

under three years old, people with disabilities and older adults in a dependent situation). This failure had a direct impact on the lives of women, who do the majority of unpaid care work. According to the most up-to-date official statistics from the Ministry of Social Development, 61.4% of women's weekly workload in Uruguay was unpaid, compared with 35.9% for men.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

Obstacles to accessing public mental health services persisted because of insufficient availability of appointments in the face of increased demand at a national level.

According to the Ministry of Health, in 2022, 823 people died by suicide, a rate of 23.2 per 100,000 inhabitants and more than twice as high as the rest of Latin America.

RIGHT TO WATER

For the first half of 2023, a water emergency affected part of the Metropolitan Region (departments of Montevideo and Canelones), causing drinking water shortages.¹ Difficulties accessing clear and accurate information about the management of the water crisis and the quality of drinking water were reported.

In July, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights urged the government to prioritize water for human consumption. According to the State Sanitary Works (OSE) and information provided by the Faculty of Chemistry of the University of the Republic, a considerable increase in salinity levels had been affecting the quality of drinking water, impacting more than 60% of the population, particularly the most vulnerable groups.

1. "Uruguay: Access to drinking water is a human right", 29 May (Spanish only)

UZBEKISTAN

Republic of Uzbekistan

The alleged organizers of mass protests in 2022 were sentenced in unfair trials on politically motivated charges. Authorities tightened their grip on critical voices, especially on social media. Torture and ill-treatment remained widespread in places of detention, and impunity was commonplace for those suspected of criminal responsibility. Amendments to the criminal and administrative codes criminalized domestic violence. The exercise of the right to freedom of religion remained tightly controlled.

BACKGROUND

Controversial changes to the constitution, which had led to mass protests in Karakalpakstan in 2022, were adopted following a referendum in April.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev was elected uncontested to a new seven-year term in June.

UNFAIR TRIALS

Dozens of people connected with the violently suppressed mass protests in Karakalpakstan were convicted in unfair trials on politically motivated charges throughout the year.

On 31 January, a court in the city of Bukhara, eastern Uzbekistan, sentenced lawyer and editor Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov to 16 years' imprisonment over alleged violent crimes in relation to the protests. The judges dismissed his allegations of torture and video footage from the protests that showed him urging the crowd not to resort to violence. Human rights defenders monitoring the trial expressed concern that the 21 co-defendants of Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov were coerced into incriminating him in exchange for lighter sentences. On 6 June, the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan upheld his verdict on appeal. He maintained his innocence.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

Despite widespread allegations of unlawful use of force against peaceful protesters in Karakalpakstan, only three members of the security forces were held accountable. According to a statement issued by the Supreme Court in August, two unnamed police officers were convicted of torturing detainees and sentenced to seven years in prison, and a third was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for failing to assist a dying person.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Defamation and insult, including insulting the president, remained criminal offences. Authorities tightened their grip on critical voices, especially those on social media.

At least 10 bloggers were convicted on allegedly fabricated and politically motivated charges for critical online publications.

In February, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that the detention of Otabek Sattoriy was arbitrary and called for his release. He was serving a six-and-a-half-year prison sentence on defamation and extortion charges for his criticism of corruption among local officials. In April, he was denied a transfer to less harsh prison conditions because of alleged violations of prison rules, but was eventually transferred to an open-type prison in December.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment remained widespread in places of detention and impunity remained commonplace for those suspected of criminal responsibility.

There was no progress in the implementation of proposals made by the Prosecutor General's Office in 2021 to address torture by reforming the criminal code, establishing independent mechanisms to monitor torture complaints, improving prison conditions and addressing reparations for torture.

The parliamentary commission set up in July 2022 to investigate the violence in Karakalpakstan, including the torture

allegations, had still failed to publish a report on its findings by the end of the year.

In November, two UN Special Rapporteurs expressed concern for the safety and well-being of Daulemurat Tazhimuratov (see above, Unfair trials) after his lawyer reported that his mental and physical health had significantly deteriorated in September. He had been kept in solitary confinement with no access to information and denied adequate healthcare and food.

During his appeal hearing in October, imprisoned blogger Abdukodir Muminov told the court that police had “electrocuted my body, kicked and crushed my genitals, repeatedly hit my leg with a special baton ... [and] broke my rib” to force a confession. The court failed to order an investigation into his claims of torture.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In April, legislative amendments criminalized domestic violence as a separate offence for the first time and provided women and children who are victims of violence with additional protection mechanisms.¹ These new legal protections were, however, officially described as “strengthening the institution of the family” and were undermined by officials prioritizing reconciliation and reunification of families over the protection of women's and children's rights.

In September, the Committee on Family and Women's Affairs reported that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had issued 21,871 protection orders to women who had experienced violence or abuse between January and August. Most cases, and 84.7% of the orders related to domestic violence, ended in reconciliation.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The draft criminal code retained an article criminalizing consensual sexual relations between adult men. During his visit in March, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged authorities to exclude this article.

Uzbekistan accepted all the recommendations made by states at the UPR

of its human rights record in November, except for those on LGBTI people's rights. The government cited "generally accepted norms" as the reason for declining to implement these recommendations.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Authorities continued to restrict the exercise of religious freedom despite repeated promises to eliminate restrictions and amend the 2021 Law on Religion.

Authorities persisted in prosecuting devout Muslims on overly broad and vaguely worded "extremism-related" charges and failed to investigate their allegations of torture and ill-treatment. Student Sardor Rakhmankulov, sentenced to five years' imprisonment in January for sharing an Islamic religious song via social media, alleged in court that police had suffocated him with a plastic bag and taken turns kicking him. An appeal court failed to consider his allegations of torture.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

In August, CEE Bankwatch Network and the Uzbek Forum for Human Rights lodged a complaint against the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The complaint, filed with the bank's Independent Project Accountability Mechanism, related to its failure to address concerns about illegal land confiscations, exploitative contracts, and mass redundancies at Indorama Agro, one of Uzbekistan's largest private cotton producers, before releasing funds. Managers had been actively trying to dismantle Indorama's workers' union, the only independent trade union in the country.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Uzbekistan's energy sector remained heavily dependent on fossil fuels and continued to heavily subsidize the use of fossil fuels. In October, the government signed an agreement with the World Bank to fund national policies to reduce emissions, including through subsidy reform and carbon market transactions.

Air pollution in major population centres, mainly from the burning of fossil fuels for

energy and transport, regularly reached levels classified as dangerous. Research by the World Bank and the Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction found that mortality attributable to particulate air pollution aggravated by dust from encroaching desertification had resulted in an economic loss equivalent to 6% of GDP.

1. "Uzbekistan: Parliament passes long-overdue legislation criminalizing domestic violence", 6 April

VENEZUELA

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Lack of access to economic and social rights remained a serious concern, with the majority of the population experiencing severe food insecurity. The public health system was in a state of collapse. The government failed to implement humanitarian measures agreed in 2022 to address these issues. Protests demanding economic and social rights were met with unlawful force and other repressive measures by security forces. Critics of President Maduro's government were arbitrarily detained, forcibly disappeared and tortured with the acquiescence of the judicial system. The government acknowledged 455 cases of enforced disappearance reported since 2015, the majority of which had not been resolved. Impunity for ongoing extrajudicial executions by the security forces persisted. Despite some releases at the end of the year, politically motivated arbitrary detentions remained systematic. The UN Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela exposed crimes against humanity, called for investigations into the state's repressive policies, and noted a lack of compliance with previous recommendations. The ICC continued its investigation into crimes against humanity in Venezuela despite the government's attempts to suspend the process. Prison conditions, including a lack of access to water and food, deteriorated