

Mexican authorities detained at least 281,149 people in overcrowded immigration detention centres and deported at least 98,299 people, mostly from Central America, including thousands of unaccompanied children.

During the year, authorities detained several refugees and migrants in airports around the country and subjected them to inhuman and degrading treatment.

The country's refugee agency received 118,478 asylum applications. The largest number of applications came from nationals of Honduras, followed by Cuba, Haiti and Venezuela.

Authorities continued to collaborate with the USA in implementing US policies that undermine the right to asylum and the principle of non-refoulement. These included summarily expelling people from Central America and Venezuela under Title 42 of the US Code, which drastically limits access to asylum procedures at the US-Mexico border. People expelled to Mexico from the USA were subjected to multiple forms of violence, including kidnappings, sexual violence and robbery.

The Supreme Court issued two landmark rulings for the protection of migrants. In May, it declared that the immigration checkpoints inside Mexico are unconstitutional on the ground that they are discriminatory. In October it recognized that the Executive branch had failed to publish clear official protocols for the protection of people returned to Mexican territory under the US "Remain in Mexico" protocol (also known as the Migrant Protection Protocols, MPP).

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Congress again failed to pass a law to regulate Indigenous peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent on projects affecting them, guaranteed under ILO Convention 169, despite a 2020 Supreme Court ruling calling on it to do so.

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1. "Mexico: Militarization of public security will lead to more human rights violations and perpetuate impunity", 9 September

2. "Americas: Attempts to militarize public security in the region are a threat to human rights", 29 November (Spanish only)
3. "Mexico: Rights of femicide victims at risk", 13 December
4. "Mexico: State must guarantee truth, justice, and remembrance for families of Ayotzinapa students", 28 September
5. "Americas: Military monitoring of civil society organizations shows deteriorating respect for human rights", 7 October

MOLDOVA

Republic of Moldova

Head of state: **Maia Sandu**

Head of government: **Natalia Gavrilița**

No visible progress was made in reducing instances of torture and other ill-treatment in detention. Impunity continued for past human rights violations by law enforcement agencies. New "temporary" restrictions on public assemblies were introduced. The rights of LGBTI people were not fully realized, leading to cases of harassment, discrimination and violence. Some refugee reception centres turned away religious and ethnic minority refugees. In the breakaway Transdnistria region, prosecution and imprisonment for peaceful dissent continued.

BACKGROUND

Political tensions were heightened by Russia's aggression against neighbouring Ukraine and the ongoing presence of Russian troops in Moldova's breakaway Transdnistria region. Explosions were reported in Transdnistria, briefly raising the terror threat level.

Moldova remained one of the poorest countries in Europe. Women, children, older people, people with disabilities and those living in rural areas were among the poorest groups. The war in Ukraine exacerbated high inflation and soaring energy prices, and in November led to energy blackouts.

On 23 June, Moldova received EU candidate status on condition of structural reforms.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

No visible progress was made in addressing institutional causes of torture and other ill-treatment in detention. Overcrowding, unsanitary and otherwise inadequate detention conditions and poor health provision remained common in adult, juvenile and mixed penitentiary institutions.

IMPUNITY

Impunity remained endemic for past human rights violations by members of law enforcement agencies, including torture and other ill-treatment of protesters in 2009.

No further progress was made in the case of the abduction and forcible return to Türkiye of seven Turkish teachers by Moldovan security services in 2018. However, following litigation by the wife of one of the teachers, the Moldovan authorities were forced to declassify details of criminal proceedings that led to the conviction and fining of the former director of the Security and Intelligence Service (SIS), Vasillii Botnari, in 2020. He had been convicted solely for an economic crime, relating to the cost of the chartered flight on which the teachers were transported. The relevant court decision had been kept secret until after the deadline for appeal by the victims' families. Nobody else appeared to have been brought to justice in relation to the abduction and illegal rendition of the seven teachers, who were subsequently imprisoned in Türkiye.

Despite this case and other abuses, the SIS was not subject to reform. Instead, in November, new draft legislation was tabled in parliament to give the security services additional surveillance and other powers.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

On 19 April, President Sandu signed into law a prohibition on the use of symbols associated with Russia's military activities abroad. These included the so-called ribbon of St. George and the letters "Z" and "V". Their use was expected by pro-Russian political groups at a traditional demonstration held on 9 May to mark Victory Day in the

Second World War. While the event was allowed to proceed uninterrupted, people displaying the banned symbols either at the event or on their cars were identified, and later 196 fines were issued by police, including to 16 parliamentarians from the Bloc of Communists and Socialists.

On 13 October restrictions were imposed on protests after President Sandu had asked the government the day before to introduce temporary legislative amendments to "allow the police to ensure public order" during protests by the opposition Shor party. The Ombudsperson (Public Advocate) criticized this decision. On 16 October police seized tents from protesters in front of central government buildings.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

During the UN Human Rights Council's UPR of Moldova in January, numerous states called for strengthened protections for LGBTI people. The Moldovan NGO GenderDoc-M reported in early 2022 that anti-LGBTI views remained common across Moldova and that young LGBTI people continued to face harassment and violence.

In February the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality stated that Marin Pavlescu had been subjected to harassment based on his sexual orientation during his military service. In late 2021, the Ministry of Defence had threatened to prosecute Marin Pavlescu for desertion after he left the army following harassment and humiliation, but in May 2022 the prosecutor's office declined to open a criminal case against him. Marin Pavlescu continued to face discrimination in finding work due to being effectively outed as gay in publicity surrounding his case.

In June, Moldova's largest-ever Pride march went ahead in the capital, Chişinău, despite threats by the city's mayor that he would ban the event.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

More than 740,000 individuals crossed from Ukraine into Moldova by December, putting significant pressure on local services. Most

travelled further into Europe or returned to Ukraine, leaving almost 90,000 refugees in Moldova.

The Public Advocate noted that some refugee reception centres had turned away Roma and other religious or ethnic minority refugees from Ukraine. Some centre managers were allegedly contacted by local police and warned that the centres should not accept Roma people.

TRANSNISTRIA REGION

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

De facto authorities in Transnistria sentenced Viktor Pleshkanov to five days' "administrative detention" for "petty hooliganism" after he reportedly threatened to hang the Ukrainian flag on his balcony as an affront to the self-styled Ministry of State Security. His lawyer reported that he was then subsequently sentenced to 38 months' imprisonment in a closed trial under undisclosed extremism-related charges.

MONGOLIA

Mongolia

Head of state: **Ukhnaa Khurelsukh**

Head of government: **Luvshansambrai Oyun-Erdene**

NGOs faced new restrictions on their activities and those involved in protests against mining and other development projects faced imprisonment under proposed legislation. Authorities failed to protect herder communities from environmental degradation caused by mining operations. Human rights defenders were subjected to intimidation and police investigations. A national mechanism for the prevention of torture was established but torture and other ill-treatment of detainees continued to be reported.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

A draft law that would restrict legitimate NGO activities remained under discussion by parliament. The bill, first tabled in 2021,

proposed the establishment of the Civil Society Development Council to oversee NGOs, but its broad mandate and vaguely worded powers risked undue interference in the internal affairs of NGOs and could place burdensome administrative requirements upon them. The bill also contained provisions prohibiting legitimate activities and limiting NGO funding.

In May, the government introduced a bill to amend the Criminal Code providing for prison sentences for obstructing mining and other development projects. The bill followed demonstrations in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, by herders from across the Gobi region protesting against mining operations and calling for protection of their social and economic rights.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Coal and other mining operations in the Gobi region destroyed grasslands, contaminated groundwater and depleted other water sources. They also caused soil erosion, with negative impacts on the health and livelihoods of herder communities in the region.

The government issued mining licences without adequate consultation with affected herder communities and failed to ensure that those displaced or otherwise affected by mining operations received adequate compensation and accommodation and had access to essential services and social protection.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The government conducted smear campaigns against human rights defenders, including publicly labelling some as foreign spies and criticizing others for obstructing national development plans.

Authorities also used criminal investigations to obstruct the work of human rights defenders. In August, the General Intelligence Agency launched an investigation into Sukhgerel Dugersuren for "illegal cooperation with a foreign intelligence agency