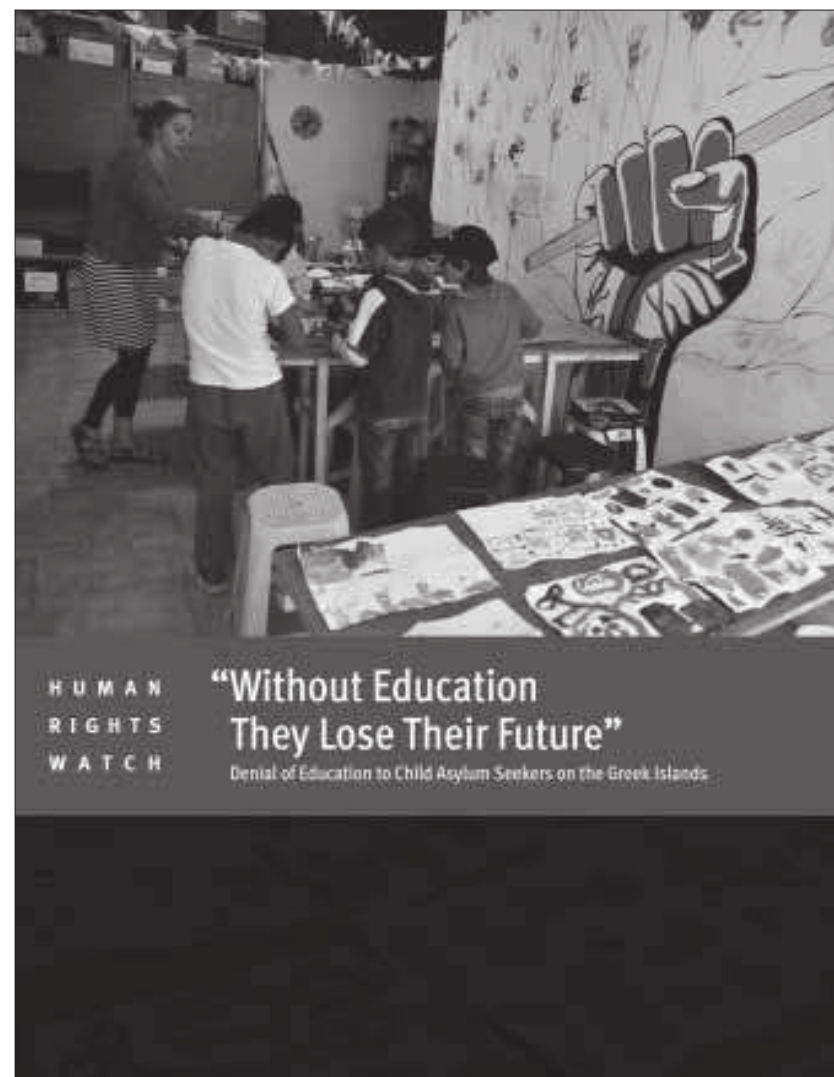




ing the year, sometimes violently. Greece did not address reception needs of newly arriving asylum seekers in the region, despite an increase in arrivals starting in April. As a result, women and girls were housed with unrelated men in sites for reception or detention of asylum seekers and lacked access to essential services.

Less than 15 percent of asylum-seeking children had access to education on the islands, and only one in two on the mainland were enrolled in public schools.

Far-right groups continued to campaign against asylum seekers on the islands, and there were media reports of attacks across the country on persons perceived to be migrants or Muslims. Police statistics for hate crimes for 2017 released in March showed a marked increase compared to the previous year.

The Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture visited Greece in April, and issued a preliminary report expressing concerns about inhuman and degrading treatment in psychiatric establishments and migrant detention centers.

Hungary

Hungary’s ruling party Fidesz and its Prime Minister Viktor Orbán won a third consecutive term with a two-thirds majority in elections in April.

Ahead of the April elections, the government ran a smear campaign on TV, radio, and country-wide billboards targeting civil society organizations working on asylum and migration, and Hungarian-born philanthropist George Soros, a key funder.

During the election campaigning period, government officials, including Prime Minister Orbán, referred to civil society organizations, political opposition, and critical journalists as “agents of Soros.”

In addition to the smear campaign, which continued after the elections in pro-government media, civil society organizations, particularly those working on asylum and migration, came under increasing government pressure in 2018.

In June, parliament approved government-proposed amendments to the constitution and other legislation, criminalizing services, advice, and support to migrants and asylum seekers, punishable by up to one-year imprisonment. The

measures came into force in July. At time of writing, no prosecutions had taken place. The measures were adopted despite criticism from the Council of Europe commissioner for human rights in February, the UN Human Rights Committee in April, UNHCR in May, and the Council of Europe's constitutional advisory body in June.

EU institutions took various enforcement actions against Hungary during the year (see Rule of Law section).

In August, a special 25 percent tax on funding to organizations "supporting immigration" was introduced, exempting only political parties and international organizations with immunity.

No agreement was reached between Central European University and the Hungarian government to secure the university's operations in Hungary after the government introduced an abusive law in 2017 aimed at forcing the university out of the country.

A law on public assembly due to enter into force in October 2018 gives police more discretion to ban or disband demonstrations.

The country saw a significant decline in asylum applications in 2018 in large part because it became almost impossible for asylum seekers to enter the country to seek protection.

By August, authorities had limited daily entry of asylum seekers to 1-2 asylum seekers per day, leaving thousands stranded in poor conditions in Serbia. In early August, Hungarian authorities denied rejected asylum seekers in the transit zones food. Following an emergency intervention by the European Court of Human Rights, authorities resumed food distribution.

In July, a constitutional amendment entered into force further restricting access to asylum by explicitly banning the "settlement of foreign populations" in Hungary and refusing protection to any asylum seekers arriving in Hungary via any transit country that Hungarian authorities deem safe for asylum seekers. By August, a total of 3,119 people filed for asylum, and authorities granted international protection to a total of 320 people, of whom 54 received refugee status and 266 received subsidiary protection.

Roma continued to face discrimination in housing, education, and public health care.

The July constitutional amendment criminalized homelessness, ignoring criticism in June by the UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing that the plan was cruel and incompatible with human rights law. Homeless people were prosecuted after the law entered into force in October.

Italy

A coalition government between the anti-immigrant League and the populist Five Star Movement was inaugurated in June. In March, the UN high commissioner for human rights deplored the racism and xenophobia that characterized the election campaign.

By mid-November, only 22,435 migrants and asylum seekers had reached Italy by sea according to UNHCR, in large part because of measures to prevent arrivals already put in place by the outgoing government. In contrast, during the whole of 2017, 119,369 people arrived.

Almost immediately upon taking power, the new government intensified that approach and began blocking disembarkation of rescued persons in Italian ports. In November, a Sicilian prosecutor filed to close an investigation, launched in August, into Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Matteo Salvini for unlawful detention and kidnapping, among other charges, for refusing to allow 177 asylum seekers from an Italian Coast Guard ship disembark, some for as long as 5 days.

In June, Italy began systematically handing over coordination of rescues in the Mediterranean to the Libyan Coast Guard, despite concerns over their capacity and the fate of individuals returned to Libya. In August, parliament approved the supply of 12 boats and training programs for Libyan crews.

In November, parliament approved a government decree limiting humanitarian visas and restricting access to specialized reception centers. One-quarter of asylum seekers in 2017 was granted permission to stay for humanitarian reasons, and up to 28 percent of decisions taken in January-February of 2018 granted humanitarian visas. In October, prosecutors charged the mayor of Riace, in south-