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Amnesty International (Author)

The State of the World's Human Rights; Portugal 2023

Seven police officers accused of torturing migrants received permission to resume their duties. Concerns about low prosecution rates for domestic violence persisted. The number of families without adequate housing was triple that in 2018. Six young people brought a landmark court case against 33 countries for inaction against climate change.

Torture and other ill-treatment

In December, following a visit in 2022, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture reported that ill-treatment of detainees by police officers is a persistent practice. The report reiterated Portuguese authorities' obligation to ensure effective investigations into these allegations, and the application of fundamental safeguards to address impunity within the police.

In June, Évora's court of appeal acquitted one military police officer and reduced the sentences of four other officers convicted of torturing migrants in the city of Odemira, Beja region. After an initial suspension from their roles, all seven police officers involved in the case received permission to resume their duties.

According to a report by the Ombudswoman published in April, the average occupancy rate of prisons in December 2022 was 100.8%, with 25 out of 49 prisons overcrowded.

Discrimination

Gender-based violence

In March, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) expressed concern at the "persistent high level of domestic violence" in Portugal. The committee urged the authorities to address low

prosecution rates for suspected perpetrators of domestic violence, as well as insufficient provision of shelters for victims seeking safety.

Migrants' rights

In March, the governmental annual report on internal security estimated an increase of 18.2% in the number of people subjected to human trafficking, almost half for labour exploitation. In February, an adult and a child died, and 14 other people were seriously injured, in a fire in an overcrowded house in the Mouraria neighbourhood of the capital, Lisbon; all were migrants.

Freedom of assembly

In February – two years after it emerged that, for over a decade, Lisbon City Council had been passing to foreign embassy officials the personal details of protesters demonstrating in front of embassies – three activists sued the municipality of Lisbon for alleged breaches of their rights. The case was brought one year after the National Data Protection Commission fined Lisbon City Council EUR 1,200,000 for 255 breaches of data law.

Right to housing

In October, the government admitted there were 86,000 families with housing needs, triple the number in 2018. Data from the National Statistics Institute in January estimated that 9.2% of people lived in overcrowded housing, affecting nearly 20% of families who were at risk of poverty. In March, the CESCR expressed concern about persistent housing shortages and a lack of data on access to adequate housing for marginalized groups.

Right to a healthy environment

In January, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment urged the government to “improve access to environmental information, strengthen public participation and facilitate access to justice”.

In September, the European Court of Human Rights began hearing a case brought by six young people from Portugal against 33 countries, including their own. Citing problems of extreme heat and wildfires, they argued that governments were breaching their human rights by failing to do enough to cut greenhouse gas emissions and protect them from climate change.

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