

the Bavarian elections to emulate the rhetoric and agenda of the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany backfired as the CSU lost voters to AfD and the Greens, with the latter becoming that state's second largest party.

Arrivals of asylum-seekers and migrants fell for the third year in a row, and federal authorities made significant progress clearing a backlog of asylum claims during the year. By the end of July, 96,644 new asylum-seekers had been registered, decreasing by a sixth from the previous year.

Despite disagreements within the newly formed federal coalition government over Germany's approach to EU asylum and migration policy, Germany continued to play a leadership role in refugee resettlement. In April, the government announced that Germany would accept 4,600 resettled refugees in 2018 and 5,600 in 2019 as a contribution towards an EU program. In July, the government granted admission to up to 300 refugees evacuated to Niger from Libya.

NGOs criticized aspects of Germany's deportation system after reports of a series of cases in which asylum seekers were returned to their home countries while their cases were still pending, including a Tunisian deported despite a court order blocking the transfer on the grounds of risk of torture.

Although fewer than in previous years, attacks on refugees and asylum seekers remained a matter of concern. In the first half of 2018, police recorded 627 attacks on refugees and asylum seekers outside their home, and 77 attacks on refugee shelters.

Xenophobic demonstrations in the city of Chemnitz triggered by the killing of a German man, allegedly by two foreign nationals, in August and the exploitation of the killing by the far-right, saw violent scenes, including attacks on people perceived as "non-German."

In March, a Dresden judge found eight people from a far-right group guilty of terrorism offences and attempted murder for attacks in 2015 on refugee shelters and a local politician supporting newly arrived migrants. In July, a Munich judge found a man guilty of murder, terror offenses, and arson in a case relating to a series of murders carried out by a neo-Nazi group between 2000 and 2006. Four accomplices were found guilty of lesser charges.

The controversial Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG), came into effect on January 1. It compels social media companies to take down hate speech and other illegal

content or face large fines. The act came under criticism after several high-profile social media users had their content or accounts blocked, either as a result of NetzDG or the companies' terms of use.

A group of foreign correspondents—with support from German journalists' unions and other press freedom groups—launched a challenge in January before the Federal Constitutional Court to the German domestic intelligence agency's power to surveil the communications of foreign nationals, arguing it infringes their right to free expression and privacy.

German judicial authorities continued their work investigating serious international crimes committed abroad, including in Syria.

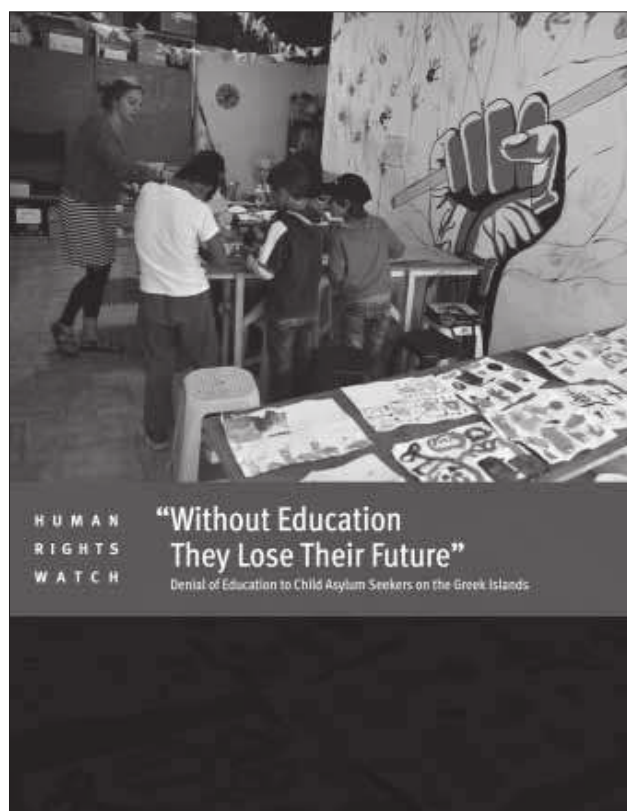
Greece

Although Greece continued to host large number of asylum seekers, it failed to protect their rights. Overall numbers of arrivals increased compared to the same period in 2017. Deficiencies in the reception and asylum system escalated with severe overcrowding, unsanitary, unhygienic conditions, and lack of sufficient specialized care, including medical care, trauma counseling, and psychosocial support. Physical and gender-based violence were common in asylum camps, and NGOs reported deteriorating mental health conditions among asylum seekers. Most unaccompanied children continued to be placed in camps with adults, in so-called protective police custody or detention or risked homelessness, with authorities failing to resolve a shortage of juvenile shelters or foster care.

Greece's EU-backed policy of confining asylum seekers who arrived by sea to the Aegean islands trapped thousands in these conditions.

While the government transferred 18,000 asylum seekers from islands to mainland Greece following a concerted NGO campaign in November, it refused to implement a binding high court ruling to end the confinement policy for new arrivals, and instead adopted a new law in May to continue it. On Lesbos, a regional authority inspection in September concluded that the Moria camp, the largest of its kind, presented a danger to public health and the environment, and called on the government to address acute shortcomings or close the camp.

Some migrants and asylum seekers trying to cross the land border from Turkey into northeastern Evros region reported being summarily returned to Turkey dur-



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

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

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

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

Hungary

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

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

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

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

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