



2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Israel

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Israel is a multi-party parliamentary democracy. Although it has no constitution, the parliament, the unicameral 120-member Knesset, has enacted a series of "Basic Laws" that enumerate fundamental rights. Certain fundamental laws, orders, and regulations legally depend on the existence of a "State of Emergency," which has been in effect since 1948. Under the Basic Laws, the Knesset has the power to dissolve the government and mandate elections. The nationwide Knesset elections in January 2013, considered free and fair, resulted in a coalition government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Security forces reported to civilian authorities. (An annex to this report covers human rights in the occupied territories. This report deals with human rights in Israel and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.)

During the year a number of developments affected both the Israeli and Palestinian populations. From July 8 to August 26, Israel conducted a military operation designated as Operation Protective Edge, which according to Israeli officials responded to increases in the number of rockets deliberately fired from Gaza at Israeli civilian areas beginning in late June, as well as militants' attempts to infiltrate the country through tunnels from Gaza. According to publicly available data, Hamas and other militant groups fired 4,465 rockets and mortar shells into Israel, while the government conducted 5,242 airstrikes within Gaza and a 20-day military ground operation in Gaza. According to the United Nations, the operation killed 2,205 Palestinians. The Israeli government estimated that half of those killed were civilians and half were combatants, according to an analysis of data, while the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded 1,483 civilian deaths – more than two-thirds of those killed – including 521 children and 283 women; 74 persons in Israel were killed, among them 67 combatants, six Israeli civilians, and one Thai civilian. Further information on the human rights situation in the occupied territories is in the annex.

The most significant human rights problems were terrorist attacks targeting civilians and politically or religiously motivated societal violence; institutional and societal discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel, many of whom self-identify as Palestinian, including the Bedouin, in particular in access to equal education and employment opportunities; societal discrimination against women; and the treatment of refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants.

Other human rights problems included institutional and societal discrimination against non-Orthodox Jews, some minority religious groups, and intermarried families, and labor rights abuses against foreign workers.

The government took steps to prosecute and punish officials who committed abuses regardless of rank or seniority. The government proceeded with structural reforms to reduce impunity and increase accountability.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There was one report the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

On November 7, police shot and killed Israeli citizen Kheir al-Din Hamdan in Kafr Kana. Police stated he tried to stab an officer during an officer's attempt to arrest Hamdan; police fired a warning shot in the air before shooting Hamdan in the chest. Video footage of the event depicted Hamdan attacking a police vehicle and also raised questions as to whether police followed their rules of engagement. The Department for Investigating Police Officers announced it was launching an investigation into the killing, and the results of the investigation were pending as of November 14.

The number of terrorist attacks increased during the year, including the kidnapping of Israeli and Palestinian civilians, and attempted terrorist attacks by infiltration through tunnels from the Gaza Strip. According to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), there were 4,824 attacks and cross-border incidents originating from Gaza, including 4,435 rockets and mortars fired from the Gaza Strip by Hamas and other armed groups, that killed seven civilians; 223 cross-border incidents, including rocket and mortar shootings, infiltrations, and smuggling attempts from Egypt; 1,936 cross-border incidents originating from Lebanon by Palestinians living in Lebanon, Lebanese Hizballah, or other militants targeting Israeli towns or Israeli military patrols; and 1,137 cross-border incidents originating from Syria that killed one civilian. Some cases were due to errant firing, but observers believed some cases were deliberate targeting of military patrols and Israeli civilian communities in the Golan Heights.

There were attacks by individuals and militant or terrorist groups targeting civilians. On August 4, a large construction vehicle driven by a Palestinian struck and overturned an empty passenger bus in West Jerusalem's Shmuel HaNavi neighborhood, killing one and injuring several others, in what authorities called "a terrorist attack." On November 10, a Palestinian attacker stabbed an Israeli soldier waiting at a bus station in Tel Aviv; the soldier later died of his wounds, and security forces apprehended the attacker. On November 18, two Palestinians attacked worshippers within the Kehilat Bnai Torah synagogue in western Jerusalem with guns, knives, and axes, resulting in the deaths of four rabbis and a police officer.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of disappearances or politically motivated abductions.

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

The law does not refer to a specific crime of torture but prohibits acts such as assault and pressure by a public official. In 1999 the High Court of Justice ruled that, although torture and the application of physical or psychological pain were illegal, Israel Security Agency (ISA) interrogators may be exempt from criminal prosecution if they used such methods in extraordinary cases determined to involve an imminent threat or "ticking bomb" scenario. Human rights organizations alleged that interrogation methods permitted by law and actually used by security personnel included beatings and forcing an individual to hold a stress position for long periods, while the government insisted it did not use any interrogation methods prohibited by the UN

Convention against Torture. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) continued to criticize other alleged detention practices they termed abusive, including isolation, sleep deprivation, and psychological abuse such as threats to interrogate family members or demolish family homes. Authorities stated the ISA held detainees in isolation only in extreme cases and when there was no alternative option and that isolation was not used as a means of augmenting interrogation, forcing a confession, or as punishment. The government rejected claims that interrogations of minors breached the convention.

The Ministry of Justice Inspector for Complaints against ISA Interrogators took the testimony of detainees whom authorities had interrogated, then released and instituted a reform that allows representatives of the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) to be present in meetings between complainants and the inspector. While the inspector stated that closing all pre-2013 complaint cases was a priority, all 2012 complaint cases remained pending before the inspector as of November 14.

The Turkel Commission was established to implement the findings of the 2010 report of the Public Commission to Examine the Maritime Incident – the interception and capture by the Israeli Navy of ships carrying humanitarian aid bound for Gaza. Following the publication of the Turkel Commission's Second Report in February 2013, the government set up a new complaint mechanism within the Ministry of Justice for allegations of torture and appointed an independent Inspector of Interrogee Complaints in February.

In February 2013 Palestinian Arafat Jaradat, whom Israeli security forces detained on February 18 for allegedly throwing stones near Hebron during 2012 protests against Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense, died in custody at Megido Prison. Israeli authorities stated an autopsy on Jaradat was "inconclusive." Palestinian authorities, who also conducted an autopsy, asserted Jaradat's body bore signs of torture. The government appointed a judge and police unit to investigate the death, and the investigation remained pending at the end of October.

In December, three members of the anti-intermarriage organization Lehava were arrested and reportedly confessed to setting fire to the Max Rayne Hand in Hand school in Jerusalem. Their attorney alleged his clients were subjected to threats, denial of sleep, and psychological pressure in questioning and moved to disqualify their confessions.

Following a temporary suspension of police use of Taser guns in 2013, and following the institution of updated operating and training procedures in April, the police commissioner reauthorized police to use Tasers.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

The law provides prisoners and detainees the right to conditions that do not harm their health or dignity. Conditions in facilities run by the Israel Prison Service (IPS) generally met international standards, according to international and domestic NGOs. NGOs reported the government restricted NGO access to the Saharonim detention facility for African migrants and asylum seekers, although authorities stated the IPS did not limit the entry of visitors to the facilities holding persons who entered the country illegally. Authorities did not allow NGOs access inside the Holot facility until March. (Conditions in four facilities for security detainees are covered in the annex.)

Physical Conditions: At year's end there were 18,658 prisoners in IPS facilities in Israel and the occupied territories, including 217 minors. Prison conditions were the same for male and female prisoners. Security prisoners, the majority of whom were Palestinians from the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, often faced harsher conditions from those of the general prison population, including administrative detention (holding suspected criminals indefinitely without presenting

charges or going to trial), restricted family visits, ineligibility for temporary furloughs, and solitary confinement. According to the government, as of November 12, there were 458 administrative detainees in IPS detention centers, a significant increase over the previous reporting year. None was detained longer than four years (see section 1.d.). No administrative detainees were minors or women.

Security prisoners organized a mass hunger strike between April 24 and June 24 to protest prison conditions and demand the government end administrative detention. Initially, 125 detainees took part in the strike, although the IPS reported the total number of participants over the course of the two-month protest reached 290 prisoners and detainees, with 70 hospitalized at various points. One Palestinian administrative detainee, Ayman Tbaish (Atbisha), began a hunger strike to protest the conditions of his imprisonment March 3; he ended his 122-day hunger strike on June 30.

Death was rare in prisons and detention centers. The family of a Palestinian prisoner who died on February 25 alleged he died of complications from an assault by prison guards, although the IPS maintained the prisoner died from a heart attack for which he was previously hospitalized. On September 9, Palestinian security prisoner Raed Jaabari committed suicide in Eshel Prison in Beer Sheva. Jaabari had been in prison for several weeks but was not on suicide watch. Authorities stated they would establish a special commission of inquiry to investigate the incident.

All prisoners had access to potable water, and observers generally regarded food, sanitation, and medical care as adequate. Nevertheless, PCATI claimed there was inadequate accommodation for Arab women prisoners in HaSharon Prison, including solitary confinement, failure to provide for hygienic and medical needs, denial of access to education and intolerance towards their religious sensibilities. NGOs reported lack of access to medical, legal, and social services in detention centers for irregular migrants but noted access to medical care greatly improved in the second half of the year.

Social workers provided individual social and supportive treatment, with emphasis on identifying and providing services for trafficking victims, victims of abuse, and victims of sexual violations.

Administration: Recordkeeping was adequate. The law allows for alternatives to sentencing for nonviolent offenders, including community service. Prisoners and detainees had reasonable access to visitors, including through a program of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that brought prisoners' relatives from the West Bank and Gaza into the country for prison visits. The ICRC and the government reported a complete cessation of family visits to all prisoners following the June 14 kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenage citizens in the West Bank and a cessation of visitors to all Palestinian prisoners throughout Operation Protective Edge that continued for some weeks thereafter. Visits to Fatah-associated detainees from the West Bank and East Jerusalem resumed on July 16, before resuming for all prisoners on September 13, but with specific rules. Visits to prisoners from Gaza resumed October 20.

Authorities allowed visits from lawyers even in the absence of active legal proceedings, and authorities stated that every inmate who requested to meet with an attorney was able to do so. Travel restrictions on entry into the country, however, affected the access of lawyers and other visitors to some Palestinian prisoners. Authorities permitted prisoners religious observance and to send and receive letters.

The law allows prisoners to submit a petition to judicial authorities alleging substandard prison conditions, and authorities investigated credible allegations of inhuman conditions, documented such investigations, and released the results publicly. Additionally, the state comptroller serves as ombudsman and investigates public complaints against government institutions, including the IPS.

Independent Monitoring: The ICRC regularly monitored IPS facilities and the two IDF provisional detention centers in accordance with its standard modalities. It also visited detainees in interrogation centers. PCATI reported authorities allowed it to study the pre-check and investigative materials from interrogations for the first time on October 24. It intends to continue pressing for structural reforms, including mandatory video recordings of interrogations. The Public Defenders' Office is officially responsible for monitoring and reporting on prison conditions, and it did so during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions for all citizens. Non-Israeli residents of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights were subject to the same laws as Israeli citizens. Noncitizens of Palestinian origin detained on security grounds fell under military jurisdiction even if detained in Israel (see annex). Until nullified by the High Court of Justice on September 22, a 2013 amendment to the 1954 Prevention of Infiltration Law allowed the government to detain newly arrived irregular migrants and asylum seekers for one year in the Saharonim facility and to hold irregular migrants indefinitely in Holot, a remote, open facility run by the IPS (see section 2.d.). Most detention practices remained in place for 90 days following the High Court's decision.

On December 8, the Knesset passed a third amendment to the "Prevention of Infiltration" law. The amended law limits detention time in Holot to 20 months, while allowing for new asylum seekers to be initially placed in Saharonim prison for up to three months. The Supreme Court subsequently acceded to an NGO appeal to instate an injunction temporarily barring the summons of irregular migrants and asylum seekers to Holot; the court then lifted the injunction on the last day of the year.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

Under the authority of the prime minister, the ISA combats terrorism and espionage in the country and the occupied territories. The national police, including the border police and the immigration police, are under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Security. The IDF is responsible for external security and has no jurisdiction over citizens. ISA forces operating in the occupied territories fall under the IDF for operations and operational debriefing. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the ISA and police forces, and the government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. The government took steps to investigate allegations of the use of excessive force by police and military. Although there were no credible reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year, NGOs criticized the low number of indictments issued relative to the number of investigations opened and the high percentage of cases closed due to investigation failures by military police.

The Department for Investigation of Police Officers in the Ministry of Justice, established in 2013, assumed full responsibility for investigating complaints against ISA bodies, including incidents involving the Israeli police and the border police occurring in Israeli territory and East Jerusalem and incidents that took place in the occupied territories but did not involve use of a weapon. The position of inspector for complaints against the ISA interrogators was officially transferred from the ISA to the Ministry of Justice. A new inspector assumed duties and began operating at the ministry in May; the unit in the ISA was disbanded. The State Comptroller's Office also reviewed ISA interrogations.

Investigative responsibility for abuses by the IDF, including incidents involving a weapon in which police units were operating under IDF authority in the occupied territories, remained within the Ministry of Defense in the Military Police Criminal Investigations Department.

In January the cabinet secretary appointed a committee to implement the findings of the 2010 report of the Public Commission to Examine the Maritime Incident, (commonly known as the "Turkel Commission") to improve the efficacy, speed, and transparency of internal investigative processes. Following Operation Protective Edge, IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz appointed Major General Noam Tibon to head a special investigative committee for incidents involving civilian deaths during the operation. He stated the IDF intended to implement the recommendations of that committee.

On September 4, Israeli NGOs B'Tselem and Yesh Din stated that existing accountability mechanisms precluded serious internal investigations by the military and were marred by severe structural flaws that rendered them incapable of conducting professional investigations.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

By law police must have warrants based on sufficient evidence and issued by an authorized official to arrest a suspect. Authorities generally informed such persons promptly of charges against them. The law allows authorities to detain suspects without charge for 24 hours before bringing them before a judge, with limited exceptions allowing for up to 48 hours. Authorities respected these rights for persons arrested in the country. There was a functioning bail system, and detainees could appeal decisions denying bail. Authorities allowed detainees to consult with an attorney in a timely manner, including one provided by the government for the indigent, and to contact family members promptly.

According to the circumstances of each case, such as the severity of the alleged offense, status as a minor, risk of escape, or other factors, authorities either granted or denied bail to noncitizens of Palestinian origin detained for security violations. Authorities held most Palestinian minors (under age 18) arrested in the West Bank and Gaza in prisons in Israel but prosecuted them under the Israeli military law applicable to the occupied territories, which denies many of the rights they would be granted under Israeli law. A person detained on security grounds may be prosecuted criminally or held as an administrative detainee or illegal combatant, according to one of three legal regimes.

First, under a temporary law on criminal procedures, repeatedly renewed since 2006, the IPS may hold persons suspected of a security offense for 48 hours prior to bringing them before a judge, with limited exceptions allowing the IPS to detain a suspect up to 96 hours before bringing the suspect before the senior judge of a district court. In security-related cases, a person may be held for up to 35 days without an indictment (versus 30 days for other than security-related cases), and the law allows the court to lengthen the holding of a detainee on security grounds for an initial period of up to 20 days for interrogation without an indictment (versus 15 days for other than security-related cases). Authorities may deny security detainees access to an attorney for up to 21 days.

Second, the 1979 Emergency Powers Law allows the defense ministry to detain persons administratively without charge for up to six months, renewable indefinitely. Administrative detention was used as an exception when intelligence sources could not be presented as evidence for criminal proceedings. On October 7, B'Tselem reported a significant increase in the number of administrative detainees as a result of operations associated with a search and arrest campaign in the West bank and arrests as part of the IDF ground operation in Gaza, as the number of administrative detainees rose from 152 at the end of 2013 to 473 detainees at the end of August. The government reported there were 458 administrative detainees as of November 12. An administrative detainee has the right to appeal any decision to lengthen detention to a military court of appeals and then to the Supreme Court, and detainees routinely did so. The military courts

may rely on classified evidence denied to detainees and their lawyers when determining whether to prolong administrative detention.

Third, the 2002 Illegal Combatant Law permits authorities to hold a detainee for 14 days before review by a district court judge, deny access to counsel for up to 21 days with the attorney general's approval, and allow indefinite detention subject to twice-yearly district court reviews and appeals to the Supreme Court.

Arbitrary Arrest: There were no credible reports of arbitrary or false arrests, although some leaders of Arab-Israeli society questioned the high number of arrests of Arab-Israeli youths in conjunction with widespread June-August protests whom authorities subsequently released without charges.

Pretrial Detention: Administrative detention continued to result in lengthy pretrial detention for Palestinian security detainees. Authorities held most detainees for less than one year but held some for more than one year and a small number for more than two years.

Detention of Rejected Asylum Seekers or Stateless Persons: The law affords foreign nationals suspected of immigration violations a hearing within four days of detention. They have the right to, but no assurance of, legal representation. According to the *Haaretz* newspaper, as of December 28, the government was holding 2,242 irregular migrants and asylum seekers under a June 2013 amendment to the 1954 Prevention of Infiltration Law, which defines all irregular border crossers as "infiltrators" and permits authorities to detain irregular migrants, including asylum seekers and their children, indefinitely. Under the 1954 law and the 2013 amendment, an "infiltrator" could be released from a prison detention facility to an "open" detention facility, in which detainees may come and go freely during the day, although they must report for mandatory check-ins if the government did not begin to process the asylum claim within three months, did not decide the claim within nine months, or if three years elapsed from the time authorities first detained the unauthorized migrant. The law, however, authorized the government to detain asylum seekers indefinitely in an open facility without assurance any refugee claims would be processed. The law set the permitted length of detention for illegal entry at one year. It also allowed the government to hold male African migrants and asylum seekers indefinitely in a remote open facility run by the IPS that is closed at night and requires three check-ins during the day. The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants secured temporary release from open facilities for men who could prove they were fathers or husbands with spouses or children in the country. Throughout the year thousands of African migrants and asylum seekers staged protests in Tel Aviv to oppose arbitrary detention, poor living conditions, and failure to adjudicate their claims for asylum. On June 27, hundreds of African migrants and asylum seekers departed the open detention facility and marched to the Egyptian border. Police arrested them two days later and returned them to the Saharonim prison to await trial.

On September 22, the High Court of Justice nullified the 2013 amendment to the 1954 Prevention of Infiltration Law and ordered the IPS to close the Holot facility within 90 days and end the mandatory roll call at the facility within two days of the ruling, although the ruling did not reverse the policy that Holot detainees could not seek employment. The court called the practice of detaining newly arrived irregular migrants in Saharonim "a severe violation of their rights." It challenged the government's assumption that most irregular migrants entered the country for economic reasons, noting the harsh conditions in Eritrea and Sudan, the two main countries of origin, and cited the government's practice of not enforcing repatriation to those countries. In a report issued prior to the High Court ruling, Human Rights Watch (HRW) characterized the country's confinement of Eritreans and Sudanese in Holot as a breach of the international law prohibiting arbitrary detention. HRW representatives said that the facility's isolation prevented persons from normal occupational and social activities, that they were not held for a lawful

purpose such as facilitating deportation, and that they were held indefinitely with no effective means to challenge the decision to detain them.

On December 8, in response to the Supreme Court's decision, the Knesset passed a third amendment to the infiltration law. The amended law limits detention time in Holot to 20 months, while allowing for new asylum seekers to be initially placed in Saharonim prison for up to three months. A joint statement issued by a coalition of NGOs – including Amnesty International, Hotline for Refugees and Migrants, the African Refugee Development Center, and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel – declared their intent to appeal the amendment, which they contended would only continue to violate the rights of asylum seekers while doing nothing to address the underlying concerns about crime and other problems. Amnesty International also noted the government continued efforts to encourage "voluntary" returns, including through agreements it made with foreign governments, which have not been made public and may offer no assurance of the protection of asylum seekers. The Supreme Court subsequently acceded to an NGO appeal to instate an injunction temporarily barring the summons of irregular migrants and asylum seekers to Holot; the court then lifted the injunction on December 31.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence. (The annex covers military court trials of Palestinians and others in the occupied territories.)

Trial Procedures

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

Defendants enjoy the rights to a presumption of innocence, to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them, to a fair trial without undue delay, and to adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense. They may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt, and may consult with an attorney, or if indigent, have one provided at public expense. Trials are public except when a court determines a closed trial is required to protect state security, foreign relations, a party's or witness's right to privacy, or a victim of a sexual offense. There are no trials by jury. Defendants have the right to confront witnesses against them, present witnesses and evidence on their behalf, access evidence held against them (except when the court determines such access would compromise national security), and appeal to the Supreme Court. The government may on security grounds withhold from defense lawyers evidence it gathered but did not use in its case against the accused. It must, however, make the evidence available to a court. The law allows the use of secret evidence against the accused in cases of espionage.

The Ministry of Justice determined the law allows the courts to consider secret evidence in reviewing the cases of Palestinians convicted in civilian courts and granted conditional release from prison as part of a prisoner exchange and later re-arrested for violating the terms of their release. In August a Nazareth court re-incarcerated seven individuals released in 2011 as part of the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange to serve out their original sentences; according to the government, the prisoners were sent to prisons with openings appropriate for the individuals re-incarcerated, not necessarily the facilities from which the courts released them. The seven prisoners appealed their re-incarceration and the interpretation of law used to re-arrest them, and as of November 14, a hearing by the High Court was pending.

Security or military trials are open to the public, but, since authorities conduct them in a military camp, members of the public require an entry permit from the military. Authorities conducted

certain trials in a closed setting for reasons of security or of protection of the identity of the minor, and these were not open to the public.

Military courts provide most of the procedural rights granted in civilian criminal courts. The 1970 evidentiary rules governing trials of Palestinians and others applicable in the occupied territories under military law are the same as evidentiary rules in criminal cases. According to the Ministry of Justice, the law does not permit convictions based solely on confessions. In military trials prosecutors often presented secret evidence not available to the defendant or counsel. Counsel may assist the accused in such trials, and a judge may assign counsel to defendants. Indigent detainees do not automatically receive free legal counsel for military trials, but almost all detainees had counsel, even in minor cases. Court indictments are read in Hebrew and, unless the defendant waives this right, in Arabic. Authorities translated all military court indictments into Arabic. At least one interpreter is present for simultaneous interpretation in every military court hearing, unless the defendant waives that right. Defendants may appeal through the Military Court of Appeals and then to the High Court of Justice.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of citizen political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

An independent and impartial judiciary adjudicates lawsuits seeking damages for, or cessation of, human rights violations. Administrative remedies exist, and court orders usually were enforced. By law Palestinians may file suit to obtain compensation through civil suits in some cases, even when a criminal suit was unsuccessful and the actions against them were considered legal.

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

The law prohibits such actions, and the government generally respected those prohibitions. Separate religious court systems adjudicate matters such as marriage and divorce for the Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Druze communities. Each year an estimated 20,000 civil marriages, marriages of some non-Orthodox Jews, marriages in non-Orthodox ceremonies, marriages of a Jew to a non-Jew, or marriages of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim must take place outside the country to be considered legal, as religious courts refuse to accept these marriages, and the country lacks a civil marriage law. Many Jewish citizens objected to exclusive Orthodox control over aspects of their personal lives. For example, the Orthodox Rabbinate did not consider to be Jewish approximately 322,000 citizens who considered themselves Jewish and who immigrated either as Jews or as family members of Jews; therefore, they may not be married, divorced, or buried in Jewish cemeteries in the country. The estimated 20,000 Messianic Jews, who believed Jesus is the Messiah and considered themselves Jews, also experienced these infringements on their personal lives, since the Orthodox Rabbinate did not consider them to be Jewish. Authorities did not fully implement a law requiring the government to establish civil cemeteries, although the authorities stated 34 civil burial locations – civil burial plots within Jewish cemeteries – existed and 12 municipalities had authority to have civil burials.

In September a Kfar Saba court ruled the state had to compensate citizens who requested civil burials but did not live in towns where such burials could take place and, therefore, had to pay other municipalities for burial. Usually, national health insurance covered some or all burial costs. The NGO Hiddush noted that the Kfar Saba case highlighted that burial practices do not adequately address the needs of non-Jewish or secular citizens.

As defined by the government on security grounds, the Law of Citizenship and Entry in Israel, which is renewed annually and valid through April 2015, prohibits Palestinians from the West

Bank or Gaza, including those who are spouses of Israeli residents or citizens, from obtaining resident status in East Jerusalem or Israel. The law allows the entry of spouses of Israelis on a "staying permit," when the male spouse is age 35 or older and the female spouse is age 25 or older, and the law provides for exceptions in special cases. The government approved 5,908 of 13,301 applications for family reunifications submitted from 2000 to March 2013; the law prevented other families from living together unless the citizen or resident family member chose to relocate to the West Bank or Gaza Strip. Authorities required East Jerusalem residents who relocated to forfeit their Jerusalem identification cards. The government may revoke the Jerusalem identification cards of those who have been away from Jerusalem for seven years, and the government may seek to revoke a Palestinian's Jerusalem identification card if the person obtains citizenship or residency in another country. The only way to qualify for a Jerusalem residency and an identification card is to derive it from one's parents or through a spouse. There is no immigration process, and one usually may not regain Jerusalem residency if it is revoked. (The revocation of identity cards for Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem is addressed in more detail in the annex.)

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech, including for members of the press, and the government generally respected these rights. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of speech and of the press.

Freedom of Speech: Individuals may criticize the government without reprisal. The law prohibits hate speech and incitement to violence, and the 1948 Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance prohibits expressing support for illegal or terrorist organizations. Legislation from 2011 permitting civil cases for damages against citizens who publicly and knowingly advocate for anti-Israel boycotts remained unimplemented pending a judgment by the High Court on its constitutionality; an expanded hearing before nine justices took place in February.

The government did not press charges against Razi Nabulsi, detained by authorities in October 2013 on charges of incitement to violence and terrorism on social media, although it claimed that an examination of materials on his personal computer yielded statements calling for violence. In July, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman called for a boycott of Arab businesses taking part in a general strike supporting Palestinians in Gaza and condemning Operation Protective Edge. Some elected officials – but no government officials – responded by affirming the right of Arab citizens to express solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

In cases of speech that constitute incitement to violence, the law empowers police to limit freedom of expression. Police filed an indictment against a person who created a social media group calling for revenge against Arabs and left-wing Israelis following the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank in June.

Press Freedoms: The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction, although there were prohibitions on publicizing content liable to incite violence or discrimination on grounds of race, origin, religion, nationality, and gender.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: All media organizations must submit to military censors any material relating to specific military issues or strategic infrastructure issues, such as oil and water supplies. The censor's decisions may be appealed to the High Court of Justice, and the censor may not appeal a court judgment.

News printed or broadcast abroad is subject to security censorship. The government did not fine newspapers or other mass media for violating censorship regulations during the year. The government regularly enacted restrictive orders on sensitive security information and required foreign correspondents, as well as local media, to abide by these orders.

Libel Laws/National Security: There were reports authorities used security justifications or slander or libel laws to censor public criticism.

In May, Shin Bet security service officials reportedly threatened a blogger with job loss and imprisonment for posting a tweet seeking the identity of three Shin Bet agents referred to a blog post about the interrogation of Palestinian minors.

In July the Israeli Broadcasting Authority banned a radio broadcast created by B'Tselem, which intended to name Palestinian children killed in Gaza in the July and August hostilities. The broadcasting authority justified the ban by claiming the content was "politically controversial." In August the Israeli Supreme Court rejected B'Tselem's appeal to overturn the decision.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the internet. The government monitored e-mail and internet chat rooms for security purposes. Internet access was widely available, and approximately 70 percent of the country's inhabitants used it regularly.

Police arrested an Arab Israeli following his posting of a negative comment on social media criticizing an advocate of Christian recruitment to the IDF. Individuals and NGOs obtained and disclosed the personally identifiable information of persons peacefully expressing dissenting political opinions on Operation Protective Edge and led campaigns to force the individuals' employers to terminate them; the Hotline for Workers (Kav Laoved) tracked more than 30 cases of unlawful terminations from private companies, municipalities, and a state-owned medical center due to political opinions expressed on social media.

On July 28, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) sent a letter to the Council of Higher Education condemning action by multiple Israeli universities to discipline students for social media postings discussing their opposition to governmental policies and Operation Protective Edge or otherwise expressing "radical and extreme" sentiments. According to ACRI, Hadassah Academic College suspended a student who ridiculed injured IDF soldiers on her Facebook page, revoked her scholarship, banned her from campus, and reported her to police.

Politically motivated cyberattacks occurred. For example, B'Tselem reported its website was hacked and that it was subjected to denial-of-service measures after it condemned the IDF killing of civilians in the Gaza Strip.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

The law prohibits institutions that receive state funding from engaging in commemoration of the Nakba, or "catastrophe," referring to the displacement of 80 percent of the Palestinian Arab population during Israel's 1948 War of Independence. In May the Haifa District Court annulled Haifa University's decision to expel two Palestinian students for organizing a Nakba commemoration on campus and ordered the university to readmit the students.

A 2013 Supreme Court ruling prohibits Palestinian prisoners designated as "security prisoners" and held in Israeli prisons from obtaining higher education through correspondence courses. A petition by the legal advocacy NGO Adalah challenging this policy was filed with the Supreme Court and was pending as of November 14.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

In July and August during Operation Protective Edge, authorities limited large gatherings citing concern for safety of participants should they need to seek shelter from rocket attacks. According to NGOs and political organizations, police cancelled and then reinstated permits for antiwar protests in Tel Aviv in July and August, warning demonstrators during periods of cancellation that they would be arrested if their buses approached the event venue; these restrictions led to a significant decrease in planned participation. The Ministry of Public Security declared that government policy towards handling of demonstrations and protests should apply universally in an equal manner to all races, genders, and religious and political groups. The police commissioner stated police made efforts to allow demonstrations, even during politically sensitive times, while countering incidents of incitement to violence.

The turbulent political and social environment following the July 2 kidnapping and killing of a Palestinian teenager in East Jerusalem and the initiation of Operation Protective Edge prompted demonstrations in Arab and mixed communities across the country; some were peaceful and some were characterized by violence. In June and July, police used force to disperse such demonstrations in Nazareth, Haifa, and an area with a high concentration of Arab-Israeli citizens in northeast-central Israel adjacent to the northern West Bank commonly known as the "Triangle" area. Over the course of the demonstrations, authorities arrested approximately 1,500 Arab Israelis. Of those arrested, authorities filed charges in 650 cases, of which 350 cases progressed to court action. While some Arab-Israeli politicians and civil society organizations accused police of heavy-handed tactics in response to demonstrations, others noted the close coordination between Arab-Israeli municipal authorities and police and stated the high number of arrests may have prevented more serious violent clashes. Protesters during this period, including Arab-Israeli members of the Knesset, reported rough handling and aggressive police tactics and alleged security forces did not act to protect antiwar demonstrators from violence by counterdemonstrators.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's [International Religious Freedom Report](#).

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

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government respected these rights for citizens. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and NGOs expressed concern over the government's actions in providing protection and assistance to some refugees, asylum seekers, and other persons of concern, including victims of trafficking, but not to others. The UNHCR and NGOs raised specific concerns over the government's use of "voluntary" return of detained migrants; the government's failure to provide individual refugee status determinations for all migrants of sub-Saharan African origin, including Eritreans and Sudanese; and the government's continued use of "anti-infiltrator" laws, which impose long-term detention (including the possibility of indefinite detention in a restrictive facility) on all individuals who enter the country irregularly, including asylum seekers and their children. The amended Prevention of Infiltration Law defined all irregular border crossers as "infiltrators" and gave authorities the discretion to detain these individuals for one year in prison or indefinitely in a restricted and isolated facility for unlawful entry, even if they requested asylum.

The government reported the arrival of 18 new irregular migrants through December 16, compared with 10,285 in 2012 before the government's completion of a fence on the border with Egypt. The government attributed the decrease in arrivals to the Prevention of Infiltration law rather than the fence.

The government reported that as of December 16, 2,444 persons who entered Israel illegally through the Egyptian border in recent years were either placed in Holot or detained in Saharonim. According to NGOs, some detainees were documented trafficking victims, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, single mothers, unaccompanied minors, and those suffering from poor physical or mental health that were unable to work and who were dependent on the capacities of their communities and NGOs to support their basic needs. The Ministry of Interior released some identified victims of torture from the Saharonim facility and granted some fathers and husbands temporary stays of orders to report to a restrictive but open detention facility in response to Hotline for Refugees and Migrants petitions. Regulatory procedures, however, forced many families to separate because regulations required male heads of household to report to Holot, and they did not have proper legal documentation to show their status as married with dependents. The High Court of Justice's September 22 ruling on the 2013 amendment to the 1954 Prevention of Infiltration Law ordered the IPS to close the Holot facility within 90 days and cease a mandatory roll call at the facility within two days of the ruling, although the ruling did not reverse the policy that Holot detainees could not seek employment outside of the facility. On December 8, the Knesset passed a third amendment to the Prevention of Infiltration law, which limits detention time in Holot to 20 months while allowing for new asylum seekers to be initially placed in Saharonim prison for up to three months. ACRI petitioned the Supreme Court and received a temporary injunction barring additional summons to Holot, but the court acceded to the government's appeal of the injunction, and the practice of summons was reinstated as of December 31. The court was to hear ACRI's appeal of the December 8 law in 2015.

Foreign Travel: Citizens generally were free to travel abroad provided they had no outstanding military obligations and no administrative restrictions. The government may bar citizens from leaving the country based on security considerations. No citizen is permitted to travel to any state officially at war with the country without government permission. In April the government detained and interrogated journalist Majd Kayyal for five days after he returned from a trip to Lebanon, releasing him when a polygraph indicated he was innocent of the charge of "contacting a foreign agent." Authorities subsequently obtained a court order, requiring renewal every 48 hours, which prohibited Kayyal from talking with a lawyer.

The legal advocacy NGO Adalah alleged the prohibition on travel to many Arab countries disproportionately discriminated against Arab-Israeli citizens and noted that Jewish Israelis were not detained upon return from similar trips to unauthorized countries. The government required all citizens to have a special permit to enter "Area A" in the West Bank (the area, according to the Interim Agreement, in which the Palestinian Authority exercises civil and security responsibility), although the government allowed Palestinian citizens access without permits. Following a High Court instruction to the government in November 2013 to implement new airport procedures, the Israel Airports Authority announced it had implemented new technology to ease screening procedures for Arab-Israeli citizens as of March 9, eliminating the practice of searching suitcases in the departure hall.

The government did not allow Palestinians from Gaza to enter Israel to access courts for tort damages filed against the Israeli security forces.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law provides for granting temporary asylum, and the government has established a system for providing temporary protection for most asylum seekers. There were continuing complaints about the accessibility, efficiency, and impartiality of the Interior Ministry's Refugee Status Determination Unit. Authorities indicted one Ministry of Interior clerk for accepting a bribe and providing forged documents to an asylum seeker from Sudan. There were other allegations that clerks accepted bribes to assist Eritreans in obtaining Ethiopian passports, and the Hotline for Migrant Workers claimed the immigration agency gave asylum seekers passports of other individuals to enable them to leave the country. In November the immigration agency in the Ministry of Interior reduced from seven to three the number of branches providing services – including renewal of temporary permits – to asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan. In response to complaints, authorities stated the ministry designed the reorganization to provide better services to all its clients, and the new center was better designed and more accessible.

Reportedly, the country also paid individuals to depart to foreign countries. These allegations raised concerns from the UNHCR and other organizations, questioning whether some persons have returned to face unsafe conditions, including torture. The UNHCR has been unable to monitor the asylum adjudication process since 2012. The Ministry of Interior concluded the examination of 453 of the 2,841 asylum requests filed through March by 1,468 Eritreans and 1,373 Sudanese. The government only approved refugee status for two Eritreans (the worldwide rate for protective or refugee status is 90 percent). Authorities have not granted asylum or refugee status to any Sudanese.

In May the State Comptroller issued a report criticizing the government's lack of an official policy with regard to irregular migrants residing in the country, specifically those not in holding facilities and not slated to leave the country. The report noted that it was "doubtful" the government's treatment of irregular migrants in society – particularly their limited access to health care, welfare benefits, and food – was consistent with the country's basic law on human rights. The report urged the ministers of interior and justice to implement a resolution to "uphold the basic dignity of migrants who are not being deported." HRW called upon the government to protect migrants better by allowing them access to basic services and employment.

As the government began to process individual status determinations for Sudanese and Eritreans outside of detention – who constituted approximately 85 percent of all asylum seekers in the country – it continued to give them renewable "conditional release" documents that deferred deportation and had to be renewed every few months. In late December 2013, NGOs and the UNHCR reported the government had reduced the validity of renewable documents to one month instead of four months with orders to report to the open facility. In August 2013 the interior minister announced the government planned to encourage these groups to leave willingly but did not specify whether individual asylum claims would be reviewed.

Government officials and media outlets periodically referred to asylum seekers as "infiltrators" and characterized them as directly associated with increases in crime, disease, and vagrancy. The government continued to implement protocols broadening the definition of crimes under which illegal migrants may be detained. The Hotline for Migrants and Refugees documented cases such as one in which authorities arrested an Eritrean woman after she filed and later withdrew a rape complaint. Authorities also arrested a Sudanese filmmaker after they found military equipment he was using in filming a movie in his apartment.

Refoulement: The government provided some protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom could be threatened. The government continued a policy of encouraging the return of detainees and other migrants or asylum seekers to the migrant or asylum seeker's home country or, if that destination was unsafe, another foreign country. The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants reported approximately 6,000 irregular migrants

and asylum seekers departed the country through the voluntary return program – 5,000 Sudanese during the year alone, according to HRW – and more than half of all those remaining in country registered to leave.

Most returnees were sent to Uganda or Rwanda, although their governments did not provide assurances of legal residency or the right to work, and the Israeli government did not confirm the existence of official agreements with these governments to accept migrants or asylum seekers. Some Sudanese traveled further to refugee camps in Sudan or Chad. The government provided returnees a \$3,500 financial stipend (paid in dollars), and prior to the returnee's departure, the Population and Immigration Authority and the Custody Review Tribunal reviewed mandatory recorded video interviews and written statements of those who opted to participate in the voluntary return program.

NGO representatives said the government forced returnees in their video statements to disavow any desire to remain in the country, even should they be released from detention; the government maintained such statements were legally necessary to complete the voluntary return procedure. NGO representatives stated that without publicly acknowledged agreements with foreign governments to accept refugees, the voluntary return program in some cases constituted refoulement. Additionally, HRW reported authorities returned many individuals to their country of origin, although rarely directly. Once authorities sent individuals to foreign countries, they did not receive permission to stay upon arrival and were, therefore, returned to their countries of origin. HRW documented the treatment of some returnees whom authorities arrested upon their return to Sudan and Eritrea; authorities beat, threatened, and in some cases tortured them.

The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants collected testimony of IDF soldiers indicating authorities instructed them to contact Egyptian security forces if they identified "infiltrators" along the border fence. They stated commanding officers ordered them to hit or shoot at the feet of individuals attempting to climb the fence, even if IDF members believed the individual to be an asylum seeker.

Refugee Abuse: Communities with a large concentration of African migrants were occasionally targets of violence. Following the August 2013 arrest of four persons for attacks that police believed were racially motivated, authorities indicted the four suspects, and the case continued as of September. The Tel Aviv municipality dedicated a special police unit to combat violence and crime in the migrant community.

Employment: Recognized refugees received renewable work visas, but renewable documents given to most asylum seekers explicitly read, "This is not a work visa." The government previously allowed asylum seekers to work in the informal sector but not to open their own businesses or to register to pay value-added tax, although the law does not prohibit this. The government, however, reserves the right to demand unpaid value-added tax and levy substantial fines against businessmen for operating businesses without a tax exemption. African asylum seekers in the Holot open facility for irregular border crossers may not work outside the facility, but some worked inside the facility for less than the minimum wage. Some of the facility's services depended on detainee labor.

The law bars migrants from sending money abroad, limits the amount they may take with them when they leave to the minimum wage for the number of months they resided in the country, and defines taking money out of the country as a money-laundering crime.

Access to Basic Services: Recognized refugees received social services, including access to the national health-care system, but the government did not provide asylum seekers with public social benefits such as health insurance. The government stated it provided infirmary services, including laboratory services, medical imaging, and general and mental hospitalization services in the open

Holot facility for individuals held there, including asylum seekers. The government sponsored a mobile clinic and mother and infant health-care stations in south Tel Aviv that provided health and dental services, sexually transmitted disease treatment and evaluation, and prenatal and infant medical care. In June a 37-year-old Holot resident with symptoms of a stroke waited three days before receiving medical treatment. Once at a hospital, authorities revoked the order mandating his detention at Holot, paradoxically leaving him without funds for medical expenses. The head of the Knesset Committee on Foreign Workers, Michal Rosin, called the case "a multi-system failure of the first degree" and held the Holot facility and the Immigration Authority at fault.

Temporary Protection: The government provided temporary protection primarily to Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers. The Ministry of Interior began processing asylum applications of Eritreans and Sudanese in detention during the year. The ministry continued to reject the applications of almost all Eritrean detainees, concluding that military desertion provided insufficient grounds for presenting a subjective fear of persecution and disregarding further evidence presented on conditions in Eritrea should individuals return.

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

The law provides citizens the ability peacefully to change their government, and citizens exercised this right through periodic, free, and fair elections based on universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Observers considered parliamentary elections held in January 2013 free and fair.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The Basic Law prohibits the candidacy of any party or individual that denies the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people or the democratic character of the state or that incites racism. Otherwise, political parties operated without restriction or interference. The Northern Islamic Movement continued its practice of prohibiting its members from running for local or national office and boycotting elections.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Women and minorities participated in political life on the same legal basis as men or nonminority citizens. In June the Knesset passed a law giving an additional 15 percent in campaign funding to municipal party lists composed of at least one-third women. Although senior political and social leaders have often come from among veterans of the predominantly male IDF, women generally did not face cultural barriers in politics, including in leadership positions up to prime minister. Women faced significant cultural barriers in political parties representing conservative religious movements and the Arab minority. Following the 2013 parliamentary elections, the 120-member Knesset had 27 female members and 12 Arab members. The 22-member cabinet included four women, but none was Arab; two women were deputy ministers. Four members of the 15-member Supreme Court were women, and one was Arab.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government implemented these laws effectively. There were reports of government corruption, although impunity was not a problem.

Corruption: The media routinely reported on corruption. The national police, the state comptroller, the attorney general, and the accountant general are responsible for combating official corruption. These entities operated effectively and independently, and were sufficiently

resourced. NGOs that focused on anticorruption efforts operated freely without government interference.

The government continued to investigate and prosecute top political figures. On May 13, the courts convicted former prime minister Ehud Olmert of accepting bribes during his tenure as mayor of Jerusalem. A district court sentenced him to six years' imprisonment, two years of conditional imprisonment, and a fine of one million new Israel shekels (NIS) (\$256,000). In addition to Olmert, the court convicted nine other defendants and acquitted three. Olmert aide Shula Zaken, who was convicted of bribery, began an 11-month prison term in July. Zaken's submission of audio tape evidence to the Supreme Court triggered a decision to retry Olmert on charges on which the court previously acquitted him; the retrial began in September.

The government completed an investigation into the "Harpaz Affair," an alleged 2010 plot to undermine illegally the minister of defense's choice of IDF chief of staff. The attorney general as of the end of the year was considering a police recommendation to indict officials, including former IDF chief of staff Gabi Ashkenazi and current cabinet secretary Avichai Mandelblit, although authorities cleared both of the most serious charge of obstructing the democratic system by overthrowing a civilian supervisor.

At year's end police announced the arrest of 31 suspects in a bribery and corruption ring in return for political kickbacks. The undercover investigation leading to the arrests allegedly revealed a broad-based system in which cash was reportedly inappropriately allocated to NGOs in return for appointment of family members and the transfer of some of the payments back to public officials as bribes or benefits. The fact that key suspects include senior members of the Yisrael Beytenu Party headed by Avigdor Lieberman, specifically his spokesperson and Deputy Interior Minister Faina Kirschenbaum, triggered counter-allegations that Lieberman and his party were deliberately targeted ahead of general elections scheduled for 2015. Police responded that the year-long investigation of the affair began before early elections were announced.

According to the government, in 2013 authorities investigated nine mayors due to suspicions of corruption. No update was available at the end of the year.

Financial Disclosure: Senior officials are subject to comprehensive financial disclosure laws, and their disclosures are verified by the Civil Service Commission. Information in these disclosures is not made public without the consent of the person who submitted the disclosure. There is no specific criminal sanction for noncompliance.

Public Access to Information: The law requires governmental agencies to make internal regulations, administrative procedures, and directives available to the public. The law was not effectively implemented by all governmental agencies.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Numerous domestic and international human rights groups operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were generally cooperative, responsive to their views, and routinely invited NGOs critical of the government to participate in Knesset hearings on proposed legislation. Human rights NGOs have standing to petition the High Court directly regarding governmental policies and may appeal individual cases to the Supreme Court. A unit in the Foreign Ministry maintained relations with certain international and domestic NGOs. In 2013 the Ministerial Committee for Legislative Affairs approved a bill that limited donations NGOs may receive from foreign governments and organizations. It would have imposed a 45 percent tax on contributions if the NGO engaged in

activities such as advocating for a boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel; calling for the trial of IDF soldiers in international courts; or denying Israel's existence as a Jewish and democratic state. Authorities halted the progress of the bill.

The Ministry of Interior continued to bar foreign nationals affiliated with certain pro-Palestinian NGOs and solidarity organizations entry into the country. Authorities required some foreign nationals to sign declarations stating their understanding that "all relevant legal actions" would be taken against them, "including deportation and denial of entry into Israel for a period of up to 10 years," if they traveled through the country to Palestinian Authority-controlled areas without appropriate authorization. The government stated this was done on an individual basis, not according to the activities or platform of the NGOs with which these persons were affiliated.

In August the director general of the National Civil Service program informed B'Tselem that it was withdrawing the organization's eligibility to employ national service volunteers, alleging the NGO's human rights work amounted to defamation and incitement against Israeli soldiers. The Attorney General's Office halted implementation of the order following a petition by ACRI.

The United Nations or Other International Bodies: The government generally cooperated with the United Nations and other international bodies. The government reinstated its participation in the UN Human Rights Council, including the Universal Periodic Review process, although it did not reverse its 2013 partial suspension of its coordination with UNESCO.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The state comptroller also served as ombudsman for human rights problems. The ombudsman investigated complaints against statutory bodies that are subject to audit by the state comptroller, including government ministries, local authorities, government enterprises and institutions, government corporations, and their employees. The ombudsman is entitled to use any relevant means of inquiry and has the authority to order any person or body to assist in the inquiry.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, or social status, and the government was generally effective in enforcing these prohibitions.

Protection of Refugees

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, including spousal rape, is a felony punishable by 16 years in prison, or up to 20 years' imprisonment for rape under aggravated circumstances or if the perpetrator rapes or commits a sexual offense against a relative. The government effectively enforced rape laws. In 2013 authorities initiated 352 cases for spousal rape. Through September 18, the government received almost 4,100 complaints of sexual offenses, of which 759 resulted in indictment, 511 were closed because the offender was unknown, 434 were closed for lack of evidence, 191 were closed for lack of public interest, and 2,193 were still open as of November 14.

From January to mid-October, police opened 18,250 domestic violence cases. Women filed the majority of complaints. According to police data, between January and May, 10 women were killed by their spouses. In October, Bussaina Abu Ghanem was killed in Ramle, the tenth woman in her extended family to be killed for "family honor" since the year 2000, according to a media report. Women in the community alleged police and community leaders did not take seriously their safety and fears. Meanwhile, the police built cases against some of the perpetrators but pointed to the challenges of investigating a domestic crime wherein family members were either

fearful to cooperate with police and speak out or were complicit in the crime and willing to destroy evidence.

On November 14, the Ministry of Public Security issued a new 90-day temporary regulation allowing armed security guards to take their weapons home at the end of their shifts. This practice was prohibited by the Ministry of Public Security in August 2013 after a coalition of NGOs raised concerns about the high rate of spousal killings by security guards using service weapons. According to ACRI, security guards' weapons were responsible for more than 30 killings in the last 10 years.

According to the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, the majority of rape victims did not report the crime to authorities due to social and cultural pressure. Women from certain Orthodox Jewish, Muslim, Bedouin, and Druze communities faced significant social pressure not to report rape or domestic abuse. Experts in the field of social work and domestic violence prevention highlighted the reluctance of many Arab women to avail themselves of social services due to societal pressure and personal affiliation as Palestinian. The government cooperated with The Abraham Fund Initiative on a pilot program to provide training for professionals in the field of domestic violence within the Arab community, bringing law enforcement officers, social workers, NGOs and religious leaders together to coordinate services for victims of domestic violence.

The Ministry of Social Affairs operated 14 battered women's shelters and a hotline for reporting abuse. The 14 shelters can accommodate 160 women and 320 children. Since November the shelters had cared for 136 women and 223 children. Police operated a call center to inform victims about their cases. Women's organizations provided counseling, crisis intervention, legal assistance, and shelters.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law prohibits FGM/C. There were no reports of FGM/C on women age 18 or older.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: Cases of "honor" killings perpetrated in defense of family honor continued to occur within the Arab community, contributing to a disproportionate number of killings of Arab women. Of five adult women killed in the northern part of the country in 2013, police determined two were the result of domestic violence, two were due to a family dispute, and one followed a romantic dispute. In the southern part of the country, one woman was killed due to a family dispute (see also subsection Rape and Domestic Violence).

According to the Ministry of Welfare, 22 of its 88 centers for prevention and treatment of domestic violence operated in Arab communities. In 2012 a total of 1,142 Arab women received treatment in these centers. Additionally, the Ministry of Welfare operated two domestic violence shelters designated for Arab women and their children and two mixed shelters for Jewish and Arab women. In 2012 eight Druze and 35 Bedouin women stayed in these shelters. Police conducted weekly assessments of threatened women to determine the level of threat and required protection, and worked with social welfare and NGOs to safeguard threatened women.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is illegal but remained widespread. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission report for 2013 counted 27 complaints of sexual harassment in the workplace.

The law requires that suspected victims of harassment be informed of their right to assistance. Penalties for sexual harassment depend on the severity of the act and whether blackmail is involved. They range from two to nine years' imprisonment. From January through September 18, police investigated 408 cases of sexual harassment, in which they served 97 indictments. They closed 131 cases while 180 remained open. Police notified all victims of their right to receive assistance from the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel. The law provides that victims

may be informed of the progress on their cases through a computerized system and information call center.

Harassment based on gender segregation continued in some public places, including on public buses. Following harassment and violent confrontation on a bus line in Beit Shemesh, the Ministry of Transportation and Road Safety and the High Court of Justice in 2011 adopted a settlement whereby communities that desire segregation on public transportation may continue this practice voluntarily, but buses must post signs clarifying that passengers are free to sit in any available seat. Subsequently, the legal branch of the Israeli Religious Action Center sued several bus drivers who failed to uphold this policy and won damages of between NIS 8,000 and NIS 12,000 (\$2,051 to \$3,077) in each case. The center claimed the civil suits had a positive effect on subsequent driver enforcement of the policy.

The Ministry of Transportation and Road Safety operates a 24-hour hotline to report complaints on public transportation, including segregation.

In March a court convicted a Haredi man from Jerusalem for sexually harassing a female soldier in 2012 because she was standing among a group of men on a bus.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals have the right to decide the number, spacing, and timing of having children, and they had the information and means to do so free from discrimination. They also have the right to attain the highest standard of reproductive health, although social and religious pressure on women in Haredi communities often led them to seek approval from a rabbi to use contraception.

Discrimination: In the secular criminal and civil courts, women and men enjoy the same rights, but religious courts – responsible for adjudication of family law, including divorce – limit the rights of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Druze women. A Jewish woman is allowed to initiate divorce proceedings, but both the husband and wife must give consent in order to make the divorce final. Because some men refused to grant divorces, thousands of women could not remarry or give birth to legitimate children. In rare cases this rule happened in reverse, with women refusing to grant men divorces. Rabbinical tribunals sometimes sanctioned a husband who refused to give his wife a divorce, while at the same time declining to grant the divorce without the husband's consent.

A Muslim woman may petition for and receive a divorce through the sharia courts without her husband's consent under certain conditions, and a marriage contract may provide for other circumstances in which she may obtain a divorce without his consent. A Muslim man may divorce his wife without her consent and without petitioning the court. Through ecclesiastical courts, Christians may seek official separations or divorces, depending on their denomination. Druze divorces are performed by an oral declaration of the husband alone and then registered through the Druze religious courts, placing the disproportionate burden on the woman to immediately leave the home with her children. A civil family court or a religious court settles child custody, alimony, and property matters after the divorce, which gives preference to the father unless it can be demonstrated that a child especially "needs" the mother.

Although the law prohibits discrimination based on gender in employment and wages and provides for class action antidiscrimination suits, a wage gap between men and women persisted. Women's salaries continued to average 66 percent of men's in 2013, according to government statistics. When calculated per working hour, women's salaries averaged 84 percent of men's salaries. Of complaints received by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2013, 5 percent related to gender discrimination and 34 percent related to pregnancy issues.

The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women in the Prime Minister's Office (the authority) works to mainstream women's participation in the government and private sector, and to combat sexual harassment and domestic violence. The authority requires every city, local council, and government ministry to have an adviser working to advance women's issues. A government resolution requires ministers to appoint women to the directorates of government-owned companies until representation reaches 60 percent (see also section 7). The law requires that at least one of two governmental representatives on the Committee for Appointment of Religious Judges be a woman.

Discrimination in the form of gender segregation continued in some public places, including in public health clinics and at the Western Wall. The government reached an agreement with Reform and Conservative Jewish religious movements to establish a separate space for egalitarian prayer at the Robinson's Arch area, in addition to the existing gender-segregated prayer areas where regulation prohibits women from leading prayers, singing aloud, or holding or reading from Torah scrolls. Some groups alleged this compromise did not sufficiently accommodate women who wanted to lead prayers in a women-only setting. Non-Orthodox and mixed gender groups used a temporary platform conceived by Religious Services Minister Naftali Bennett for religious ceremonies such as bar and bat mitzvahs.

In ultra-Orthodox areas of Jerusalem, images of women in advertisements were vandalized.

In March following the attorney general's 2013 adoption of the recommendations of a Ministry of Justice team established to investigate the exclusion of women in the public sphere, a government resolution declared segregation of women constituted a serious negative phenomenon requiring governmental corrective action. The government also required all local authorities to provide assurances that segregation of women did not occur in public events, funerals, public transportation, or any other area of the public sphere.

In 2013 Finance Minister Lapid appointed a committee charged with examining gender aspects of the state budget and establishing guidelines for a policy to introduce gender analysis to the budgetary process. The Knesset passed a law that gives a financial incentive of an additional 15 percent in campaign funding to municipal party lists composed of at least one-third women. The Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women continued to operate a hotline for complaints regarding the public exclusion of women.

In June the government adopted the recommendations of a committee that studied the status of women in public service, which included integrating women in 50 percent of senior managerial positions in the civil service (compared with 38 percent as of year's end) and recognizing hours worked from home for parents of younger children.

Children

Birth Registration: Children derive citizenship at birth within or outside of the country if at least one parent is a citizen. Births are to be registered within 10 days of the delivery. The country registers the births of Palestinians in Jerusalem, although Palestinian residents of Jerusalem reported delays in the process.

According to the National Council for the Child, 155,907 children in the country did not have citizenship and, therefore, lacked its corresponding rights. The figure included children of legal and illegal foreign workers and children of mixed marriages, especially those between Arab-Israelis and Palestinian residents of the occupied territories.

According to NGOs the Ministry of Interior refused to list fathers' names or to give children their father's last names on the birth certificates of children without legal residency status in the

country, including children of asylum seekers and migrant workers and children of international students and others who do not hold Israeli citizenship. The Ministry of Interior requires parents without a permit to sign a form declaring they are "present illegally" in the country before issuing a birth certificate. A petition to require the government to issue an official birth document listing both parents' names remained pending before the High Court as of November 14.

Education: Primary and secondary education is free and universal through age 17. The government continued implementing a 2007 law to make education compulsory through grade 12, but a February decision by the Knesset Education Committee postponed implementation of the Compulsory Education Law (integrating children ages three to five) until the 2015-16 school year. The government continued to expand free public preschool beginning at or slightly before age three. The government did not enforce compulsory education, however, in unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev, and Bedouin children, particularly girls, continued to have the highest illiteracy rate in the country. The government operated separate school systems for Hebrew-speaking children and Arabic-speaking children. For Jewish children there were separate school systems for religious and secular families. At the beginning of the school year, parents and teachers at a secular school in Beit Shemesh launched a partial strike protesting the city's decision to allot half of the building to an ultra-Orthodox girls' school and erect a wall separating the secular and ultra-Orthodox students; authorities eventually removed the wall. Individuals could choose to attend a school regardless of ethnicity. Approximately 400,000 students attended ultra-Orthodox Jewish schools. This growing population constituted 25 percent of all students. The government funded 55 to 75 percent of the operating costs of recognized ultra-Orthodox schools, which are required to teach a corresponding percentage of the national curriculum.

Gaps existed in government education funding, according to a *Haaretz* newspaper report, although the government worked to address these gaps. During the year the Ministry of Education spent approximately NIS 27,000 (\$6,923) per student on average at government religious Jewish high schools, NIS 24,800 (\$6,359) at government secular Jewish high schools, and NIS 21,100 (\$5,410) at Arab high schools.

Haredi political parties continued to oppose government regulation of Haredi government-funded school systems.

Medical Care: The government provides preventive health services to minors without civil status who are younger than age six. It also provides services similar to those provided citizen children to noncitizen minors younger than age 18, regardless of their legal status in country, if their parents register them in the "Meuhedet" health-care fund. This arrangement does not include minors whose guardian is a resident of the Palestinian Authority, and it does not cover pre-existing conditions.

Child Abuse: The National Council of the Child received a number of complaints during the year of abuses related to health, availability of welfare services, education, physical and sexual abuse, child pornography, and poor educational environments. According to the council's most recent available annual report, 48,984 cases of child abuse were reported in 2012. Also according to the council, the incidence of reported child abuse increased from 8.7 victims per 1,000 youths younger than age 18 in 1995 to 18.9 victims per 1,000 in 2010. In a survey of more than 10,000 youths, released by the council in November, 48.5 percent of Jewish youth and 67.7 percent of Arab youth reported they had been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused. The council noted a significant gap between the percentage of youth who reported abuse in the survey and the 1.9 percent of the youth population that had reported abuse to social workers. The law requires mandatory reporting of any suspicion of child abuse. Police opened 7,874 cases of offenses against minors in 2013.

The law requires social service employees, medical and education professionals, and other officials to report indications that minors were victims of, engaged in, or coerced into prostitution, sexual offenses, abandonment and neglect, assault or abuse, and human trafficking. The government stated police immediately attend to each case forwarded to them from the National Council for the Child or any other source. Without distinction to ethnic or racial background, it assigned officers with special training in dealing with child abuse. NGOs expressed concern, however, regarding police negligence in child abuse and domestic violence cases reported in minority communities.

The government provided specialized training to psychologists, offered a free psychological treatment program to treat child victims of sexual offenses, and operated a 24-hour emergency hotline. The Ministry of Education operated a special unit for sexuality and for prevention of abuse of children and youth that assisted the education system in prevention and appropriate intervention in cases of suspected abuse of minors.

According to police in 2012, minors filed two-thirds of the more than 5,000 complaints of sex crimes. The most common offense against minors – more than 50 percent of the cases – was molestation. Approximately one-quarter of those complaints were for rape.

In September a court convicted Goel Ratzon on multiple rape charges; authorities believed he had as many as 32 "wives" and 49 children. Charges against him included sex with a minor. Knesset member Zehava Gal-On objected to Ratzon's acquittal on the charge of enslavement of one of his victims.

Early and Forced Marriage: The law set the minimum age of marriage at 18, with some exceptions for younger children due to pregnancy and for couples over age 16 if the court permitted it due to unique circumstances. In 2012 (the most recent year for which data were available), 472 boys and 2,227 girls married before age 18.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law prohibits FGM/C. There were no reports of the practice since a single case in 2008.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: In September authorities charged a brother, a cousin, and two others for the June killing of 14-year-old Fatima Haib in Tuba Zanjariyya in an honor crime.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law prohibits sexual exploitation of a minor and sets a penalty of seven years to 20 years in prison for violators, depending on the circumstances. The law prohibits child pornography. The minimum age for consensual sex is 16. Consensual sexual relations with a minor between the ages of 14 and 16 constitute statutory rape punishable by five years' imprisonment.

The government supported a number of programs to combat sexual exploitation of children, including establishing an interministerial research team, preparing educational materials, and conducting numerous training sessions for government and police officials.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information see the Department of State's report on compliance at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/english/legal/compliance.html and country-specific information at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/english/country/israel.html.

Anti-Semitism

Jews constituted approximately 80 percent of the population. The government defined crimes targeting Jews as nationalistic crimes relating to the overall Palestinian-Israeli conflict rather than

anti-Semitism. During a period of Jewish-Arab tension following the kidnapping and killing of a Palestinian teenage person in East Jerusalem in July, rioters in the Arab town of Qalanswa attacked some Jewish visitors to the town and burned a Jewish-owned vehicle. In response police installed temporary checkpoints at entrances to certain Arab towns and advised Jewish Israelis not to enter. Observers noted swastikas in graffiti targeted at both Jews and non-Jews.

The country is a leader within the Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's [Trafficking in Persons Report](#).

Persons with Disabilities

The Basic Laws provide a legal framework for prohibiting discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, and the provision of other state services. Legislation mandates access to buildings, transportation, and physical accommodations and services in the workplace, and access to mental health services as part of government-subsidized health insurance. On July 6, the minister of economy signed an Encouragement of Employment of Persons with Disabilities order requiring that 3 percent of the workforce of employers with more than 100 employees be persons with disabilities. According to NGOs, government progress in enforcing these laws was limited.

Societal discrimination and lack of accessibility persisted in employment, transportation, housing, and education. According to the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor, the employment rate of persons with disabilities rose from 40 percent in 2007 to 51 percent in 2012. The rate remained lower than the 74 percent employment rate for persons without disabilities.

According to 2012 statistics, gross per capita income of persons with disabilities was 73 percent of that of persons without disabilities, but net income was relatively higher at 80 percent. The average monthly income of persons with severe disabilities was 36 percent lower than that of persons without disabilities.

The rate of persons with disabilities in the Arab community was 29 percent, compared with 17 percent in the Jewish population. Employment of Arab citizens with disabilities was 21 percent, compared with 49 percent for Jews with disabilities. Shortages of funding for Arab municipalities, including for education, adversely affected Arabs with disabilities.

The government reported improved access to interurban buses with 91 percent of municipal buses, 43 percent of inter-urban buses, and 73 percent of bus stops being accessible to persons with disabilities. Authorities projected 92 percent of central bus stops would be accessible to persons with disabilities by year's end. Ninety-five percent of train stations were accessible to persons with disabilities, with the remaining 5 percent scheduled to become accessible in 2015, according to the government.

Access to community-based independent living facilities for persons with disabilities, however, remained limited. According to the disability rights NGO Bizchut, more than 8,000 persons with intellectual disabilities lived in institutions and large hostels while only 1,500 lived in community-based settings. Following the government's decision to close private psychiatric hospitals, the government issued, but then rescinded, tenders for new small community-based housing units for persons with disabilities leaving these facilities. Reportedly, the government preferred to place them in existing institutions. Bizchut claimed there were prior complaints against several of these institutions. During the year the Ministry of Social Affairs announced a new program to move 900

persons with intellectual disabilities from institutions into community-based housing facilities within the next three years.

A family court restored legal capacity to a woman with a disability and removed her legal guardian in favor of a supported decision-making arrangement. Other laws passed during the year widen the scope of the Law Preventing Sexual Harassment to employees in sheltered vocational workshops, provide paternity leave to husbands whose wives cannot fully care for an infant due to a disability, and allow parents of children with disabilities to be absent from work for medical appointments as part of sick leave.

The law prioritizes access by persons with disabilities to public services, such as eliminating waiting in line as well as providing adapted seating and accessible facilities in public places other than buildings, such as public beaches, municipal parks, swimming pools, and cemeteries. For deaf and hard-of-hearing persons, the law provides for short message public announcement services.

The Commission for Equal Rights of People with Disabilities within the Ministry of Justice is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and worked with government ministries to enact regulations. The Unit for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities in the Labor Market, located within the Ministry of Economy, examined and promoted the employment of persons with disabilities. The unit has three support centers designed to assist employers who wish to hire persons with disabilities. During 2013, 474 employers applied to these centers for assistance, and 261 persons with disabilities found employment through their assistance. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services provided out-of-home placement and sheltered employment for persons with cognitive, physical, and communication disabilities. As of November there were 3,750 persons with mental disabilities employed in sheltered employment, 1,350 employed in the open labor market in supported employment, and 1,700 in nonemployment day care. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services also handled criminal investigations involving persons with certain disabilities, whether they were victims or offenders, when police requested assistance. The National Insurance Agency provided financial benefits and stipends, the Ministry of Health provided mental health and rehabilitation services, and the Ministry of Education provided special education services to persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Economy allocated NIS 15 million (\$3.8 million) for workplace modifications to accommodate persons with disabilities between 2007 and the end of the year.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Arab citizens faced institutional and societal discrimination. Tensions between Arabs and Jews, sparked by two incidents of kidnapping and killing in the West Bank and East Jerusalem – one perpetrated by Palestinians against three Jewish Israelis, and one perpetrated by Jewish Israelis against a Palestinian – and exacerbated by hostilities between Israel and Hamas in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge in July and August, contributed to an increase in incidents of politically or religiously motivated violence throughout the country.

"Price tag" attacks (property crimes and violent acts by extremist Jewish individuals and groups) continued throughout the country, targeting Arab and some Jewish institutions, but were most pronounced in areas where Jews and Arabs cooperated commercially. The government suggested assailants were attempting to incite the local populations against Jews who did business where they lived.

The most common offenses, according to police, were attacks on vehicles, defacement of real estate, harm to Muslim and Christian holy sites, assault, and damage to agricultural lands. In Kafr Qasem assailants attacked local businesses, causing property damage and leaving graffiti indicating they targeted the businesses because they were Arab owned. Other attacks occurred in

Jerusalem, Baka al-Gharbiyya, Jish, Acre, Jaljulia, and Jaffa. There were numerous incidents in which groups gathered to shout "death to Arabs" and to attack Arab drivers.

In June 2013, following a number of attacks including car burnings and desecration of a Christian Orthodox cemetery in Jaffa, the Security Cabinet authorized the minister of defense to declare groups that perpetrated such attacks as "illegal associations." The minister did so in August 2013. Subsequently, a dedicated police unit to handle these crimes began operations, and it became fully functional during the year. In the first quarter of the year, authorities opened 63 cases and filed 21 indictments.

Indictments were filed against three suspects in the February 2013 attack on an Arab-Israeli municipal street cleaner in Tel Aviv, and proceedings continued in Tel Aviv District Court at the end of the year. Following an August 8 attack on two Palestinians in Beit Hanina, authorities indicted 10 Jerusalem residents for assault and obstruction of justice.

Anti-assimilation organizations continued to oppose Arab-Jewish marriages. In August the anti-intermarriage organization Lehava organized a protest outside the wedding of an Arab-Israeli man to a Jewish-Israeli woman who converted to Islam. Israeli President Reuven Rivlin issued a statement congratulating the couple and endorsing their civil right to marry. Lehava also pasted stickers on an Arab-Jewish bilingual school in the Negev warning Arab students, "Don't you dare touch a Jewess." The Israeli Religious Action Center published a report highlighting the gendering of anti-Arab sentiment through exhortations to "protect" Jewish women from Arab men.

On November 29, members of Lehava reportedly set afire two first grade classrooms in the Arabic-Hebrew bilingual Max Rayne Hand in Hand school in West Jerusalem and scrawled graffiti with racist messages, including "Death to Arabs." Prime Minister Netanyahu condemned the attack, as did Justice Minister Tzipi Livni and Housing Minister Uri Ariel in their visits to the school the following day. On December 11, police announced they had arrested the Lehava members, who confessed to the attack; police also arrested other Lehava members, including the organization's leader Bentzi Gopstein.

The law exempts Arab citizens, except for the Druze, from mandatory military service, but a small percentage served voluntarily. On March 13, the Knesset voted into law a conscription plan for Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) citizens; the law exempts those who were 18 or older when the law was passed. Implementation lagged through the end of the year due to bureaucratic hurdles, and as of November the NGO the Movement for Quality Government in Israel petitioned the Supreme Court to invalidate the law because it granted too much favored treatment to the Haredi community. Citizens who did not perform military service enjoyed fewer societal and economic benefits and sometimes were discriminated against in hiring practices. Citizens generally were ineligible to work in companies with defense contracts or in security-related fields if they had not served in the military. Some Druze opposed their inclusion in mandatory military service, and authorities jailed them for refusing to serve. The government managed a National Civil Service program for citizens not drafted for military service, giving Arabs, some Haredi Jews, Orthodox Jewish women, and others the opportunity to provide public service in their own communities and thus be eligible for the same financial benefits accorded military veterans. Many in the Arab community opposed the National Civil Service program because it operated under the auspices of government ministries associated with security. There were multiple instances of Haredi communities ostracizing Haredi soldiers for serving in the military.

In January the Interior Ministry announced it had appointed or would appoint Arab representatives to the ministry's three committees of inquiry on redistricting and revenue sharing in the Negev, in response to a petition filed by ACRI. The government continued to implement multi-year economic development and social advancement projects for Arab and other minority populations,

which were authorized in 2010 and 2011. The government employed affirmative action policies for Arabs and Druze in the civil service. As of June the government had filled 1,421 of 1,730 positions in the civil service designated for "persons of the Arab population." The Education Ministry continued implementing a plan to place 500 Arab teachers in positions in predominantly Jewish schools by 2020. The plan offered partial solutions for many Arabs with teaching credentials who could not find work as teachers and for Hebrew-language schools that experienced a shortage of teachers in key subject areas including math, English, and science.

Resources devoted to education in Arabic were inferior to those devoted to education in Hebrew in the public education system, according to several NGOs, and some Arabs in ethnically mixed cities elected to study in Hebrew instead. The Knesset Center for Research and Information documented a 39.6 percent drop in funding for day-care centers, nurseries, and after-school programs for the Arab population. The separate school systems produced a large variance in education quality: 35 percent of Muslim students, 45 percent of Druze students, 51 percent of Arab students studying at mainstream Hebrew schools, and 61 percent of Christian students passed the matriculation exam in 2014, according to the Knesset Center for Research and Information, compared with 76 percent of Jews, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics. The government noted the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Education operated programs to provide free matriculation-exam coaching to Arab students. According to the government, the percentage of students in higher education who were Arab (approximately 26 percent) exceeded that of population percentage of young Arab adults (approximately 20 percent), although according to another statistic from the Council for Higher Education, 14 percent of university students were Arab. The percentage of master's and doctoral degree students who were Arab was 9 percent and 4.5 percent, respectively, which was significantly lower than the Arab percentage of the country's total population but higher than in previous years. The government attributed the increase to the opening of higher education institutions in peripheral areas more accessible to the Arab population. Of all Arab students studying in universities, 68 percent were women. The government operated several scholarship programs specifically targeting the Arab population.

Approximately 93 percent of land is in the public domain, including approximately 12.5 percent owned by the NGO Jewish National Fund (JNF), whose statutes prohibit sale or lease of land to non-Jews. According to a 2005 attorney general ruling, the government may not discriminate against Arab citizens in marketing and allocating lands it manages, including those of the JNF. As an interim measure, the government agreed to compensate the JNF for any land it leased to an Arab by transferring an equal amount of land from the Israel Lands Administration to the JNF. Legal petitions against the JNF policy of leasing public land only to Jews continued at year's end. The NGO Israel Land Fund continued its program to purchase Arab land throughout the country and market it to Jewish buyers, including in the diaspora. The organization claimed all the land belonged to Jews and described as a "danger" the purchase of Jewish-owned lands by non-Jews.

New construction was illegal in towns that did not have an authorized outline plan for development, which is the legal responsibility of local authorities. Arab communities that still lacked fully approved planning schemes could turn to their municipal authorities to develop them, according to the government. As of August, according to the Ministry of Interior, 131 of 133 Arab localities had approved outline plans, of which 62 had been updated since 2000, 23 were undergoing statutory approval, and 22 more scheduled to have new draft plans in progress by year's end. The approved outline plans added an average of 70 percent to the land zoned for the communities, according to the government. The NGO Mossawa said that it was aware of only 64 recognized Arab localities and that of these, 45 percent lacked authorized plans, that the update process was lengthy and frequently was rendered irrelevant after the 10-20 years required for approval, and that authorities overwhelmingly enforced violations against Arab citizens. Localities were also responsible for initiating and submitting urban outline plans to the district committees,

which approved any expansion of the municipalities. The government allocated more than NIS 400 million (\$102.6 million) for the development of industrial areas in Arab localities.

Arab communities in the country generally faced economic difficulties, and the Bedouin segment of the Arab population continued to be the most disadvantaged. More than half the estimated 200,000 Bedouin population lived in seven government-planned communities. Approximately 30,000 lived in the 11 recognized villages of the Nave Midbar and Al-Qasum Regional Councils, formerly the Abu Basma Regional Council, and approximately 60,000 Bedouins lived in 35 unrecognized tent or shack villages that did not have water and electricity or educational, health, and welfare services. NGOs, Bedouin leaders, and the government noted that Bedouin towns ranked lowest on the country's standardized socioeconomic scale, with most ranking a one out of 10 and only Rahat, Hura, and Segev Shalom ranking two out of 10. During Operation Protective Edge, Bedouin citizens risked injury or death from rocket attacks due to the lack of shelters and sirens in the recognized and unrecognized villages in the Negev. On July 13, a rocket hit the edge of Al-Makimen village, severely injuring two sisters, and on July 19, another rocket hit the village of Al-Jrabah, killing a Bedouin man and injuring four of his relatives, including an infant. The Supreme Court did not require the government to provide temporary shelters for Bedouin communities in response to an ACRI petition, although it mandated further discussion.

While 11 of 13 recognized villages had plans that define the areas of the village, in most areas residences were not connected to the electricity grid, there was no connection to the sewage disposal system, there were no paved roads, and only six villages had high schools, according to the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality. Additionally, residents were responsible for providing their own water infrastructure to bring water from a central line to their property.

In the 35 unrecognized villages in the Negev claimed by various Bedouin tribes, the government viewed all buildings as illegal and subject to demolition. In cases of demolitions with no agreement from the residents to relocate, the government levied fines against residents to cover expenses incurred in the course of demolitions. Many Bedouin whose residences or structures were subjected to demolition orders elected to self-demolish to avoid being fined.

The government confirmed that from January to June, the government carried out 208 demolitions in recognized and unrecognized villages in the Negev in 2012, with an additional 356 homes demolished by Bedouins to avoid being fined. The government noted its policy was to demolish "new vacant illegal structures" built without permits after 2010 and found in areas it determined to be state land, not belonging to any local authority. The NGO Dukium recorded 1,261 demolitions of Bedouin buildings from 2012 to the middle of 2013 according to 551 separate demolition orders; Bedouins demolished 636 themselves to avoid being fined. The government carried out 11 separate demolitions of the entire Al-Arakib village, which had been rebuilt on government land more than 60 times since 1998 despite multiple eviction orders, a 2007 Supreme Court decision, and police enforcement since 2010. The Al-Arakib residents maintained the government should recognize claims to the land, while the government claimed the Al-Arakib tribes were "invaders" who "do not and did not have private ownership over the land." In August a district court advised the government and the Bedouin leaders to solve their dispute through arbitration. Arbitration failed, and the matter was pending before the court as of November 14. In January a Beer Sheva court dismissed two indictments against protesters in Al-Arakib charged with attacking police officers and disturbing public order. Of 14 original indictments on similar charges, the court dismissed or acquitted the accused in 13 cases; one case remained pending at year's end.

The government maintained a program to encourage Bedouins to relocate from unrecognized villages to established towns by providing low-cost land and compensation for demolition of illegal structures for those willing to move to designated permanent locations, but Bedouins often refused to participate in this program because they asserted that they owned the land or were given

prior permission by the government to settle in their current locations. Some residents were caught between court-ordered demolitions and the rejection of their designated relocation sites for reasons of overcrowding. Additionally, many Bedouins complained that moving to government-planned towns would require them to surrender claims to land they had occupied for several generations and would separate them from their livelihood. Conversely, the government claimed it was difficult and inefficient to provide services to clusters of buildings throughout the Negev that ignored planning procedures. Some Bedouins continued to pursue legal recognition of their 3,200 claims to parcels of land based on practices of land ownership and sales predating 1948. In 2013 Rabbis for Human Rights asserted that rates of crime and unemployment were higher in the government-established permanent locations for the Bedouin than in the unrecognized villages, creating a disincentive for relocation.

At the beginning of the year, the prime minister ordered a reorganization of the governmental authority handling Bedouin affairs, placing the authority within the Ministry of Agriculture. The minister of agriculture halted discussions of controversial proposed legislation on planning and compensation for Bedouin and met with NGOs and Bedouin representatives, including creators of an Alternative Master Plan for the Negev region that would support traditional lifestyles while extending services and civil rights to remote Bedouin communities. NGOs and Bedouin leaders noted that the implementation of the government plan for developing the Negev, with the resultant home demolitions and planned relocations of some Bedouin communities, continued apace in the absence of specific legislation to address Bedouin land claims. In May the Beer Sheva District Court rejected the state's appeal against a decision by a lower-level court to cancel 51 demolition orders against the homes of 500 Bedouin residents of al-Sira village.

The law bars family reunification when a citizen's spouse is a non-Jewish citizen of Iran, Iraq, Syria, or Lebanon. Citizens may apply for temporary visit permits for Palestinian male spouses age 35 or older or Palestinian female spouses age 25 or older, but they may not receive residency based on their marriage and have no path to citizenship. The government had yet to implement a policy in response to a 2010 Supreme Court recommendation that social services be provided to an estimated 5,000 Palestinian spouses of citizens granted "staying permits" to reside legally in Israel.

The government generally prohibited Druze citizens and residents from visiting Syria. The government, however, coordinated with the UN Disengagement Observer Force for Druze residents of the Golan Heights to attend college in Syria and permitted the Druze religious leadership to attend religious meetings in Damascus. The government also allowed noncitizen Druze residents from the Golan Heights to visit holy sites in Syria through the ICRC-managed pilgrimage program, but it had prevented family visitations since 1982. The government facilitated the entry of several hundred Syrian nationals, including Druze, to the country to receive medical treatment.

An estimated population of 130,000 Ethiopian Jews faced persistent societal discrimination, although officials and the majority of citizens quickly and publicly criticized discriminatory acts against them. In December 2013 officials of Magen David Adom – a national organization that provides prehospital emergency services, national blood collection, storage, and distribution services, and acts as an auxiliary service to the IDF during times of war – holding a blood drive at the Knesset refused to accept blood from a Knesset member of Ethiopian descent, sparking an emergency session of the health committee to discuss discrimination faced by the Ethiopian community. Magen David Adom blood-donation criteria prevented those who had lived in endemic malaria or AIDS areas from donating.

Continued reports of discrimination by Ashkenazi Jews of European descent against Sephardic (Mizrachi) Jews of Middle Eastern descent fueled a national debate on this topic. Organizations

representing Mizrahi Jews from various Middle Eastern countries claimed that government negligence in pursuing reparations for property losses for Jews from Arab countries and Iran had exacerbated social stratification along ethnic lines since the establishment of the state and during subsequent waves of (sometimes forced) immigration.

A survey commissioned by the Economy Ministry's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found 42 percent of employers would prefer not to hire Arab men and 41 percent would prefer not to hire an Arab mother of young children. Of all respondents 46 percent said they were reluctant to work with an Arab man, and 28 percent said the same of working with an Arab woman (see section 7.d.).

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

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the government generally enforced these laws, although discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity persisted in some parts of society. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) activists commented that 2013-14 marked a significant shift from achievements via court cases against the government in the field of civil and human rights for LGBT persons to active legislation by the government to extend rights to the community. On August 12, the minister of interior announced that non-Jewish spouses of gay and lesbian married couples could immigrate under the Law of Return, even if one of the couple was not Jewish. Members of the cabinet, including the prime minister, publicly voiced approval for giving same-sex couples the same surrogacy rights as heterosexual couples. Representatives from the LGBT task force commented that the prime minister's support for such a measure in and of itself constituted a landmark in the struggle for equality for LGBT persons. The minister of education and other elected officials, however, made disparaging comments about LGBT families.

An LGBT violence-prevention center and hotline established in 2012 reported it received 250 reports of violence and discrimination between August 2013 and August.

In February police arrested the chief state witness in the case against Hagai Felician, who had been indicted on homicide and attempted homicide charges in relation to a 2009 double killing at an LGBT youth club in Tel Aviv, on suspicion of fabricating evidence and obstruction of justice. Because the witness was critical to proving Felician's involvement and motive, the case collapsed.

In 2013 the government established an interministerial team to examine the issue of West Bank residents who claimed to be in a life-threatening situation due to their sexual orientation and requested legal residency status in the country. There is no mechanism for granting such persons legal status, leaving those who cannot return to the West Bank due to fear of persecution in limbo and vulnerability to human traffickers, violence, and exploitation.

In contravention of laws prohibiting such discrimination (see section 7.d.), there were reports of discrimination in the workplace against LGBT persons. A study by the LGBT task force found that employers discriminated against approximately 80 percent of transgender persons, 50 percent of lesbians, and 20 percent of gay males in the hiring process or terminated them once their sexual orientation or gender identity was known.

Same-sex couples could face difficulties in renting a home, and the law allows private landlords to use discretion in determining to whom to rent, which in some cases allegedly could amount to discrimination. The *Haaretz* newspaper reported that a law firm specializing in LGBT-related issues received reports of such incidents approximately once a week.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

There were some reports of discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS, including refusal by some doctors and dentists to provide care to HIV-positive persons. Authorities ordered one dentist to pay damages and treat a patient to whom he had refused treatment because of his HIV status, and the court ordered the dentist to cease discriminating on the basis of HIV status.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law protects the right of workers to form and join independent unions, strike, earn the minimum wage and overtime, and bargain collectively. The law specifically prohibits antiunion discrimination. A labor court has discretionary authority to order the reinstatement of a worker who was fired for union activity. The government respected these rights.

Court rulings and union regulations forbid simultaneous membership in more than one trade union. Members of the General Federation of Labor in Israel (Histadrut) who pay affiliation fees may be elected to the union's leadership bodies regardless of ethnicity, religion, or gender.

Authorities generally respected workers' rights to free association and collective bargaining for citizens, although foreign workers often faced difficulties exercising these rights. Worker organizations were independent of the government and political parties.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

While the law prohibits forced or compulsory labor and criminalizes labor exploitation, the government did not enforce effectively laws concerning minimum employment conditions for foreign workers. The passage of revised labor laws in 2012 increased penalties to NIS 35,000 (\$8,974) and helped investigation procedures.

According to government statistics, there were approximately 75,000 legal foreign workers in the country and almost 15,000 illegal foreign workers. Some workers, particularly foreign workers, experienced conditions of forced labor including the unlawful withholding of passports, restrictions on freedom of movement, limited ability to change or otherwise choose employers, nonpayment of wages, exceedingly long working hours, threats, sexual assault, and physical intimidation. Foreign agricultural workers, construction workers, and nursing care workers – particularly women – were among the most vulnerable to conditions of forced labor, including in particular nonpayment or withholding of wages.

Also see the Department of State's [Trafficking in Persons Report](#).

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law provides for the protection of children from exploitation in the workplace and prohibits forced or compulsory labor. Children age 14 and older may be employed during official school holidays in light work that does not harm their health. Children age 15 and older who have completed education through grade nine may be employed as apprentices. Regulations restrict working hours for youths between ages 16 and 18 in all sectors.

The government generally enforced these laws and conducted year-round inspections to identify cases of underage employment, with special emphasis on summer and school vacation periods. Employers employed youth mainly in the food-catering sector and the entertainment and hospitality sectors. In 2012 the government opened six child labor investigations against employers, including one in Jerusalem's central market. In all six cases, authorities found

violations, and in response, authorities issued 17 administrative warnings for employment of youth without a medical certificate and without provision of pay slips. Additionally, authorities levied fines of NIS 35,000 (\$8,974) in one case for employment of a youth under the legal age.

d. Discrimination with respect to Employment or Occupation

The Equal Employment Opportunities Law prohibits an employer from discriminating against employees, contractors, or persons seeking employment on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, personal status, pregnancy, fertility treatments, in vitro fertilization treatments, parenthood, age, race, religion, nationality, country of origin, opinion, political affiliation, and army reserve service. Discrimination is also prohibited with regard to working conditions, promotion, professional training, dismissal or severance payments, and retirement benefits or payments.

The Commission for Equal Employment Opportunities is charged with the implementation and civil enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunities Law. The 26-member commission includes one member each from organizations that promote employment rights for Arab Muslims, Arab Christians, Druze and Circassians, Haredim, immigrants, elderly persons, women, and army veterans.

Additionally, the commission must have adequate representation of citizens of Ethiopian descent and of persons with disabilities. No details were provided by the government regarding violations of the law or enforcement activities.

In March the Knesset amended the employment law to require public bodies that publish reports about workers' salaries to also address gender in their reports. In February the Knesset passed an amendment to the Women's Employment Law entitling male and female employees undergoing fertility treatments protection from dismissal for absence from work due to these treatments for up to two births per partner. The previous law allowed for only one birth.

As of September, 74 percent of government companies (78 of 105) were implementing adequate representation of women in their directorates. In 10 government corporations, only one additional woman director was needed to meet the requirements of the law.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The minimum wage is set annually on April 1 to equal 47.5 percent of the average income. The national minimum wage was NIS 23.12 (\$5.92) per hour, and was slightly less for youths under the age of 18, who earned between 70 and 83 percent of the minimum wage. The law allows a maximum 43-hour workweek at regular pay and provided for paid annual holidays. Premium pay for overtime is set at 125 percent for the first two hours and 150 percent for any hour thereafter up to a limit of 15 hours of overtime per week. In March 2013 the Supreme Court ruled that labor law provisions for overtime pay do not apply to migrant workers who work as live-in caregivers for ill or elderly Israelis. An NGO reported the average salary of an Arab man was 43 percent lower than that of a Jewish man, and the salary of an Arab woman was 21 percent less than that of a Jewish woman.

The Labor Inspection Service, along with union representatives, enforced labor, health, and safety standards in the workplace, although resource constraints limited enforcement capacity. These standards were generally current and appropriate. By law workers may remove themselves from situations that endanger their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, and the government protected this right. In 2013 authorities opened 450 investigations against employers for violating labor laws involving foreign workers, and the government imposed 28 fines, totaling NIS 2.1 million (\$380,000). Additionally, authorities opened 20 criminal cases, all of which remained under investigation at year's end. The government investigated 21 workplace accidents

involving foreign workers and conducted thousands of supervision visits to sites that employed large numbers of foreign workers. From January through October, there were 55 fatal workplace accidents. There was little information about protection and enforcement standards in the informal economy.

According to some NGOs, however, the country failed to enforce its labor laws fully with respect to minimum working conditions for foreign workers, and existing penalties were not sufficient to deter violations. Many foreign workers earned significantly less than the minimum wage. There were numerous documented cases of foreign laborers living in harsh conditions and subjected to debt bondage, but authorities prosecuted few employers. In 2013 the government examined 327 complaints from foreign workers and filed nine indictments against employers. Most complaints were determined not to meet the evidentiary threshold of a criminal violation, as required by labor courts.

The country had bilateral work agreements with Bulgaria, Moldova, and Romania to regulate recruitment fees of migrant workers in the construction sector, and it had an agreement with Thailand to regulate recruitment fees for migrant workers in the agricultural sector. The entire recruitment process of foreign workers in these industries was coordinated solely through government offices. The result was a steep decline in recruitment fees paid by migrant workers in the construction and agricultural sectors. Most migrant construction workers prior to the signing of these agreements were Chinese who paid on average NIS 80,000 (\$20,500) to recruiters. By contrast Bulgarian construction workers paid approximately NIS 1,820 (\$466) in recruitment fees within the framework of the bilateral agreement. Likewise, recruitment fees for Thai migrant workers declined from approximately NIS 32,800 (\$8,400) before the agreement to approximately NIS 7,300 (\$1,900). The agreements also provide for migrant workers to have information on their labor rights as well as a translated copy of their labor contract before they arrive in the country. As a result of greater awareness of their legal rights and their reduced recruitment debt, more workers were willing to report labor violations to NGOs or quit their jobs and return home than prior to the agreements.

Research by NGOs into the living and working conditions of foreign construction and agriculture workers, however, continued to reveal violations of their rights. In 2013 only 16 percent of Bulgarian workers said their labor conditions lived up to the terms of their contract, and 43 percent said they were not paid for overtime. In 2013 the government opened 11 investigations against employers in the construction sector on suspicion of violating labor laws. Labor violations by employers in the agricultural sector also remained widespread. Observers noted that 217 Thai workers filed complaints in person with a local NGO about their labor conditions in 2013. These workers on average earned only 71 percent of the minimum wage. According to another NGO, 27 percent of Thai workers said their labor conditions lived up to the terms of their contract after the country's bilateral agreement. In 2013 the government opened 120 investigations against employers of Thai workers on suspicion of violating labor laws but issued only five fines, amounting to a total of NIS 350,700 (\$90,000). The breadth of violations by employers and the lack of penalties imposed by the government suggested enforcement of labor laws in these industries was far from adequate despite the bilateral agreements.

Some employers in the agricultural sector circumvent the bilateral agreement with Thailand by recruiting students from poor countries to take part in agricultural study programs on student visas and then forcing them to work in the agriculture industry once they arrive in the country. Employers required participants to pay high fees to participate in what they believed were study programs, but there was no supervision of their working or living conditions since they lacked work permits and were ostensibly in the country for study. A local NGO estimated there were between 4,000 and 5,500 agricultural workers employed in this manner as of August.

While bilateral work agreements in the construction and agricultural sectors reduced the recruitment fees foreign workers paid in those industries, no such agreements regulated recruitment to the home-care sector. Abuse in the recruitment of home-care workers remained widespread and included excessive recruitment fees and false descriptions of the terms of employment contracts.

Live-in arrangements and lack of legal protections and inspections led to many cases of exploitative working conditions for female migrant workers. Local NGOs filed hundreds of complaints on behalf of foreign caregivers, including allegations of underpayment of wages, physical violence, sexual harassment, and unsuitable employment conditions.

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