforcing these laws. However, labor unions reported problems in their enforcement in sectors not covered by collective agreements.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance experienced a substantial increase in the number of complaints of labor exploitation. Foreign workers, primarily from Eastern Europe and East and South Asia, reportedly were forced to work up to 13 hours a day, seven days a week, for very low wages. NGOs and the ombudsman also confirmed that employers often retained a portion of foreign workers' salaries as payment for accommodations.

There were reports of mistreatment of maids and other foreign domestic workers. Such reports usually involved allegations that maids, primarily from East or South Asia, were mistreated by their employers or fired without cause in violation of their contracts. Although the law protects domestic workers who file a complaint with the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance from being deported until their cases have been adjudicated, NGOs reported that many of them did not complain to authorities out of fear of deportation.

Health and safety laws apply to places of work in all economic sectors and were enforced by government inspectors. Factory inspectors processed complaints and inspected businesses to ensure that occupational safety laws were observed. Their inspections were supported by close government cooperation with employer/employee organizations. However, the law does not apply to private households where persons were employed as domestic servants. Workers have the right to remove themselves from work situations that endanger health or safety without jeopardy to their continued employment, and authorities effectively enforced this right.

THE AREA ADMINISTERED BY TURKISH CYPRIOTS

Since 1974 the northern part of Cyprus, with a population of approximately 256,000 persons, has been run by a Turkish Cypriot administration that proclaimed itself the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)" in 1983. The United States does not recognize the "TRNC," nor does any country other than Turkey. Mehmet Ali Talat was elected "president" in April 2005 in free and fair elections. Elections to the "Assembly of the Republic" in February 2005 were also free and fair and resulted in the formation of a coalition "government." The June 2006 elections for two empty seats in "parliament," together with the municipal elections, were generally free and fair. The "TRNC government" was restructured in September 2006 when a minority coalition partner left. The "TRNC constitution" is the basis for the laws that govern the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. Police and security forces were ultimately under the operational command of the Turkish military, per transitional article 10 of the "TRNC constitution," which cedes responsibility for public security and defense "temporarily" to Turkey.

Turkish Cypriot authorities generally respected the human rights of citizens living under their control; however, there were problems in some areas. Police abuse of detainees and arbitrary arrest and detention continued to be problems. There were also restrictions on citizens' privacy rights and on the rights of asylum seekers. In 2006 the "government" proposed legislation to govern the treatment of asylum seekers, but by year's end there was still no regulatory infrastructure developed to handle asylum applications or specifically to protect the rights of asylum seekers. Trafficking in persons was a problem.

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 authorities or their agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

The authorities participated in the autonomous, tripartite (UN, Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot) UN Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) in Cyprus as part of its continuing efforts to account for persons who remained missing after the intercommunal violence in 1963-64 and the conflict of 1974. In August 2006 the CMP launched its project to exhume, identify, and return remains. By year's end the CMP returned the remains of 19 Turkish Cypriots to their families. Exhumations continued in different parts of the island. According to the CMP, 1,430 Greek Cypriots and 483 Turkish Cypriots remained missing.

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

The law prohibits such practices; however, there were reports that police abused detainees.

Kudret Celebi, charged with rape, claimed that he was tortured by police in November 2006 after his escape and recapture. Celebi stated that police guards handcuffed him naked to a bunk and beat him, and that the guards forced him to walk through crowds of inmates so that they could hit him. After hearing Celebi's complaints, the judge ordered a medical examination. The case was presented to the "attorney general's" office, where the case was closed due to the lack of a witness to prove Celebi's claims.

The authorities had no record of a complaint regarding a police beating reported by the press in September 2005. The press made no further mention of the case.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions did not meet international standards. Inmates complained of overcrowding at the prison, and the authorities publicly acknowledged the problem. Inmates also raised complaints, via the media, regarding unsanitary living conditions and prison authorities' negligence. In the 263-person capacity prison, there were 395 prisoners, 61 percent of whom were foreigners, mostly Turkish citizens. More than 30 percent of the prisoners were awaiting trial.

Juveniles were not held separate from adults.

The authorities permitted prison visits by independent human rights observers and journalists. A group from the Turkish Cypriot Doctors Association visited the prison in May to observe and investigate.

On May 8, a riot broke out at the prison. The prison authorities summoned the special riot police to restore order. According to reports, the violence broke out over drug dealing. However, police allegedly targeted not only rioters, but the general prison population, subjecting scores of prisoners to truncheon blows. The Turkish Cypriot Doctors' Association obtained permission from the "Ministry of Interior" and on May 10 entered the prison to examine the inmates. Of a random sample of 60 prisoners, 54 had heavy bruising of their legs, consistent with blows from truncheons. On May 16, the "prime minister" announced that the police intervention would be investigated. No results from the investigation were reported by year's end.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the authorities generally observed these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Police are responsible for law enforcement. The chief of police reports to a Turkish Cypriot general, who is nominally under the supervision of the "prime ministry," holding the "security portfolio." However, the police and security forces are ultimately under the operational command of the Turkish military per transitional article 10 of the "TRNC constitution," which "temporarily" cedes responsibility for public security and defense to Turkey. Security forces were generally cooperative with civilian authorities and effective in matters of law enforcement. The police are divided into eight functional divisions and five geographic divisions.

The office of the "attorney general" continued to work in conjunction with the inspection division (or occasionally the criminal investigative division) to conduct investigations into allegations of police misconduct. There were no investigations resulting in the prosecution of officers for the abuse of detainees during the year.

Arrest and Detention

Judicially issued arrest warrants were required to arrest a person. No person could be detained for more than 24 hours without referral of the case to the courts for extension of the period of detention. The authorities generally respected this right in practice. Detainees were usually promptly informed of charges against them, although individuals believed to have committed a violent offense were often held for longer periods of time without charge. Judges could order that suspects be held for investigative detention for up to 10 days before formal charges are filed, or up to three months for those accused of serious crimes. Bail was permitted and routinely used. Detainees were usually allowed prompt access to family members and a lawyer of their choice. The authorities provided lawyers to the indigent for violent offenses only. Particularly at the time of arrest, police sometimes did not observe legal protections. Some suspects were not permitted to have their lawyers present when testimony was taken, in contravention of the law. Suspects who demanded the presence of a lawyer were sometimes threatened with stiffer charges or physically intimidated.

The media reported that in October the police arrested a man for not standing up when the Turkish national anthem was played at a public ceremony celebrating the Turkish Republic Day. After his arrest, police found the man had illegal drugs and prosecuted him for the possession of illegal substances.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

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

Most criminal and civil cases begin in district courts, from which appeals are made to the "Supreme Court." There were no special courts for political offenses. New legislation was passed transferring jurisdiction from military to civilian courts for cases in which civilians are accused of violating military restrictions, such as filming or photographing military zones.

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. The "TRNC constitution" guarantees public trials, the defendant's right to be present at those trials, and the defendant's right to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. The authorities provided lawyers to the indigent for violent offenses only. Defendants are allowed to question witnesses against them and present evidence or witnesses on their behalf. The law also guarantees that defendants and their attorneys have access to "government"–held evidence related to their cases. Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and have a right of appeal. The authorities generally respected these rights in practice.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There was generally an independent and impartial judiciary for civil matters, permitting claimants to bring lawsuits seeking damages for human rights violations. There were generally no problems enforcing domestic court orders.

Property Restitution

During the year Greek Cypriots continued to pursue property suits in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) against the Turkish government for the loss since 1974 of property located in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. Under ECHR rules, an appellant does not have standing to bring a case before the ECHR until that appellant exhausts all local remedies, unless no adequate local remedy exists. In response to the ECHR's 2005 ruling in the landmark Xenides–Arestis case that Turkey's "subordinate local authorities" in Cyprus had not provided an adequate local remedy, Turkish Cypriot authorities established a new "Property Commission" to handle claims by Greek Cypriots. In May 2006 the "Property Commission" began reviewing Greek Cypriot claims and reportedly received more than 290 applications by December 2007. By year's end three applicants had received restitution of their properties outright; one received restitution pending a future settlement of the Cyprus problem, while 22 accepted compensation in lieu of restitution. Two property exchange decisions were also taken. In December 2006 the ECHR ruled that the commission had satisfied "in principle" the ECHR's requirement for an effective local remedy.

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

The law prohibits such actions; however, there were reports that police subjected Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots to surveillance. Although the authorities reported otherwise, a Maronite representative confirmed that houses in three enclaved villages were occupied by the Turkish military during the year.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the authorities generally respected these rights in practice; however, journalists were at times obstructed in their reporting, fined, and threatened with more serious charges.

Individuals can and did publicly criticize the authorities without reprisal. There were no reports of the authorities attempting to impede criticism.

The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction. International media were generally allowed to operate freely. Bayrak Radyo Televizyon Kurumu (BRTK) is the only "government"-owned television/radio station.

In August a journalist who reported alleged nepotism regarding promotions within the police force as well as police abuse of prisoners on his weekly television program had his program cancelled by the network owner. The journalist claimed that the owner was intimidated into cancelling the program.

In November 2006 two French journalists were arrested for filming in the military zone of Varosha near Famagusta and fined approximately $700 (1,000 lira) each. A local press nongovernmental organization (NGO) paid their fines.

In December 2006 eight Turkish Cypriot journalists were arrested while filming a house fire next to the military zone on the green line in Nicosia. The journalists were held for a few hours and subsequently released without charge.

Internet Freedom

The authorities did not restrict access to the Internet, and there were no reports that they 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. The Internet was easily accessible and widely available to the public.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

The authorities did not restrict academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the authorities generally respected this right in practice.

c. Freedom of Religion

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

Greek Cypriots and Maronites were still prohibited from visiting religious sites located in military zones. Greek Cypriots and Maronites were required to apply for permission to conduct church services anywhere other than the seven churches designated by the authorities.

Missionaries have the legal right to proselytize, but the authorities closely monitored such activities.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Greek Cypriots living in the government-controlled area continued to assert that vandals damaged vacant Greek Orthodox churches and removed religious icons in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots in previous years; there were no reported investigations of these incidents. Greek Cypriot claims included alleged Turkish Cypriot misuse of a Greek Orthodox church in the village of Trimithi as a ceramics showcase. Turkish Cypriot authorities denied the claim that using the church as a ceramics showcase constituted misuse.

There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts. The Jewish community is very small and composed primarily of nonresident businesspeople.

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 law provides for freedom of movement within the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the authorities generally respected these rights in practice.

Turkish Cypriot authorities' cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in providing protection and assistance to asylum seekers was uneven, due at least in part to complications arising from the unrecognized status of the "TRNC." No law exists regarding the handling of asylum applications, but procedures were conducted in accordance with an annually renewed project agreement between the UNHCR and the Turkish Cypriot authorities on the rehabilitation of

asylum seekers. There is a Turkish Cypriot UNHCR representative in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. Asylum seekers, if they qualify after a preliminary investigation, are referred to the UNHCR representative. During the year 60 Iraqis and 11 Palestinians applied for asylum, 42 of whom escaped to the government-controlled areas before a UNHCR decision. The remaining 29 Iraqis were under the auspices of the UNHCR at year's end.

Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were required to show identification cards when crossing the green line. In addition Greek Cypriots and foreigners crossing into the area administered by Turkish Cypriots were required to fill out a "visa" form.

In 2006 the immigration law was amended, and the authorities reported that all illegal immigrant workers were registered. According to the new law, all employers who wish to bring foreign workers need official permission from the "Department of Labor" to register workers. As a result of the new law, the number of illegal workers, and thus illegal immigrants, in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots decreased dramatically. The authorities deported illegal immigrants found without work permits. All illegal immigrants without work permits were barred from entering the "TRNC" at the ports of entry. Asylum seekers were generally treated as illegal immigrants, and were either deported or denied entry.

The authorities no longer maintained general restrictions on visitors to the 369 Greek Cypriots and 124 Maronites living in enclaves in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, although there were reports that specific refugees from the enclaved villages were barred from returning to their villages. In 2006 a Maronite representative reported that the two Maronites barred from returning to their enclaved village in 2005 after visiting the government-controlled area were allowed to return.

Turkish Cypriots had difficulty traveling to most countries because only Turkey recognizes travel documents issued by the "TRNC." Some Turkish Cypriots used Turkish travel documents, but many obtained travel documents issued by the ROC. Turkish Cypriots born after 1974 to parents who were ROC citizens before 1974 obtained ROC passports relatively easily, compared to Turkish Cypriots born after 1974 to one Cypriot parent. Children of Turkish Cypriot mothers and Turkish fathers were usually denied citizenship by ROC authorities. It was reported that children of Turkish Cypriot fathers and Turkish mothers also faced some obstacles. "TRNC" citizen children born to "TRNC" citizen parents of Turkish origin could not receive ROC citizenship and passports.

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

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Although they would fall under the UN definition of IDPs, Turkish Cypriots considered those displaced as a result of the division of the island to be refugees. These persons and their descendants numbered approximately 90,000 to 100,000 in the north. They were resettled, had access to humanitarian organizations, and were not subject to attack, targeting, or return under dangerous conditions.

Protection of Refugees

The law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 protocol, and the authorities neither granted refugee or asylum status and did not establish a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice the authorities did not provide protection against "refoulement," the return of persons to a country where there was reason to believe they feared persecution. Individuals who requested asylum were supposed to be directed to the UNHCR. However, the authorities' cooperation with the UNHCR was uneven, due at least in part to complications arising from the unrecognized status of the "TRNC." There were reports that the authorities at times refused entry to persons who arrived with or without proper documentation at ports of entry, denying them the opportunity to apply for asylum through the UNHCR.

In September 17 Iraqis and Palestinians who were arrested for trying to enter the "TRNC" through illegal means in a fishing boat were arrested and handed over to the UNHCR. There were also reports of Syrians and other nationalities utilizing newly established ferry links between Syria and the "TRNC" to arrive on the island with the intent of later crossing illegally into the government-controlled area.

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

The law provides Turkish Cypriots the right to change their government peacefully, and they exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Turkish Cypriots choose a leader and a representative body every five years or less. In the 2005 "parliamentary" elections, which were free and fair, parties favoring a solution to the division of the island based on the UN settlement plan, known as the Annan Plan, took a near majority of seats. Municipal elections held in June 2006, together with by-elections for two empty seats in "parliament," were also generally free and fair.

Greek Cypriots and Maronite residents were prohibited from participating in Turkish Cypriot "national" elections; they were eligible to vote in Greek Cypriot elections but had to travel to the government−controlled area to exercise that right. In December 2006 Greek Cypriot and Maronite communities in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots directly elected municipal officials for the first time; previously, the ROC appointed these representatives. The Turkish Cypriot authorities did not recognize these ROC officials.

Authorities did not restrict the political opposition, and membership or nonmembership in the dominant party did not confer formal advantages or disadvantages. However, there were widespread allegations of societal cronyism and nepotism.

There were three women in the 50−seat "parliament," including the "speaker."

There were no minorities represented in the "parliament."

Government Corruption and Transparency

Corruption, cronyism, and lack of transparency were generally perceived to be serious problems in the legislative and executive branches.

In June recurrent and serious allegations of corruption led to the dismissal of the "minister of economy and tourism," who represented the junior coalition partner. The "minister" was replaced with a "member of parliament" from the same party. Many accounts claimed that the "minister" was soliciting bribes from individuals and companies which applied for licenses, land allocation and other services. The details and scope of the corruption was unknown. No investigation was carried out regarding the allegations by year's end.

Opposition parties claimed that the "government" mostly hired supporters of the two ruling coalition parties for public sector jobs during the year.

The "constitution" provides for the right of free access to "government" information; however, there are no specific laws that assure public access. Civil servants were not allowed to give access to "government" documents without first obtaining permission from their directors or "minister." There were no reported cases of persons being denied access to "government" information during the year.

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 restriction from the authorities, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. The authorities often were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Local human rights groups were concerned almost exclusively with alleged violations of Turkish Cypriot rights by Greek Cypriots. Other NGOs included groups promoting awareness of domestic violence, women's rights, and trafficking in persons. These groups were numerous but had little impact on public opinion or specific legislation. A few international NGOs were active in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, but many were hesitant to operate there due to political sensitivities related to working in this unrecognized area.

The UN, through the CMP, continued its efforts to account for persons who remained missing after the intercommunal violence beginning in 1963–64 and the conflict of 1974.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the authorities generally effectively enforced it; however, violence against women, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against Greek Cypriots and Maronites were problems.

Women

The law provides for no minimum sentence for individuals convicted of rape, including spousal rape; the maximum sentence is life imprisonment. The authorities and police effectively handled and prosecuted rape cases, including cases of spousal rape. There were no NGOs to support rape victims.

Kudret Celebi and Erkut Latif were arrested for raping a 14-year-old girl in the village of Akdogan in February 2006. Prior to the trial, the two men escaped from prison to the government-controlled area. In November 2006 they were caught and in June were sentenced to 12 years in prison for the kidnapping and rape.

Turkish taxi driver Mucahit Yanarates was sentenced in March 2006 to four years' imprisonment for raping Moldovan Mariana Gaiduc in Famagusta in 2005. After Yanarates' prison escape in June 2006, media reported that he was captured by ROC police and deported to Turkey via Greece.

Violence against women, including spousal abuse, was a problem. The law prohibits domestic violence. Even though claims were usually considered a family matter and settled out of court, there were eight domestic violence cases tried during the year, resulting in prison sentences for four persons and fines for six persons. The authorities considered a case credible only if there was at least one witness in addition to the victim.

The law does not specifically prohibit prostitution; however, encouraging or forcing a person to engage in prostitution is illegal, and procurement of a prostitute is a misdemeanor. The law regulating the hiring of women at nightclubs and cabarets provides penalties for women and employers who "partially or completely earn a living from prostitution."

In July 2006 the Nicosia District Court ordered the first prostitution-related imprisonment in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. After pleading no contest to the charges, the manager of Mexico nightclub, Mesut Kilicarslan, was sentenced to 15 days in prison for encouraging and profiting from prostitution. By year's end three more suspects were sentenced to imprisonment for encouraging and profiting from prostitution.

The law does not specifically prohibit sexual harassment; however, victims could pursue such cases under other sections of the law. Sexual harassment was not discussed widely, and any such incidents largely went unreported.

Women generally have the same legal status as men under property law, family law, and in the judicial system. Laws requiring equal pay for men and women performing the same work were generally enforced at the white–collar level; however, women working in the agricultural and textile sectors were routinely paid less than their male counterparts. There were several NGOs, but no functioning "government" agencies, that worked to protect women's rights.

Children

The authorities were generally committed to children's rights and welfare.

Education through the age of 15 was free and compulsory. Approximately 90 percent of children attended school up to the secondary level. It is estimated that approximately 70 percent completed some kind of post–secondary education. Unlike in previous years, the Greek Cypriot school, Rizokarpasso Gymnasium, a primary and secondary school in the enclaved communities, did not report any obstacles. The Turkish Cypriot authorities continued to screen all textbooks sent to Rizokarpasso Gymnasium, but unlike in previous years, did not send textbooks deemed as derogatory back to the government-controlled area. Unlike in previous years there were no reports of administrative harassment of school employees.

There were no reported cases of child abuse; however, as with domestic violence, there were social and cultural disincentives to seek legal remedies for such problems, which observers believed were underreported.

Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons, and there were widespread reports that women were trafficked to and within the area administered by Turkish Cypriots for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The green line reportedly serves as a porous crossing point for traffickers to move victims into the south.

The authorities issued worker "visas" to women, primarily from Eastern Europe, permitting their entry into the area administered by Turkish Cypriots to work in nightclubs and cabarets. There were credible reports that many of these women engaged in prostitution and that some women were coerced. The authorities acknowledged the existence of trafficking; however, they often confused it with human smuggling or illegal immigration. According to researchers, women working in nightclubs and cabarets often were sold by agencies that had advertised for models, babysitters, or elder caregivers. They also said that large casinos had offered women as "gifts to their richest customers." By year's end authorities had charged 55 suspects with 40 prostitution-related crimes. Fourteen cases were completed, resulting in the sentencing of three persons to prison terms, seven to fines, and four to bail. Cases against two persons were withdrawn. At year's end 26 cases against 30 persons were pending.

The authorities examined the extent of the trafficking problem and began to offer some assistance to victims. In 2005 the "Ministry of Health" began collecting questionnaires on working and living conditions from nightclub and cabaret employees and hired a Russian–speaking staff member to interview the women in private to ascertain whether they were coerced or forced to engage in prostitution. In April 2006 the "ministry" established a hot line number for victims, but it did not publicize the number adequately. In December 2006 the NGO Prologue Consulting Ltd. released a report concluding that many women working at nightclubs and cabarets were trafficked. Release of the report sparked numerous press reports and public debate.

The police reported that they had assisted international trafficking investigations through Turkish authorities.

There were no NGOs available to provide assistance to trafficking victims.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or in the provision of other state services, and in practice the authorities effectively enforced these provisions. The "government" employed 761 persons with disabilities and provided financial aid to the remaining 2,986 of the approximately 3,747 known persons with disabilities in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. The law does not mandate access to public buildings and other facilities for persons with disabilities. A local NGO reported that this remained the greatest problem for persons with disabilities in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law prohibits discrimination, and the 1975 Vienna III Agreement remains the legal source of authority regarding the treatment of Greek Cypriots and Maronites; however, the authorities' noncompliance with some of the agreement's provisions made daily life difficult for the 369 Greek Cypriot and 124 Maronite residents.

Greek Cypriots and Maronites in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots alleged that they were subject to surveillance, although less so than in previous years, and representatives of both communities claimed that their telephones were tapped.

Under the Vienna III agreement, the UN Force in Cyprus visited the enclaved Greek Cypriots weekly and the Maronites twice a month; any additional visits had to be preapproved by the authorities. Although the Vienna III Agreement provides for medical care by a doctor from the Greek Cypriot community, the authorities only permitted care provided by registered Turkish Cypriot doctors; enclaved persons also traveled to the government-controlled area for medical care.

Greek Cypriots and Maronites were able to take possession of some of their properties but were unable to leave any of their properties to heirs residing in the government-controlled area. The authorities allowed the enclaved residents to make improvements to their homes and to apply for permission to build new structures on their properties. Maronites living in the government−controlled area could use their properties only if those properties were not under the control of the Turkish military or allocated to Turkish Cypriots.

A majority of foreign workers in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots were Turkish. One NGO reported that Turkish workers were often targeted by police investigations during the year, albeit less frequently after the authorities registered all foreign workers. The same NGO also reported that many Turkish workers lived in derelict buildings in Nicosia, with up to 20 persons sleeping in one room. Those working in the agricultural or construction sectors reportedly were forced to sleep on the ground, and those working at restaurants were seen sleeping after hours on chairs in the establishments where they work.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The law criminalizes homosexuality in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. Homosexuality remained highly proscribed socially and rarely discussed.

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

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

All workers except members of the police and military forces have the legal right to form and join unions of their own choosing without prior authorization, and workers did so in practice. Approximately 1 percent of private sector workers, 60 to 70 percent of semi−public sector workers, and nearly all public−sector workers belonged to labor unions.

Some companies pressured workers to join unions led or approved by the company. Officials of independent unions claimed that the authorities created rival public sector unions to weaken the independent unions.

The law does not prohibit antiunion discrimination, and union leaders claimed that private sector employers were able to discourage union activity because the enforcement of labor regulations was sporadic and penalties−−such as reassignment to an undesirable location or denial of promotion−−for antiunion practices were nominal.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference, and the authorities generally protected this right in practice. The law provides for collective bargaining, and workers exercised this right in practice; however, collective bargaining agreements were not legally enforceable. The "Ministry of Economy" and union officials estimated that 98 percent of workers in the public sector, 60 to 70 percent of workers in the semipublic sector, e.g., the "state" university, and 1 percent of workers in the private sector were unionized. Public and semipublic employees made up approximately 30 to 35 percent of the work force and benefited from collective bargaining agreements. Although the law provides for the right to strike, employers have an unrestricted right to hire replacement workers in the event of a strike, which limited the effectiveness of the right to strike. The law does not ensure due process for essential service workers and, in fact, states that judges and members of the police and the armed forces do not have the right to strike. The authorities have the power to curtail strikes in "essential services" and, although this power was rarely used in practice, in October the "government" invoked its right to postpone a strike for 60 days at the "state" university, citing the crucial need of students to continue their education without interruption. The wage-related dispute between the "government" and the unions was subsequently mostly resolved.

There are no special laws for or exemptions from regular labor laws in the export processing zone at the port of Famagusta.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The authorities prohibited forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that such practices occurred. Women were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. Legal and illegal migrant workers were subject to reduced wages or nonpayment of wages, beatings, and the threat of deportation.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The authorities effectively enforced the laws and policies to protect children from exploitation in the workplace.

The minimum age for employment in an "industrial undertaking" is 16, and children may be employed in apprentice positions at 15. There were labor inspectors who enforced the law effectively. It was common in family−run shops for children to work after school, and children as young as 11 worked in orchards during school holidays.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

As of February the minimum wage was approximately $815 (950 lira) per month, which did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. On December 27, the minimum wage was raised to approximately $910 (1060 lira), effective January 1, 2008. Migrant workers were often offered substandard accommodation as part of their compensation or were made to pay for accommodation. The "Ministry of Labor and Social Security" is responsible for enforcing the minimum wage, and it was generally enforced. However, one NGO reported that legal foreign workers in general were paid below the minimum wage.

The legal maximum workweek was 38 hours in the winter and 36 hours in the summer. Labor inspectors generally enforced these laws, except in the case of migrant workers, who worked irregular hours and at times reportedly were required by their employers to work up to 14 hours per day, seven days a week. The law requires overtime pay, but it was not uniformly enforced.

As part of an overall scheme to better regulate legal foreign workers, the "Ministry of Labor and Social Security" and police routinely checked restaurants, hotels, nightclubs, casinos, and construction sites to make sure that workers had valid work "permits," that they had signed a contract with their employers, and that working conditions were safe and sanitary.

In September the "government" amended the labor law, prohibiting the employment of workers in the construction sector and related fields on Sundays. The "Ministry of Labor and Social Security" stated the amendment was needed in part to prevent employers from forcing employees to work seven days a week. The authorities and the police jointly implemented the law and warned or fined employers in contravention of it.

The authorities sporadically enforced occupational safety and health regulations. Although factory inspectors processed complaints and inspected businesses to ensure that occupational safety laws were observed, workers who filed complaints did not receive satisfactory legal protection and could face dismissal. Workers did not have the legal right to remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety without risking their continued employment.

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