

and “inducing or seducing a male or a female in any way to commit illegal or immoral actions” is a crime.

In February, Mashrou' Leila, a Lebanese rock band whose lead singer is openly gay, cancelled its planned appearance at Northwestern University's Doha campus for “safety concerns” after an anti-gay online backlash.

DEATH PENALTY

In February, the emir halted the execution of a Tunisian man convicted of murder. No execution was reported.

1. *Reality Check 2021: A Year to the 2022 World Cup, the State of Migrant Workers' Rights in Qatar* (Index: MDE 22/4966/2021), 16 November
2. *“In the Prime of Their Lives”: Qatar's Failure to Investigate, Remedy and Prevent Migrant Workers' Deaths* (Index: MDE 22/4614/2021), 26 August
3. *Joint Statement: Kenyan Labour Rights Activist Leaves Qatar After Paying Hefty Fine for Publishing “False News”* (Index: MDE 22/4626/2021), 19 August
4. *“Qatar: Ensure fair trial for Abdullah Ibhaiss”, 19 November*

ROMANIA

Republic of Romania

Head of state: **Klaus Iohannis**

Head of government: **Nicolae Ciucă (replaced Florin Cîțu in November)**

A statute of limitations on torture, among other crimes, was removed. NGOs raised concerns around the exercise of the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. Healthcare workers demanded increased protection against Covid-19. The media exposed violent pushbacks of refugees and migrants at borders. Roma and LGBTI people continued to face systemic discrimination. An investigation into the unlawful CIA rendition and torture of Abd al-Rahim Al-Nashiri was closed.

BACKGROUND

In May, the European Court of Justice (CJEU) ruled that Romania must abide by pre-EU

accession pledges to tackle corruption and meet EU benchmarks to ensure a fair legal system, including safeguards against political interference. In June, the European Commission (EC) reported a positive trend in relation to judicial reforms and the fight against corruption.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

In June, dozens of civil society organizations wrote to the Minister of Justice expressing their wish to be fully involved in a government review of the regulatory framework for associations and foundations. They called for simplified procedures to be balanced with adequate safeguards against discretionary decisions that could threaten NGOs.

In August, Bucharest Pride's organizers were fined after more than the permitted 500 people joined the march. The NGO Accept contested the fine arguing that Covid-19 restrictions on attendance were disproportionate. In July, NGOs had raised concerns that pandemic-related restrictions on protests were not similarly applied to sport, cultural, religious or family events.

Reporters investigating alleged irregularities and corruption in the use of public funds were questioned by the Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism in May, after a mayor lodged a criminal complaint accusing them of organizing a criminal group and blackmail – both crimes punishable by up to five years in prison. NGOs warned that a dangerous precedent had been set, which could undermine the right to freedom of expression. Prosecutors closed the complaint against the reporters in June.

A draft law on the protection of whistle-blowers in the public interest – excluding whistle-blowers in private sector – remained pending in Parliament. The Ministry of Justice was criticized for overlooking several amendments proposed by NGOs, including on legal aid provision and the ability of whistle-blowers to report directly to the press.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

The Covid-19 pandemic put immense pressure on an already underfunded and overstretched health system. In March 2021, healthcare workers held demonstrations calling for an increased health budget, better protection from Covid-19, increased wages and lower retirement ages.

By end of the year, 40% of the population had been fully vaccinated and vaccine uptake had plateaued. Romania registered the highest rate of mortality due to Covid-19 in the region and one of the highest in the world.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In October, an investigation by Lighthouse Reports exposed how authorities in Romania – as well as in other EU countries – had violently rounded up migrants and asylum seekers and summarily returned them to countries outside the EU.

DISCRIMINATION

ROMA RIGHTS

In January, a new law criminalizing hate crimes against Roma came into force. Roma continued to experience harassment, in both online and public spheres, and to face discrimination, including segregation, in education, housing and employment.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

LGBTI people continued to face systemic discrimination. In January, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that Romania violated the rights of two transgender people by refusing to recognize their identities, on the basis that they had not undergone gender reassignment surgery. It considered that the legal framework was not clear and consistent in this area.

In June, the ECtHR ruled that authorities had failed in their duty to protect individuals from far-right militants who stormed an LGBTI film screening in October 2013 shouting threats and homophobic abuse.

In July, NGOs raised concerns that politicians intended to propose anti-LGBTI legislation. Same-sex marriage and partnership remained unrecognized. In

September, the European Parliament asked the EC to address Romania's failure to comply with a 2018 CJEU decision on the need to harmonize national legislation to guarantee freedom of movement and residence for same-sex couples.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In March, authorities closed an investigation into Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri's unlawful rendition, secret detention and torture at a CIA black site in Romania. In 2018, the ECtHR had found that Romania hosted the secret facility and was complicit in Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri's torture and enforced disappearance. Authorities continued in their refusal to acknowledge complicity or recognize the ECtHR judgment. Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri remained detained in Guantánamo Bay without trial and at risk of facing the death penalty.

RUSSIA

Russian Federation

Head of state: **Vladimir Putin**

Head of government: **Mikhail Mishustin**

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to exacerbate the dire state of healthcare services. The rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly were routinely violated. Public assemblies organized by the political opposition were almost completely prohibited. Legislation on "foreign agents" and "undesirable organizations", together with prosecutions on trumped-up charges and other forms of pressure, were widely used to suppress dissent. Threats and attacks against journalists, human rights defenders and other activists were perpetrated with impunity. Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses intensified. Torture and other ill-treatment in places of detention remained endemic and prosecutions of perpetrators rare. Enforced disappearances were reported in Chechnya. The authorities failed to address domestic violence. LGBTI