

Human rights bodies and others expressed concerns about the living conditions in reception facilities, including the restrictions imposed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In November, the president requested emergency support from the EU for the management of migration, including the temporary suspension of new asylum applications.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The leading anti-racism organization KISA continued to face dissolution proceedings as a result of a 2020 legislative change, which led to the organization's removal from the registry of associations in December 2020 due to a minor delay in their complying with the new requirements. KISA appealed before the country's Supreme Court. Meanwhile, the organization was operating with serious limitations.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In September, the Cyprus Supreme Court heard an appeal by a young British woman against a district court ruling which found her guilty of making false claims when she reported she was gang-raped in July 2019. Serious concerns existed about the reported shortcomings of the police investigation into the case and the fairness of her first instance trial.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

In February, police reportedly used unlawful force against peaceful protesters during an anti-corruption demonstration in Nicosia. An investigation was started by the Independent Authority for the Investigation of Complaints against the Police. Although the investigation was reportedly completed, the outcome was not known by the end of the year.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The Cypriot authorities kept in place an unlawful and disproportionate blanket ban on all demonstrations, introduced as part of Covid-19 related restrictions in March 2020.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

During the year, the remains of 1,023 missing people (732 Greek Cypriots and 291 Turkish Cypriots) were identified by the Committee of Missing Persons in Cyprus in its mission to establish the fate of individuals who were forcibly disappeared during the inter-communal fighting of 1963-1964 and the events of 1974.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Czech Republic

Head of state: **Miloš Zeman**

Head of government: **Petr Fiala (replaced Andrej Babiš in December)**

There were concerns over the independence of public broadcasting media. Parliament voted for a bill to compensate thousands of Romawomen who were unlawfully sterilized in the past. Authorities denied that police officers were responsible for the death of a Roma man during a police intervention against him.

BACKGROUND

Throughout the year, the government adopted socio-economic measures to support individuals affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. They included 14 days' compensation of wages for those undertaking compulsory quarantine.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Authorities restricted the right to freedom of peaceful assembly in response to Covid-19. In December 2020, Parliament announced a state of emergency which lasted until 11 April. During this period, gatherings were restricted to a maximum of 500 people. The decision led to protests in January under the slogan "Let's open the Czech Republic".

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

There were concerns over the independence of public broadcasting media. In March, the European Broadcasting Union stated that it had observed increasing politicization of the

governing body of Czech Television. In May, Reporters Without Borders expressed concerns about the risk of increased political pressure on the public broadcaster following the election of new members of the Czech Television Council.

DISCRIMINATION

ROMA

Roma children continued to experience discriminatory segregation in schools.

A Roma man, Stanislav Tomáš, died during a police intervention against him in the town of Teplice on 19 June. According to video footage from the arrest, published by the news server Romea.cz, three police officers used force against him. The video showed Stanislav Tomáš lying on the ground while one of the officers knelt on his neck during the entire intervention.¹ On 26 July, the Police Inspectorate informed Amnesty International that the police intervened because of Stanislav Tomáš's "aggressive behaviour that escalated and turned against the intervening police officer." The minister of interior stated in July that the autopsy identified drug overdose as a possible cause of death, and that the police did not restrict breathing or blood flow. In December, the deputy Public Defender of Rights published her investigation into the case, which found that police officers made significant errors during the intervention. In particular, she noted that the police failed to ensure that their coercive methods did not cause disproportionate harm.

In July, the Senate voted for a bill to compensate thousands of Roma women who were unlawfully sterilized by the authorities between 1966 and 2012.² Survivors of unlawful sterilizations will each be eligible for compensation of 300,000 CZK (€11,800), which must be applied for through the Ministry of Health within three years of 1 January 2022, when the law enters into force.

In August, the Constitutional Court set aside an amendment to the law on welfare benefits on the grounds that it would be discriminatory and exclude certain categories

of residents. The amendment allowed municipalities to declare zones of "socially pathological behaviour", residents of which were barred from claiming some housing benefits. NGOs had criticized the amendment in the past as disproportionately targeting Roma and poor people.

LGBTI PEOPLE

In January, the Constitutional Court rejected a regional court's proposal to amend a law that prevents recognition of adoptions from abroad by same-sex couples who live in the Czech Republic. The law permits adoptions by married couples only.

In April, the lower chamber of the parliament approved the first reading of a bill allowing same-sex marriage. The parliament did not further discuss the bill before the October elections.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Five years after signing the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), the Czech Republic had yet to ratify it. In March, the government plenipotentiary for human rights stated that, following the October parliamentary elections, the new government will decide whether to propose ratification to the parliament.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In August, the government accepted 170 Afghans as part of the Czech Republic's evacuation operations from Afghanistan. Also in August, the Minister of Interior stated that the government's priority was to ensure that the tension in Afghanistan "would not lead to another migration wave" and to prevent a "crisis on the external EU borders".

In September, during the parliamentary election campaign, then prime minister Andrej Babiš used billboards with anti-immigration messages stating "I will defend you from illegal migrants. To my dying breath."

The government continued to refuse to participate in any relocation efforts within the

EU and the resettlement programme remained “frozen”.

1. [Czech Republic: Concerns Over Possible Unlawful Killing by the Police](#) (Index: EUR 71/4329/2021), 23 June
2. [“Czech Republic: Hard won justice for women survivors of unlawful sterilization”](#), 22 July

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Head of state: **Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo**

Head of government: **Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge** (replaced **Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba** in February)

Continuing armed conflict and violence claimed thousands of lives, large-scale displacement and widespread sexual violence. At least 10 cases of crimes under international law were prosecuted by military courts, but impunity remained widespread. Economic, social, and humanitarian crises persisted, exacerbated by Covid-19 and other outbreaks. The use of arbitrary arrests and unlawful detentions was prevalent across the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Prison conditions remained inhumane. Rallies and protests organized by opposition parties or civil society deemed to be critical of the government were often banned or violently suppressed. Human rights defenders and journalists continued to be targeted with attacks and threats; at least three journalists were killed. Mining projects led to serious pollution with a considerable human rights impact. Children’s education was interrupted by teachers’ strikes over poor pay and working conditions.

BACKGROUND

President Tshisekedi appointed Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge as prime minister in

February, having ended the two-year coalition with his predecessor Joseph Kabila. In April, a new government was formed with a parliamentary majority.

Tensions emerged over the elections planned for 2023, particularly in relation to the organization, functioning and leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission.

In North Kivu and Ituri, a state of siege was declared in May allowing the army and police to take over political leadership, public administration, and the criminal justice system in the two provinces.

Rampant violence continued in the Kasai region. South Kivu, Tanganyika and Maniema provinces also experienced continued and significant levels of violence.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS AND KILLINGS

Indiscriminate attacks against civilian populations, looting and destruction of homes, crops, and other objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population, as well as attacks on infrastructure, continued particularly in the east and south; some of these acts constituted war crimes.

In North Kivu and Ituri provinces, attacks and other violations and abuses against civilians by armed groups and government forces increased by 10% between May and November according to the UN. According to the Kivu Security Tracker, at least 1,137 civilians were unlawfully killed in the two provinces between 6 May (when the state of siege was declared) and 15 November. For instance, at least 55 civilians were killed during indiscriminate attacks by combatants of the Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO), an alliance of militia groups, in the villages of Boga and Tchabi, in Ituri province, on 30 May. In the same province, the Congolese army killed seven civilians in Nongo village on 2 May and eight civilians in the villages of Banikasowa, Ndenge I and Ndenge II on 15 May. There were multiple abductions and 300,000 people fled their villages. Armed groups including combatants of the Allied