

2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Italy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Italy during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: serious restrictions on freedom of expression including criminal libel laws and violence or threats of violence against journalists; crimes involving violence and threats of violence targeting members of national, racial, and ethnic minorities, including some immigrant and Romani communities; crimes, violence, and threats of violence motivated by antisemitism; and crimes involving violence or threats of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons.

The government took credible steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who may have committed human rights abuses.

Section 1.

Respect for the Integrity of the Person

A. ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE AND OTHER UNLAWFUL OR POLITICALLY MOTIVATED KILLINGS

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings.

B. DISAPPEARANCE

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

C. TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT, AND OTHER RELATED ABUSES

The constitution and law prohibited such practices. Prosecutors filed criminal charges against prison authorities alleged to have engaged in torture or illegal treatment or punishment.

In November 2022, a trial began of 105 Santa Maria Capus Vetere prison guards accused of beating prisoners who protested for more masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer to protect against COVID-19 in March 2020. In October 2022, prosecutors opened another investigation of 41 police officers related to the same incident. Associazione Antigone (AA), a domestic nongovernmental organization (NGO) that reports on the human rights of prisoners, filed complaints with prosecutors for episodes of alleged mistreatment.

On May 24, four Milan police officers were filmed beating a transgender individual whom they had arrested. Municipal authorities disciplined the officers, and public prosecutors opened

investigations into three of them.

On June 6, a Verona court ordered the arrest of five police officers accused of torture, injury, and other crimes against homeless persons and asylum seekers in detention. The press reported that police were allegedly responsible for racist insults, death threats, and violence.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison and detention centers were at times overcrowded. NGOs and media reported cases of mistreatment of prisoners.

Abusive Physical Conditions: Prison populations in Brescia, Como, and Lodi exceeded 170 percent of capacity.

According to a May report by AA, only 60 percent of cells for female inmates and 47 percent for male inmates had a shower. Additionally, the report highlighted improper treatment of mentally ill detainees. AA reported that lack of access to physical activity for inmates contributed at times to mental health problems.

On March 24, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) released a report on visits to four prisons and nine police stations in the country conducted in 2022. The CPT received accounts of inter-prisoner violence and intimidation and allegations of ill-treatment by prison staff.

Administration: Authorities investigated credible allegations of mistreatment.

Independent Monitoring: In addition to periodic visits by the CPT, the government permitted independent human rights organizations, parliamentarians, the national and regional ombudsmen of detainees, and media to visit prisons and detention centers. The government also provided access to migrant and refugee detention centers to representatives of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the European Asylum Support Office, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Italian Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, and Save the Children.

D. ARBITRARY ARREST OR DETENTION

The constitution prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court. The government generally observed these requirements.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

To detain an individual, police needed a warrant issued by a public prosecutor, unless they caught a perpetrator in the act or there was a specific and immediate danger to which a police officer was responding. The law required authorities to inform a detainee of the reason for arrest. If authorities detained a person without a warrant, an examining prosecutor had to decide within 24 hours of detention whether there was enough evidence to validate the arrest. An investigating judge then had 48 hours to affirm the arrest and recommend prosecution. In cases of alleged terrorist activity, authorities could hold suspects up to 48 hours before bringing the case to a magistrate. The government generally respected these rights and processes.

There was no provision for bail, but judges could, and often did, grant detainees provisional liberty while awaiting trial. The government provided a lawyer to indigent persons at its expense. The law required authorities to allow a detainee to see an attorney within 24 hours of his or her arrest, or within 48 hours for cases of suspected terrorist activities. Access to an attorney could take up to five

days under exceptional circumstances if the investigating judge needed to interrogate the accused concerning organized crime or if the judge foresaw a risk the attorney might attempt to tamper with the evidence.

E. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL

The constitution provided for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality. There were isolated reports of judicial corruption and politically motivated investigations by magistrates.

Trial Procedures

The constitution provided for the right to a fair and public trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right.

Judiciary experts reported foreign detainees were occasionally unable to access free interpretation or translation services in a timely manner.

Domestic and European institutions criticized the slow pace of the judicial process. The Ministry of Justice reported that the period between a criminal suspect being charged and the start of the corresponding penal trial dropped from an average 211 days in 2021 to an average of 180 days in 2022. It took an average of 815 days for a case to arrive at the court of appeals from the time of the initial indictment.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

F. TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

Not applicable.

G. PROPERTY SEIZURE AND RESTITUTION

The government-established Ansemlı Commission, a technical body with the mandate to investigate the confiscation of Jewish assets during the Holocaust and evaluate government restitution efforts, in the past recommended the government actively identify survivors and heirs entitled to unclaimed property, but the government had not acted on this recommendation. The commission reported that survivors who claimed assets generally received them back.

In July, the government allotted €61 million (\$57.9 million) to reimburse Italians recognized as victims of the Third Reich by German courts. Further implementation procedures were outstanding.

The Department of State's *Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today (JUST) Act Report* to Congress, released publicly in July 2020, can be found on the Department's website: <https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/>.

H. ARBITRARY OR UNLAWFUL INTERFERENCE WITH PRIVACY, FAMILY, HOME, OR CORRESPONDENCE

The law prohibited such actions, and there were no reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

Section 2.

Respect for Civil Liberties

A. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, INCLUDING FOR MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND OTHER MEDIA

The constitution provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, and the government generally respected this right. An independent media, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of expression, including for media members.

Libel/Slander Laws: The law criminalized defamation and libel with penalties ranging from fines to three years in prison. Courts seldom imposed criminal penalties. On March 23, a Florence court rejected former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's €200,000 (\$190,000) compensation request from the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* for an allegedly libelous article. The court stated that, "the requested amount of money had a blatant and unjustified purpose of deterrence" and ordered Renzi to pay €16,000 (\$15,200) to the publishing company and its employees.

Nongovernmental Impact: The national association of journalists reported more than 250 journalists were victims of intimidation and under police protection, including 22 who received around-the-clock protection, a figure corroborated by the NGO Reporters Without Borders. The NGO further reported significant hostility towards journalists with serious threats or murder attempts from criminal groups – mostly in Rome and the south – necessitating police protection.

Police reported 46 cases of intimidation against journalists between January and June, down from 64 during the same period in 2021. The government believed organized criminal groups were responsible for four of the incidents.

The independent news outlet *Ossigeno* reported an increase in the total number of journalists, bloggers, and media operators who were victims of threats from 384 in 2021 to 721 in 2022.

On January 15, several demonstrators assaulted journalist Jari Pilati while he was filming a demonstration organized by an anarchist group and stole his smartphone.

On July 25, Syracuse prosecutors opened an investigation against former Sicilian regional councilor Giuseppe Gennuso, two journalists, and another person, who were accused of having plotted a campaign against journalist Paolo Borrrometi. Borrrometi published investigative reports on organized crime and received threats from criminal groups.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content.

B. FREEDOMS OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

The constitution and law provided for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

C. FREEDOM OF RELIGION

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

D. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND THE RIGHT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY

The law provided for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.

E. PROTECTION OF REFUGEES

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

Access to Asylum: The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees.

By September, 133,617 persons had entered the country by sea, compared to 71,790 during the same period in 2022. The increase affected the ability of authorities to provide housing and other services to asylum seekers. NGOs and independent observers identified difficulties in asylum procedures, including inconsistencies in the application of standards in reception centers and insufficient referral rates of trafficking victims and unaccompanied minor children to appropriate and adequate services.

Refoulement: Italian authorities sometimes cooperated with the Libyan coast guard to seize vessels carrying persons in Libyan waters and return them to Libya. Civil society, including UNHCR, did not consider Libya a "safe country" due to the absence of a functioning asylum system and widely reported difficulties faced by refugees and asylum seekers in Libya including the lack of protection from abuses, the lack of durable solutions, and a heightened risk of trafficking for those forced to remain in Libya or returned to Libyan shores.

Freedom of Movement: The law permitted authorities to detain asylum seekers in identification and expulsion centers for up to 120 days if authorities decided they posed a threat to public order or believed they might flee from a deportation order or predeportation jail sentence.

Access to Basic Services: UNHCR, IOM, and other humanitarian organizations and NGOs reported refugees were living in abandoned, inadequate, or overcrowded facilities in Rome and other major cities. They also reported these persons had limited access to health care, legal counseling, basic education, and other public services. Many refugees working in the informal economy could not afford to rent apartments, especially in large cities. NGOs claimed the government provided limited services aimed at young men, who traditionally made up the majority of new arrivals and who in many cases did not request support from local authorities.

Durable Solutions: The government offered refugees resettlement services, while both the government and the IOM assisted refugees who opted to return to their home countries.

Temporary Protection: The government provided temporary protection to asylum seekers and refugees. UNHCR noted that as of September 1, the government reported 167,525 refugees from Ukraine in the country.

F. STATUS AND TREATMENT OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS)

Not applicable.

G. STATELESS PERSONS

According to the NGO Associazione 21 Luglio, fewer than 800 Romani stateless persons lived in the country in 2022, mostly children. The law provided citizenship to any child born in the country to two stateless individuals, both of whom must have obtained formal recognition of stateless status. Otherwise, Italian citizenship would not be conferred upon the child at birth, and the child would be born stateless. The law provided that individuals formally recognized as stateless could request to become naturalized citizens after five years of legal residence in the country.

Section 3.

Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The law provided citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Abuses or Irregularities in Recent Elections: National and international observers considered elections fair and free of abuses and irregularities.

Section 4.

Corruption in Government

The law provided criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption.

Corruption: According to the national anti-corruption authority, an increase in public expenditure increased the risk of corruption in the implementation of public projects receiving funding. National and local government promoted a series of preventive measures, including the adoption of a code of conduct, staff rotation, norms on whistleblowing, transparency, and training. On June 22, police arrested former director of the customs agency Marcello Minenna and former Member of Parliament Gianluca Pini and opened an investigation of another 32 persons in a corruption probe regarding the supply of facemasks to Emilia Romagna regional authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section 5.

Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Monitoring and Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction to monitor or investigate human rights conditions or cases and publish their

findings. Government officials were often cooperative and responsive to the views of these groups.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The National Office to Combat Racial Discrimination under the Department of Equal Opportunity in the Prime Minister's Office assisted victims of discrimination. The Interministerial Committee for Human Rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Senate's Human Rights Committee focused on international and high-profile domestic cases.

Section 6.

Discrimination and Societal Abuses

WOMEN

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law penalized convicted perpetrators of rape of either gender, including spousal rape, with six to 12 years in prison. The law criminalized the physical abuse of women, including by family members, and provided for the prosecution of perpetrators of gender-based violence and for assistance in shielding from publicity women who experienced gender-based violence. The government effectively enforced the law. Judicial protective measures for domestic violence allowed for an ex parte application to a civil court judge in urgent cases. A specific law on stalking included mandatory detention for acts of sexual violence, including by partners.

The Department of Equal Opportunity operated a hotline for survivors of gender-based violence seeking immediate assistance and temporary shelter. It operated another hotline for those experiencing stalking.

Other Forms of Gender-based Violence or Harassment: On February 7, police arrested in Stresa a Bangladeshi man suspected of having kidnapped and mistreated his daughter who had refused an arranged marriage in Bangladesh.

Discrimination: The law provided the same legal status and rights for women as for men, and those laws were generally respected. The government enforced laws prohibiting discrimination in all sectors of society and the economy. The law did not allow women to remarry within 300 days of divorce or annulment to prevent misattributed paternity. Women could request a waiver from a court after proving they were not pregnant.

The law prohibited discrimination with respect to employment and occupation based on gender (including pregnancy). Women workers had special protection in case of pregnancy and maternity. The government effectively enforced applicable law; however, there were reports of employment discrimination based on gender.

Reproductive Rights: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities. Emergency contraception methods were available. Independent observers and NGOs reported government health authorities did not provide sufficient resources to adequately supply the public with reproductive health services and counseling.

The government provided access to sexual and reproductive health services for survivors of sexual violence. Emergency contraception and post-exposure prophylaxis were available as part of clinical management of rape. NGOs reported in some cases government personnel were not sufficiently trained to identify survivors and refer them to the available sources of assistance.

SYSTEMIC RACIAL OR ETHNIC VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

Various laws sought to protect members of racial and ethnic minorities from violence and discrimination. The government generally enforced these laws. Discrimination against members of ethnic minorities, including Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti, remained a problem.

The law prohibited discrimination with respect to employment and occupation based on race, national origin, color, ethnicity, and refugee or stateless status. The government effectively enforced applicable law; however, there were reports of employment discrimination based on race or ethnicity.

The press and NGOs reported cases of incitement to hatred, violent attacks, forced evictions from unauthorized camps, and mistreatment by municipal authorities. The European Roma Rights Center reported Romani families living in informal camps were persistently evicted, disregarding international standards. Residents had no warning prior to eviction, and they did not receive formal eviction orders, making legal challenges difficult. Roma living in camps reported overcrowded housing (seven or eight persons per trailer, shack, or shipping container) and noted the camps were typically located on the periphery of a town or city and lacked easy access to government services, educational and employment opportunities, and public transportation. On July 8, the government approved a plan to close six authorized camps hosting 2,261 persons, of whom 45 percent were minor children, by 2026. Only 31 percent of Romani children ages six to 11 attended schools.

CHILDREN

Child Abuse: Abuse of children was punishable by six to 24 years in prison, depending on the age of the child. Child abuse within the family was punishable by up to seven years in prison. The government implemented prevention programs in schools, promptly investigated complaints, and punished perpetrators.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: The minimum age for marriage was 18, but juvenile courts could authorize marriages for individuals as young as 16. Forced marriage was punishable by up to five years in prison, or six years if it involved a child. Forced marriage for religious reasons was also penalized.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: Authorities enforced laws prohibiting child sexual exploitation, the sale of children, child sex trafficking (offering or procuring a child for commercial sex), and practices related to child pornography. Children were exploited in child sex trafficking, forced to commit crimes, or beg. Roma children were at risk for trafficking, including child sex trafficking, and “lover boy” gangs recruited girls in Eastern Europe, especially Romania, via social media and exploited them in Italy in child sex trafficking. Traffickers frequently targeted unaccompanied children who were especially vulnerable to trafficking.

The minimum age for consensual sex was 14, or 13 if the age gap between the children was less than three years.

ANTISEMITISM

There were approximately 27,000 Jews in the country. The law criminalized the public display of the Fascist stiff-armed Roman salute and the sale or display of Fascist or Nazi memorabilia. Convictions could result in imprisonment from six months to two years, with an additional eight months if they involved the selling of Fascist or Nazi memorabilia online. On June 27, the ministers of the interior and sports, the national coordinator to fight antisemitism, and the president of the Italian soccer federation (FIGC) signed a memorandum of understanding on preventing discriminatory incidents. Soccer teams committed to not assign jersey number “88” and accepted the interruption of matches in case of antisemitic chants and slogans. On April 4, FIGC authorities suspended the fan bloc for the Rome-based Lazio professional soccer team for one match after they chanted antisemitic slurs at opposing fans during a March 19 game against crosstown rival Roma.

Antisemitic societal prejudices persisted. Some extremist fringe groups were responsible for antisemitic remarks and actions, including physical violence against Jews, vandalism of Jewish-owned business and synagogues, and publication of antisemitic material on the internet.

Internet hate speech and bullying were the most common forms of antisemitic attacks, according to the Center of Contemporary Jewish Documentation. Most incidents occurred during Jewish holidays or celebrations. Antisemitic slogans and graffiti appeared in some cities, including Milan, Florence, and Chieti. More than 2,000 police officers regularly guarded synagogues and other Jewish community sites in the country.

For further information on antisemitism incidents, whether or not those incidents were motivated by religion, and for reporting on the ability of Jews to exercise freedom of religion or belief, please see the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/> <http://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

ACTS OF VIOLENCE, CRIMINALIZATION, AND OTHER ABUSES BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY OR EXPRESSION, OR SEX CHARACTERISTICS

Criminalization: The law did not criminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults, cross-dressing, or other sexual or gender characteristic-related behaviors.

Violence and Harassment: NGOs advocating for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons reported instances of societal violence, discrimination, and hate speech.

The press reported cases of violence against LGBTQI+ individuals. Discrimination and violence against lesbian and bisexual women occurred. On June 13, four persons assaulted a lesbian couple, mutilating the ear of one individual.

On September 29, university professor Massimo Arconge, a member of the LGBTQI+ community, denounced death threats and insults he received following his criticism of a book considered homophobic.

Discrimination: The law prohibited discrimination by state and nonstate actors based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics, and explicitly recognized LGBTQI+ individuals, couples, and their families. The government enforced the law. The law did not punish discrimination in other sectors such as education and housing and incitement to commit violence on the same ground. Same-sex couples had the right to civil unions but could not adopt children, and the government, acting pursuant to a 2022 decision by the highest appellate court, did not register nonbiological parents of children in the civil register (regardless of the nonbiological parent's sexual orientation). In June, some lesbian families began receiving notices nonbiological parents were being removed from their children's birth certificates. The law permitted stepchild adoption, including for same-sex couples.

According to 2022 statistics from the Italian National Statistics Institute, 33.3 percent of LGBTQI+ employees surveyed reported discrimination due to their sexual orientation. Of those, 44.6 percent reported hearing slurs, 42.1 percent harassment, 40.7 percent exclusion from work meetings and conversations, 20.2 percent verbal or written threats, and 16.6 percent losing job duties.

By July the website Gay Help Line received approximately 20,000 calls and online messages, 42 percent of which concerned discrimination and violence against self-identified gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals within their families after coming out and 15 percent of which concerned discrimination against transgender individuals. According to Gay Help Line, in 2022 only 10 out of 400 young homosexuals forced to leave their homes had shelter in a protected community. Approximately 11 percent of requests for help involved cases of discrimination in the workplace; 15 percent concerned cases of workplace harassment, blackmail, and “revenge porn;” 19 percent concerned assaults; and 15 percent concerned bullying.

Availability of Legal Gender Recognition: Legal gender recognition was available, but individuals had to petition a court with jurisdiction over the matter. Self-determination was not allowed. An individual could petition for gender-affirming surgery or, where surgery was not desired, for a legal name change and gender-marker update. In deciding such cases, courts considered gender dysphoria and irreversible identification with the perceived gender. The petition had to include psychodiagnostic and medical documentation attesting to the path of gender affirmation, irreversible willingness to rectify legal sex, and definitive and irreversible identification with the experienced gender.

Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological Practices: The law did not ban so-called conversion therapy practices. There were no reports of forced or involuntary so-called conversion therapy practiced on adults or minors to try to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. Likewise, there were no reports of surgeries performed on nonconsenting intersex persons.

Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly: The law did not restrict freedom of expression, association, or peaceful assembly for LGBTQI+ individuals.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The constitution and the law required authorities to provide access to education, health services, public buildings, and transportation to persons with disabilities on an equal basis. The government enforced these provisions effectively, but there were incidents of societal and employment discrimination. Although the law mandated access to government buildings and public transportation for persons with disabilities, physical barriers continued to pose challenges, and government information was not always provided in an accessible format.

On March 31, the Court of Cassation ruled that labor contracts recognizing the same number of days of paid sick leave to all employees were discriminatory for persons with disabilities. The case regarded a street cleaner fired for being on sick leave for more days than provided by the applicable collective labor contract in 2018.

Section 7.

Worker Rights

A. FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND THE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The law provided for workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. Antiunion discrimination was illegal, and employees fired for union activity had the right to request reinstatement. The law provided for members of the armed forces to establish independent unions.

By law, strikes impacting essential public services (such as transportation, sanitation, and health services) required longer advance notification than in other sectors; the law also prohibited multiple strikes within days of each other in those sectors. The law only allowed unions that represented at least one-half of the transit workforce to call a transit strike.

The government effectively enforced applicable laws protecting freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike for workers. The penalties were commensurate with those for analogous crimes or violations. Penalties were regularly applied against violators. On March 1, the Council of State struck down temporary rules adopted in 2018 limiting strikes in public services such as transportation on the grounds that they were too restrictive.

The government generally respected freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, although there were instances in which employers unilaterally annulled bargaining agreements. Employers continued to use short-term contracts and subcontracting to avoid hiring workers with bargaining rights.

B. PROHIBITION OF FORCED OR COMPULSORY LABOR

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

C. PROHIBITION OF CHILD LABOR AND MINIMUM AGE FOR EMPLOYMENT

The law prohibited all of the worst forms of child labor and included a minimum age for employment, including limitations on working hours, and occupational safety and health restrictions for children. The minimum age for employment was 16 and applied to children working in all sectors. The government effectively enforced applicable laws in the formal economy, but enforcement was not as effective in the informal economy. Penalties were commensurate with those for analogous serious crimes, and violations were regularly applied against violators.

Children between the ages of 16 and 18 were limited to working eight hours per day or 40 hours per week. The law provided for the protection of unaccompanied foreign children and created a system of protection that managed children from their arrival in the country until they reached the age of 21 and could support themselves. Traffickers continued to target unaccompanied children. Children were forced to commit crimes, beg, or work in the agricultural sector, shops, bars, restaurants, or bakeries.

D. DISCRIMINATION (SEE SECTION 6)

E. ACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS OF WORK

Wage and Hour Laws: The law did not provide for a minimum wage. Instead, collective bargaining contracts negotiated between unions and employers set minimum wage levels for different sectors of the economy. These minimum wages were above the poverty income level. Unless limited by a collective bargaining agreement, the law provided a 40-hour workweek. Alleged violations of wage, hour, or overtime laws were more common in the agricultural and service sectors.

Occupational Safety and Health: The law set occupational safety and health (OSH) standards that were generally appropriate for the main industries in the country. OSH experts from government institutions proactively identified unsafe situations through inspections and responded

to OSH complaints. In general, if documentation was provided, workers could remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety.

Alleged violations of OSH standards were more common in the agricultural and service sectors.

Migrant workers in the agricultural sector sometimes faced unsafe work conditions, including working outdoors for prolonged periods of time in extreme temperatures and receiving wages below contractual requirements. In July, the government approved a decree to help families and businesses hit by extreme climate events. The decree included provisions allowing construction and agricultural firms to use wage-supplement funds for employees unable to work due to heatwaves without those hours being counted towards existing maximum limits for temporary furloughs.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement: The government effectively enforced minimum wages as set by collective labor contracts, overtime, and OSH laws. Penalties for violations were commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud or negligence, and were regularly applied against violators.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policies was responsible for enforcement of wage, hour, and OSH laws. Labor inspections were jointly conducted by representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, the National Institute for Social Security, the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work, and the Carabinieri. The number of labor inspectors was sufficient to enforce compliance, and inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions.

To prevent violations, particularly against vulnerable groups, the government continued to conduct random inspections, investigate alleged violations, and conduct public awareness campaigns.

The estimated size of the informal sector was 11.2 percent of total employment in 2021, the latest estimate from the International Labor Organization. Informal sector workers were covered by wage, hour, OSH, and other labor laws, and the government provided social protections for informal economy workers. Due to the nature of the informal economy, however, the government was limited in its enforcement of laws and provision of protections, especially in the agricultural, construction, and service sectors.