

About the U.S. Department of State

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings; torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; political prisoners; transnational repression against individuals in another country; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; punishment of family members for alleged offenses by a relative; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, censorship, and enforcement or threat to enforce criminal libel laws to limit expression; serious restrictions on internet freedom; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on the organization, funding, or operation of nongovernmental and civil society organizations; restrictions of religious freedom; restrictions on freedom of movement and residence within the country and on the right to leave the country; inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections; serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation; serious government corruption; extensive gender-based violence, including femicide and other forms of such violence; trafficking in persons, including a policy or pattern of state-sponsored forced labor; and prohibiting independent trade unions and significant and systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association.

The government did not take significant steps to identify 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 several reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings, during the year.

On February 23, Sergio Pozo Hernández died after a police officer beat him. There was no information regarding an investigation of the incident.

In October 2022, Euxdyn Yoel Urgelles Huete died after police arrested and beat him. The court system found the police officers not guilty of wrongdoing.

b. Disappearance

There were no confirmed reports of extended disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities. There were, however, numerous confirmed reports of short-term disappearances. There were multiple reports of detained activists and protesters whose whereabouts were unknown for

hours or days because the government did not register these detentions, many of which occurred at unregistered sites. After the protests following Hurricane Ian in 2022 and another in Caimanera in May, police and state security agents spread disinformation when relatives asked for information regarding the arrested protesters. Justicia 11J, a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), and Cubalex, a Cuban NGO based abroad, tracked cases related to the oppression of protesters and stated disappearances included prison transfers that were not reported.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and Other Related Abuses

The law prohibited such practices, but there were credible reports that government officials employed them. Members of the security forces and their agents reportedly harassed, intimidated, and physically assaulted human rights and prodemocracy advocates, political dissidents, and peaceful demonstrators, and did so with impunity, according to reports from the NGOs Justicia 11J, Prisoners Defenders, Cubalex, and Human Rights Watch. Some detainees and prisoners endured physical abuse and threats of sexual abuse by prison officials or other inmates at the instigation of guards. Although the law prohibited coercion during investigative interrogations, police and other security forces at times used aggressive and physically abusive tactics, threats, and harassment during questioning. Detainees reported officers intimidated them with threats of long-term detention, loss of child custody rights, denial of permission to depart the country, and other punishments. The NGO Christian Solidarity Worldwide reported prison authorities repeatedly ridiculed imprisoned religious leaders for their religious beliefs.

On May 30, the Spain-based NGO Prisoners Defenders released a report that documented 181 cases of torture of political prisoners in the country from April 2022 through March. The report identified 15 patterns of torture and mistreatment: deprivation of medical care among political prisoners; forced labor and forced labor not related to the prisoners' status as a defendant or criminal conviction; highly uncomfortable, damaging, degrading, and prolonged forced postures; solitary confinement; use of temperature as a torture mechanism; physical aggression; transportation of inmates to locations unknown to inmates and their relatives; intentional disorientation; deprivation of liquids and food; sleep deprivation; deprivation of communication with family, defense counsel, and relatives; threats to prisoners' integrity and safety, and threats to their loved ones; threatening exhibitions of weapons or elements of torture; intentional subjection to anguish, grief, or uncertainty regarding the situation of a family member; and humiliation, degradation, and verbal abuse.

On July 12, Maykel Castillo Pérez sewed his mouth shut to protest his abusive treatment, and prison authorities punished him by denying family visits and putting him in solitary confinement. Castillo was convicted in June 2022 of contempt of authority, assault, public disorder, and defamation of institutions and organizations, heroes, and martyrs, and was sentenced to nine years in prison.

Impunity was pervasive. There were no known cases of prosecution of government officials for any human rights abuses, including torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions were often harsh and sometimes life threatening. There were reports of overcrowding; deficient facilities, sanitation, and medical care; extended solitary confinement; and assault by prison officials.

Abusive Physical Conditions: Prison cells were reportedly overcrowded. The government did not publish official statistics on prisons, and provided no information regarding the number, location, or capacity of detention centers, including prisons, work camps, and other kinds of detention facilities.

Prisoners Defenders estimated the government had more than 200 such facilities and more than 90,000 prisoners in 2020. The Spain-based NGO Cuban Observatory of Human Rights listed 293 penitentiary centers.

Many prison and detention cells reportedly lacked adequate water, sanitation, light, ventilation, and temperature control. Although the government provided some food and medical care, many prisoners relied on their families for food and other basic supplies. Potable water was often unavailable. Women reported lack of access to feminine hygiene products and adequate prenatal care.

Prisoners, family members, and NGOs reported inadequate health care in prisons, which led to or aggravated multiple maladies. Prisoners reported outbreaks of dengue fever, tuberculosis, and hepatitis. There were reports of prisoner deaths following official indifference to chronic medical conditions, as well as reports of suicide. For example, on October 20, Beatriz Conde Mesa, mother of political prisoner Abel Lázaro Machado Conde, alleged her son suffered from depression and schizophrenia, for which prison authorities denied him access to medication.

Prisoners reported solitary confinement was a common punishment for failure to comply with prison regulations. Authorities subjected prisoners who criticized the government or engaged in hunger strikes and other forms of protest to extended solitary confinement, repeated interrogations, assaults, restrictions on family visits, and denial of medical care. Some prisoners were held incommunicado until they were released. Authorities reportedly denied at least five family visits to opposition leader and political prisoner José Daniel Ferrer García.

There were reports that prison officials assaulted inmates.

Prisoners were subject to forced labor, often in strenuous farm work without sufficient food or water, or working in hazardous environments without protective equipment, such as working in production of industrial chemicals. Prisoners were not free to refuse to work and were punished if they did so.

It was not unusual for political prisoners' relatives to report that prison officials arbitrarily canceled scheduled visits or denied visits altogether. This was particularly true for persons incarcerated following the July 2021 mass protests.

Administration: Authorities frequently did not investigate credible allegations of mistreatment. Prisoners reported government officials refused to accept or respond to complaints.

Independent Monitoring: The government did not permit independent international or domestic human rights groups to monitor prison conditions, and it denied access to detainees by international humanitarian organizations.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. Although the 2019 constitution added explicit protections of freedom and human rights, including habeas corpus, there were no indications authorities observed or enforced them.

In July, the Constitutional Court began hearing cases for the first time since 1973; however, the court had a limited mandate, and there were no reports that any detainees successfully had their constitutional rights enforced through the court.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Police had 24 hours after an arrest to present a criminal complaint to an investigative police official. Investigative police had 72 hours to investigate and prepare a report for the prosecutor, who in turn had 72 hours to recommend to the appropriate court whether to open a criminal investigation.

Within the initial 168-hour detention period, by law authorities were required to inform detainees of the basis for the arrest and criminal investigation and grant access to legal representation. Those charged could be released on bail, placed in home detention, or held in continued investigative detention. Once the accused had an attorney, the defense had five days to respond to the prosecution's charges, after which a court date was to be set. Prosecutors could demand summary trials "in extraordinary circumstances" and in cases involving crimes against state security. The Ministry of Justice regularly invoked "extraordinary circumstances" to conduct summary trials.

Reports suggested bail was available, although it was typically not granted to persons arrested for political activities. Time in detention before trial could be counted toward time served if convicted. Detainees could be interrogated at any time during detention and had no right to request the presence of counsel during interrogation. Detainees had the right to remain silent, but officials did not have a legal obligation to inform them of that right.

By law, investigators were required to complete criminal investigations within 60 days. Prosecutors could grant investigators two 60-day extensions upon request, for a total of 180 days of investigative time. The supervising court could waive this deadline in "extraordinary circumstances" and upon special request by the prosecutor. In the case of the "extraordinary circumstances" waiver, no additional legal requirement existed to complete an investigation and file criminal charges, and therefore authorities could detain a person without charge indefinitely.

Arbitrary Arrest: The government continued its pattern of arbitrary arrests of activists and dissidents and their relatives. Police routinely stopped and questioned citizens and carried out search-and-seizure operations directed at known activists. Police used legal provisions against public disorder, contempt of authority, lack of respect, aggression, and failure to pay minimal or arbitrary fines as ways to detain, threaten, and arrest civil society activists.

In October, state security agents detained two journalists before they could travel to report on the increase in violence in an area called La Candonga in Holguin Province. Agents did not provide a motive for their detention and threatened they would be surveilled and imprisoned if they received external support.

Police routinely conducted short-term detentions to interfere with individuals' rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, and at times assaulted detainees. Such detentions generally lasted from several hours to several days. After being taken into custody, suspects were typically fined and released.

The law required that police furnish suspects a signed "report of detention" noting the basis, date, and location of any detention in a police facility and a registry of personal items seized during a police search. Authorities routinely ignored this requirement. The government frequently detained activists without informing them of the charges against them and often denied them the ability to communicate with their relatives. Authorities frequently failed to specify the law that was allegedly broken or the name of the official who issued the fine, making fines difficult to contest in court. At times, authorities prevented persons owing fines from leaving the country.

Pretrial Detention: The government held some detainees for months or years in investigative detention, in both political and nonpolitical cases. In 2022, authorities arrested more than 208 persons after protests, of whom 87 remained in detention as of July. Justicia 11J estimated 837 of the more than 1,400 persons arrested in the July 2021 protests remained in detention as of July. Several persons were detained longer than the legally mandated period without being informed of the nature of the arrest or being permitted to contact family members or legal counsel.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

While the constitution recognized the independence of the judiciary, the judiciary was directly subordinate to the National Assembly and municipal assemblies, which could remove or appoint judges at any time. The Cuban Communist Party (PCC) exercised influence over these bodies but did not directly appoint or remove judges. Political considerations affected judicial decisions, and there was ineffective separation of powers among the judicial system, the PCC, and the executive branch.

Civilian courts existed at the municipal, provincial, and national levels. Special tribunals convened behind closed doors for political (“counterrevolutionary”) cases and other cases deemed “sensitive to state security.” Military tribunals had jurisdiction over civilians if any of the defendants were active or former members of the military, police, or other law enforcement agencies, or if they were civilian employees of a military business, which comprised most of the country’s economic activity.

Trial Procedures

The law provided for the right to a public trial; however, many trials concluded quickly and were closed to the press. The government arbitrarily denied admission to observe trials but customarily allowed a relative to attend.

Courts regularly failed to protect or observe due process rights. The law presumed defendants to be innocent until proven guilty, but authorities often placed the burden on defendants to prove their innocence.

The law required defendants be represented by an attorney at public expense, if necessary. Private attorneys were not licensed to practice in criminal courts. Defendants could receive legal counsel only from defense attorneys from a group organized under the Ministry of Justice. Consequently, defendants had to rely on lawyers who worked for the government that was prosecuting them. These attorneys reportedly were often reluctant to defend individuals charged with political crimes or associated with human rights cases. In many instances, the attorneys met their clients for the first time when the trial was about to begin.

Interpretation was sometimes provided during trials for non-Spanish speakers.

Criteria for admitting evidence were arbitrary and discriminatory. Prosecutors routinely introduced irrelevant or unreliable evidence to prove intent or offered testimony regarding the defendant’s “revolutionary credentials,” which referred to a defendant’s perceived loyalty to the PCC or lack thereof. Generally, the government discounted testimony of defense witnesses if they provided information unhelpful to the government’s case.

Defense attorneys had the right to review the investigation files of a defendant unless the charges involved “crimes against the security of the state.” In “state security” cases, defense attorneys were not allowed access to investigation files until charges were filed. Many detainees, especially political detainees, reported their attorneys had difficulty accessing case files due to administrative obstacles. Authorities reportedly held activist Aniette González García in preventive custody for four months without her lawyer being able to access the state’s case file.

As of August, Prisoners Defenders confirmed that almost 700 July 2021 protesters had been convicted. Prosecutors charged several protesters, including children, with serious crimes such as assault and sedition in order to secure the maximum possible sentence. An estimated 211 protesters were charged with sedition, and at least 209 were sentenced to an average of 10 years’ imprisonment each. On June 8, a military court sentenced eight persons who protested the blackouts in Cavadonga, Cienfuegos, in July 2022. They were charged with sedition, contempt, sabotage, and burglary and were sentenced to between two and nine years’ imprisonment.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

The government held political prisoners and detainees. The government refused access to its prisons and detention centers by international humanitarian organizations and the United Nations.

Prisoners Defenders estimated there were at least 1,047 political prisoners in detention as of August. The lack of governmental transparency, along with systemic abuse of due process rights, obscured the true nature of criminal charges, investigations, and prosecutions. This allowed government authorities to prosecute and sentence peaceful human rights activists for alleged criminal violations. The government used the designation “counterrevolutionary” for inmates who opposed the government but did not publicize the number of these inmates. The government closely monitored organizations tracking political prisoner populations, and the organizations often faced harassment from state authorities.

Political prisoners were held with the general prison population. Political prisoners reported the government held them in isolation for extended periods and were not provided the same protections as other prisoners or detainees. Political prisoners who refused to wear standard prison uniforms were denied certain privileges, such as family visits, access to prison libraries, reductions in the length of their sentence, or transfer from a maximum-security to a medium-security prison. Political prisoners sometimes did not receive appropriate health care. The government frequently denied all political prisoners access to home visits, prison classes, telephone calls, and, on occasion, family visits. Political prisoners also reported that fellow inmates, acting on orders from or with the permission of prison authorities, beat, threatened, intimidated, and harassed them.

On July 11, political prisoner Lizandra Góngora Espinosa reported she was transferred to Los Colonos Prison in Isla de la Juventud, outside of her home province, and threatened with transfer to a prison even farther away. Góngora was sent to an isolation cell after conducting a hunger strike and refusing to wear prison clothes. She said that other prisoners had access to arms and she feared for her life. Góngora also denounced harassment from state security agents within the prison, assaults from prison guards, confiscation of food her family brought her, and lack of medical attention. Góngora was not allowed to communicate with her family for months at a time.

Several imprisoned July 11 protesters started hunger strikes demanding their release and protesting the violation of their rights.

f. Transnational Repression

Efforts to Control Mobility: There were credible reports the government attempted to control mobility to exact reprisal against citizens abroad by denying them entry into Cuba. In March, the government denied Cuban-Canadian Glenda Corella Cespedes entry; independent media attributed the ban to her liking a Facebook post critical of a PCC leader.

g. Property Seizure and Restitution

Not applicable.

h. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution provided for the protection of citizens’ privacy rights in their homes and correspondence, but there were reports that the government failed to enforce the law. The law required police to have a warrant signed by a prosecutor or magistrate before entering or conducting a search. Officials routinely entered homes without legal authority and systematically monitored correspondence and communications between individuals and tracked their movements.

Security forces conducted arbitrary stops and searches, especially in urban areas and at government-controlled checkpoints at the entrances to provinces and municipalities. The Ministry of Interior employed a system of informants and neighborhood groups, known as the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, to monitor government opponents and report on their activities. Agents from the ministry's General Directorate for State Security frequently subjected foreign journalists, visiting foreign officials, diplomats, academics, and businesspersons to surveillance, including electronic surveillance.

The government selectively blocked the communications of government critics to prevent them from communicating with one another, sharing content, or reporting on government harassment. Human rights activists reported frequent government monitoring and disruption of cell phone and landline services prior to planned events or key anniversaries related to human rights. For example, the government cut internet access temporarily on September 7 in a region in Havana where the Assembly of Cuban Filmmakers was meeting, which some filmmakers described as an attempt to interfere with their gathering.

Relatives of July 11 protesters and imprisoned members of Cuba de Luto (Cuba in Mourning), an organization of relatives of political prisoners, said state security agents subpoenaed, surveilled, harassed, and threatened them. Marta Perdomo, mother of detained protesters Jorge and Nadir Perdomo, was told her sons would be sent to different prisons if she continued calling for their release. Ailex Marcano Fabelo was placed under house arrest to prevent her from attending mass.

A study by the Cuban Observatory of Human Rights noted that relatives of political prisoners were often fired from their jobs or had their private business licenses canceled.

Public reports revealed that the government monitored citizens' internet use. Arbitrary government surveillance of internet activity was pervasive and frequently resulted in criminal cases and reprisals. Internet terms and conditions required that users agree they would not use the internet for anything "that could be considered...damaging or harmful to public security," which was unclearly defined. User software developed by state universities gave the government access to users' personal data and communications.

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, on the condition the expression "conforms to the aims of socialist society." The government restricted freedom of expression in various ways.

Freedom of Expression: The government repeatedly limited public debate of topics considered politically sensitive. Several laws criminalized aspects of freedom of expression, such as the Social Communication Law approved in May, which increased regime control over information, press and other media, and social media through the Institute of Communication and Information. Rather than enforce these laws, police typically used other pretexts to harass and arrest persons exercising freedom of expression.

Religious groups reported continued restrictions on expressing their opinions during sermons, at religious gatherings, and in public protests. Most members of the clergy exercised self-censorship. Religious leaders in some cases criticized the government, its policies, and the country's leadership without reprisals. Other religious groups, particularly those not officially state-sanctioned, reported harassment against themselves and family members in retaliation for speech critical of the government.

Violence and Harassment: Repression and forced exile were used to harass independent journalists. In August, police broke into the home of José Antonio López Piña and arrested him. According to the NGO Instituto Cubano por la Libertad de Expresión y Prensa (Cuban Institute for Freedom of Speech and Press), he was fined 4,120 Cuban pesos (\$17) for his social media posts. López remained under house arrest as of October.

Forced exile was used against independent journalists. In January, officials threatened to prosecute journalist Yoel Acosta Gómez, of independent outlet *Cubamet*, for an “attack against the state security” and “incitement to civil disobedience.” Acosta traveled to Guyana in June and went into exile in Brazil.

Despite meeting government vetting requirements, journalists belonging to state media institutions who reported on sensitive subjects did so at personal risk. The government harassed and threatened independent citizen journalists who reported on human rights abuses. As of June, the NGO Article 19 registered 41 incidents regarding denials or restrictions of freedom of expression, including arbitrary detentions, house arrests, threats, and internet restrictions against 21 independent journalists of news outlets *El Toque*, *Diario de Cuba*, *Cubamet*, *14yMedio*, *La Joven Cuba*, *ADNCuba*, and *Palenque Visión*.

Censorship or Content Restrictions for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media: The government or the PCC directly owned all print and broadcast media outlets and almost all widely available sources of information. News and information programming were generally uniform across all government-controlled outlets. The government controlled all printing presses and nearly all publications. The government limited the importation of printed materials.

The government harassed and denied access to foreign correspondents who reported stories deemed critical of the government. Fearing harassment, many foreign journalists did not publish stories on human rights abuses while inside the country.

Libel/Slander Laws: The government used a defamation of character law to arrest or detain individuals critical of the country’s leadership or institutions. Authorities frequently arrested and charged persons with the vague crime of “contempt of authority.” Leandro Pupo Garcés was charged with “defamation of institutions, organizations, heroes, or martyrs” in July because of a Facebook post he made criticizing the Ministry of Interior. The Prosecutor’s Office asked the court to impose four years’ imprisonment with correctional work.

National Security: The law prohibited distribution of printed materials considered “counterrevolutionary” or critical of the government on the grounds of national security. The penal code sanctioned propaganda against the constitutional order with three to eight years’ imprisonment. For example, foreign newspapers and magazines were generally unavailable outside of tourist areas. Distribution of material with political content – interpreted broadly to include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, foreign newspapers, and independent information on public health – was not allowed, and possession of these materials reportedly sometimes resulted in harassment and detention.

Internet Freedom

The government restricted access to the internet and used a combination of restrictive laws, targeted website censorship, bandwidth throttling, pressure on website operators, and unrestricted surveillance to censor information critical of the regime and to silence its critics and events such as the protest that took place in Caimanera, Guantánamo, in May. Authorities also restricted internet access for individuals or particular regions of the country during the national elections in March. The penal code further criminalized online speech, establishing explicit and frequently heightened penalties for several alleged crimes carried out over digital networks, including slander and the use of social networks to organize protests.

The law further criminalized freedom of expression online, allowed the government to flag for removal social media posts critical of the government or government officials, listed criminal incitement through social media as an “aggravating circumstance” to allow for harsher sentences, and increased penalties for slander and the use of social networks to organize protests. According to the NGO Proyecto Inventario (Project Inventory), which advocated for facilitating access to open data and public information, the government used legislation to prohibit the online publication of information contrary to the “social interest, morals, [and] good manners,” and to target, temporarily detain, fine, and sometimes confiscate cell phones of citizens, journalists, and activists.

All internet access was provided through state monopoly companies, and the government had unrestricted and unregulated legal authority to monitor citizens’ and foreigners’ use of email, social media, internet chat rooms, and browsing. The government controlled all internet access, except for limited facilities provided by foreign diplomatic facilities and a small number of underground networks. Access to blocked outlets was generally possible only through a virtual private network.

The government closely monitored web access points, such as Wi-Fi hotspots, cybercafes, and access centers, as well as the backbone internet infrastructure, which was directly controlled by the government.

Some individuals could connect to the internet at low or no cost via state institutions where they worked or studied. The government selectively granted censored in-home internet access to certain areas of Havana and sectors of the population, consisting mostly of government officials, established professionals, professors, students, journalists, and artists. Others could access email and internet services through government-sponsored “youth clubs,” internet cafes, or Wi-Fi hotspots approved and regulated by the Ministry for Information, Technology, and Communications. Users were required to purchase prepaid cards to access the internet.

Authorities reviewed the browsing history of users, reviewed and censored email, and blocked access to websites the government considered objectionable. According to *The Freedom on the Net 2022* report by Freedom House, the government routinely blocked numerous websites critical of the government’s human rights record. The government blocked access to Freedom House’s *Freedom on the Net* report. The government blocked internet tools and websites considered contrary to its interests.

ETECSA helped monitor and censor the internet and usually cut or restricted internet connections in the entire country or by region during protests. ETECSA frequently disconnected telecommunication services of human rights organizers, often just before their detention by state security or to disrupt planned activities.

Human rights activists reported government employees tracked and “trolled” the social media accounts of activists. This included allegations of state-linked accounts that harassed, offended, and threatened activists on social media.

While the law did not set specific penalties for unauthorized internet use, it was illegal to own a satellite dish that provided uncensored internet access. The government restricted the importation of wireless routers, actively targeted private wireless access points, and confiscated equipment.

The use of encryption software and the transfer of encrypted files were illegal, but information on enforcement of this restriction was not available. Despite limited access, harassment, and infrastructure problems, private news sites and blogs existed in which users posted opinions critical of the government with help from persons living outside the country, often expatriates. The government blocked local access to many of these blogs. In addition, citizens used X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, TikTok, and other social networks to report independently, including observations critical of the government.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law allowed for the freedoms of assembly and association, but the government restricted these freedoms.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

Although the constitution provided for a limited right of assembly, it was subject to the requirement that assembly must be with legal and peaceful purposes. The law penalized unauthorized assemblies with sentences of up to one year in prison, a fine, or both. The government tolerated some gatherings, and many religious groups reported the ability to gather without registering or facing sanctions.

Independent activists and political parties other than the PCC faced greater obstacles than religious groups. State security forces often suppressed attempts to assemble, even for gatherings in private dwellings and in small numbers. The government refused to allow independent demonstrations or public meetings by human rights groups or any others critical of government activity. The government routinely arrested individuals who attempted to assemble, by either placing them under house arrest or taking them into custody if they left their residences.

On numerous occasions, the government, using undercover police and Ministry of Interior agents, allegedly organized “acts of repudiation” by crowds of civilians to assault and disperse persons who assembled peacefully. These agents arrived in government-owned buses or were recruited by government officials from nearby workplaces or schools. Participants arrived and departed in shifts, chanted progovernment slogans, sang progovernment songs, and taunted those who had peacefully assembled. The persons targeted by this harassment at times suffered physical assault or property damage. Government security officials at the scene, often present in overwhelming numbers, did not arrest those who physically attacked the victims, nor did they respond to victims’ complaints. Instead, government security officials frequently orchestrated activities against protesters or took direct part in physical assaults.

In June, Fernando Vázquez announced on social media that he would march toward the Ministry of Interior’s Office of Prisons in Havana to deliver a letter requesting the release of political prisoners. The government warned him not to do it. On June 14, police and state security arrested him but released him a few hours later. Relatives of July 11 political prisoners tried to join him on his march but were prevented by police and state security.

Freedom of Association

The government routinely denied freedom of association and did not recognize independent associations. The law proscribed any political organization not officially recognized. Several independent organizations, including opposition political parties and professional associations, operated as NGOs without legal recognition, and police sometimes raided their meetings.

For example, members of the Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White), an association of women political activists originally formed to protest the 2003 detention of their male relatives during the infamous “Black Spring,” were subjected to arbitrary arrest, constant surveillance of the house that served as the organization’s headquarters, and harassment by state officials and local PCC members. Authorities often targeted the group as they attempted to attend or depart church services or pray publicly for the freedom of political figures as an act of dissent. In April, authorities detained 12 members of the Damas de Blanco on Easter Sunday. As of April 10, authorities had detained the leader of the group, Berta Soler, 47 times. The European Union, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International criticized the arrests of Soler and her husband Angel Moya during the year. They had been arrested numerous times and fined on their way to a church to ask for the release of political prisoners. Other members of the organization were also arrested and fined.

Officially recognized churches, Freemasons, and several fraternal and professional organizations were permitted to function outside the formal structure of the state or the ruling party. The PCC’s

Office of Religious Affairs oversaw officially registered religious groups, required that groups have permits for religious activities, and had the authority to deny permission. The office also surveilled unregistered religious groups. The office pressured church leaders to refrain from including political topics in their sermons and often limited freedom of movement for independent pastors and their followers.

Groups were required to register through the Ministry of Justice to receive official recognition. Authorities ignored applications for legal recognition from new groups, including several new religious groups, women's rights organizations, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex (LGBTQI+) rights organizations. The lack of official recognition left group members open to potential charges of illegal association.

The legal code did not allow an association to exist if there was already an existing association with the same scope that was connected to the PCC or other large organizations, such as the Federation of Cuban Women or the Cuban Trade Union.

The digital magazine *Arbol Invertido* (Inverted Tree) recorded the repression, surveillance, and harassment of Cuba de Luto members who publicly called for the release of July 11 imprisoned protesters.

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 government placed arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement within the country, the right to leave the country, and migration with the right to return. Under the terms of the 1994-95 U.S.-Cuba migration accords, the government agreed not to prosecute or retaliate against migrants returned from international or U.S. waters or from the Guantanamo U.S. Naval Station after attempting to emigrate illegally, assuming they had not committed a separate criminal offense.

In-country Movement: Although the constitution allowed all citizens to travel anywhere within the country, establishing residence in Havana was restricted. The government controlled internal migration from rural areas to Havana, sometimes arresting and expelling persons from Havana if authorities discovered their national identity card listed them as living in another city. These policies disproportionately affected Afro-Cubans from the eastern region of the country who resided in large numbers in marginalized communities in Havana without residential permits. Any change of residence required authorization from the local housing commission and provincial government authorities. The government could fine persons living in a location without authorization and force them to return to their legally authorized residence. There were reports that authorities provided only limited social services to illegal Havana residents and at times restricted food purchases to vendors in a person's official neighborhood of residence. Police threatened to prosecute anyone who returned to Havana after expulsion.

The law permitted authorities to bar an individual from a certain area within the country, or to restrict an individual to a certain area, for a maximum of 10 years. Dissidents frequently reported authorities prevented them from leaving their home provinces or detained and returned them to their homes, even though the dissidents had no written or formal restrictions placed against them.

Foreign Travel: The law restricted the right of citizens to leave the country. The law provided for imprisonment, a moderate fine, or both for those who attempt to depart the country illegally. When former government employees emigrated from the country, their family members sometimes were arbitrarily denied passports to travel and visit or join their family members abroad.

The government required persons from several professional and social categories to obtain permission to emigrate. The affected persons included highly specialized medical personnel; military or security personnel; many government officials, including academics; and many former political prisoners and human rights activists. In July, independent media reported the government denied medical doctors Cosme Daniel Pulido Espinosa and Yanet Martínez Viamonte to board flights leaving the country because of their medical specializations.

The government prohibited human rights activists, religious leaders, independent journalists, and artists from traveling outside the country to attend events related to human rights and democracy. The government used arbitrary or spurious reasons to deny permission for human rights activists and religious leaders to leave the country to participate in workshops, events, or training programs. Activists reported they were subjected to a significant increase in interrogations and confiscations at the airport when arriving from abroad.

The government arbitrarily designated some persons as *regulados*, allowing authorities to prohibit them from receiving a passport, leaving the country, or returning. Intellectual Alina Bárbara López was not able to obtain a new passport because of “public interest.”

In September, independent media reported at least 600 persons were denied permission to exit the country under a new rule the tax authority published in 2022 because they owed “significant public debts.” Media reports stated the government did not define a monetary value that would constitute “significant public debts” and instead arbitrarily applied the new rule. Writer and journalist Jorge Fernández Era reported police told him he could not exit the country because he refused to pay a fine that he said state security agents fabricated.

Exile: The government sought to pressure activists into exile to avoid extreme prison sentences or threats to their family. Human Rights Watch stated that for Cubans who opposed the political system, there were two options: prison or exile. The NGO Observatorio Cubano de Derechos Humanos (Cuban Observatory of Human Rights) annual report for 2022 documented 53 cases of activists and journalists exiled. Among them were Carolina Barrero, Thais Mailén Franco Benítez, Esteban Rodríguez, Héctor Luis Valdés Cocho, Oscar Casanella, Katherine Bisquet, Sayli González, Keilylli de la Mora Valle, Camila Cabrera Rodríguez, and Pedro López. The government allowed some activists to leave the country only if they went into exile. According to the independent outlet *Diario de Cuba*, state security officials told Juan Antonio Madrazo, coordinator of the Comité Ciudadanos por la Integración Racial (Citizens Committee for Racial Integration), that he had an exit ban and could leave only if he agreed to go into permanent exile.

Citizenship: Consular documents explicitly stated employees the government considered deserters for leaving their jobs, such as medical mission personnel, would be barred from reentering the country and reuniting with their family in Cuba for eight years. Any citizen residing outside the country for more than 24 months could lose full citizenship rights. The government suspended this rule in the wake of the pandemic and suspended it indefinitely in May.

e. Protection of Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern. Information regarding the extent of that cooperation was not publicly available. The United Nations reported there were an estimated 160 asylum seekers and refugees as of April, some of whom had been in the country for years.

Access to Asylum: The constitution provided for the granting of asylum to individuals persecuted for their principles or actions involving several specified political grounds. The government did not have a formal mechanism, however, to process asylum for foreign persons.

Temporary Protection: For the small number of cases of persons seeking asylum, the government worked with UNHCR to provide protection and assistance pending third-country resettlement.

Section 3.

Freedom to Participate in the Political Process ✓

The constitution enshrined one-party rule by the PCC. Political expression outside the Communist Party was not permitted.

Elections and Political Participation

Abuses or Irregularities in Recent Elections: Elections were neither free nor fair. Citizens were not permitted to form political parties or run as candidates from political parties other than the PCC. Candidates for office had to be nominated by a PCC “mass organization” and approved by local party officials. These PCC-approved candidates won the vast majority of votes, since electors were limited to PCC representatives and only one candidate was nominated for each post. The government selected all candidates for the March election for president of the republic, president of the National Assembly, and membership in the Council of State. Only members of the National Assembly were allowed to vote, and candidates ran for office uncontested.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The 2019 constitution included many sections that restricted citizens’ ability to participate fully in political processes by deeming the PCC the state’s only legal political party and the “superior driving force of the society and the state.” The constitution codified the use of civilian violence to suppress dissent: “Citizens have the right to combat through any means, including armed combat when other means are not available, anyone who intends to overthrow the political, social, and economic order established by this constitution.” Citizens who lived abroad without a registered place of abode in Cuba could not vote.

PCC membership was a requirement for high-ranking political positions and an advantage for high-ranking management positions in state-owned companies. Nonmembers of the PCC were at a comparative disadvantage for seeking such positions.

Section 4.

Corruption in Government ✓

The law provided criminal penalties for corruption by officials. The government did not implement the law effectively. There were numerous reports of government corruption.

Corruption: There were reports of police and other official corruption in enforcement of economic restrictions and provision of government services. For example, employees frequently stole products from government stocks and sold them on the black market. Corruption by customs officers was also reportedly common. The government and state-controlled businesses engaged in international money laundering to evade sanctions.

In May, state-owned media outlet *Cubadebate* reported on the crackdown on a corruption net in Sancti Spíritus, focusing on four local officials of a local state-owned company who were selling products at three times the state-mandated price. In the first quarter of the year, five other corruption cases were detected in that province.

For additional information about corruption in the country, please see the Department of State’s *Investment Climate Statement* for the country, and the Department of State’s *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, which includes information on financial crimes.

Section 5.

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

The government did not recognize domestic human rights groups or permit them to function legally. Several human rights organizations continued to function outside the law. The law included an “illicit finance” provision that sanctioned the financing of activities deemed to be “counterrevolutionary” or “subversive” and carried penalties of up to 10 years’ imprisonment. The law also allowed for the prosecution of NGOs or activists if they received foreign support and engaged in “activities against the state or the constitutional order,” which could result in four to 10 years’ imprisonment.

No officially recognized NGOs monitored human rights. The government refused to recognize or meet with NGOs that monitored or promoted human rights. There were reports that government agents harassed individuals who met with unauthorized NGOs.

Retribution against Human Rights Defenders: The government subjected domestic human rights advocates to intimidation, harassment, periodic short-term detention, and long-term imprisonment on questionable charges. For example, authorities reportedly detained Henry Constantín, a journalist and director of the independent media outlet *La Hora de Cuba*, along with his colleague José Luis Tan Estrada, when they attempted to attend the trial of human rights activist Lenelis Delgado Cué, who was being prosecuted for the crime of contempt in Camagüey. Tan Estrada was released after spending more than five hours “locked up in a dungeon with the most inhumane conditions that could exist,” according to his account.

Family members of human rights defenders, including their minor children, reportedly suffered reprisals related to the activities of their relatives. These reprisals included house arrest, travel restrictions, interrogations by state security, and threats of retaliation against imprisoned relatives. In April, state security officials summoned the daughter, age seven, of an activist for interrogation. Police agents appeared at the child’s house and took her to a juvenile detention facility in Camagüey Province.

The United Nations or Other International Bodies: The government continued to deny international human rights organizations, including the United Nations, its affiliated organizations, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, access to prisoners and detainees, despite being a member of the UN Human Rights Council. The government continued to deny or ignore long-standing requests from the UN special rapporteurs on torture, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and freedom of assembly to enter the country to monitor human rights.

Section 6.

Discrimination and Societal Abuses ✓

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The penal code criminalized rape of women and men, including spousal rape, as well as domestic or intimate partner rape and other forms of domestic and sexual violence, including so-called corrective rape of LGBTQI+ persons. It separately criminalized abuses against both genders. The penalty for rape stipulated at least seven years’ imprisonment. The law did not recognize the crime of femicide, nor was there a specific law for domestic violence. It recognized the crime of gender-based violence and stipulated penalties from fines to prison sentences of varying lengths, depending on the severity of the offense. The government generally

enforced the law effectively regarding rape. Several reports from women's rights advocacy groups, however, suggested that crimes against women were underreported and that the state failed to investigate many cases.

The NGOs Red Femenina de Cuba (Cuban Women's Network), Observatorio de Alas Tensas (Taut Wings Observatory), and Yo Si Te Creo en Cuba (I Do Believe You) called on the state to update information on crimes against women and train officials to handle these crimes. The government opposed any nonstate-sponsored programs that focused on gender-based violence. Police also targeted for harassment small groups of women assembling to discuss women's rights and gender matters more broadly, including those tracking and reporting femicides.

Other Forms of Gender-based Violence or Harassment: The law provided penalties for sexual harassment, with potential prison sentences of six months to five years. The government did not release any statistics on arrests, prosecutions, or convictions for offenses related to sexual harassment during the year.

There were no official numbers for femicides, but the NGO Alas Tensas tracked 55 femicides through August. Official media sources failed to report any of these killings or to report on femicide statistics.

Discrimination: The law accorded women and men equal rights, the same legal status, and the same responsibilities regarding marriage, divorce, parental duties, home maintenance, and employment. No information was available on whether the government enforced the law effectively; however, the government continued a 2021 program to promote gender equality. Employment advertisements were often explicitly sexist.

Reproductive Rights: There was no reliable information regarding coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

The government was the sole legal importer of health goods, which resulted in constant shortages of contraceptive products, particularly condoms. Nearly all births were attended by a skilled health worker, who by law had to be employed by the state. It was illegal for private citizens, despite their qualifications, to provide health attendance during pregnancy and childbirth.

The government attempted to provide access to sexual, psychosocial, and reproductive health services, including postexposure prophylaxis, for survivors of sexual violence; however, the health care provided by the state was insufficient to meet survivors' needs.

Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination

The law prohibited discrimination based on race. No information was available on whether the government enforced the law effectively. The government continued a 2019 National Program Against Racism and Racial Discrimination.

Afro-Cubans often suffered racial discrimination. Afro-Cubans reported employment discrimination, particularly for positions of prominence within the tourism industry, media, and government. Employment advertisements were allowed to be openly racist.

The economic crisis disproportionately affected Afro-Cubans, as seen in the scarce distribution of food and continuous water shortages affecting Havana's Afro-Cuban population. Although the regime's defenders pointed to a few high-ranking officials, Afro-Cubans remained severely underrepresented in ministerial positions and the Politburo, and they were largely absent from the highest ranks of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and Ministry of Interior, seen as the country's true power centers.

Children

Child Abuse: The constitution and family code regulated the rights of minors and the responsibilities of their legal guardians, while the penal code established sanctions for not complying with these responsibilities or for violating the rights of minors. The law imposed six months' to five years' imprisonment for child abuse, depending on the severity and whether the victim suffered substantial injury from the abuse or neglect. The government generally enforced the law effectively.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: The family code set 18 as the legal minimum age for marriage. Forced marriage was punishable by seven to 15 years' imprisonment, and by 10 to 30 years' imprisonment or life imprisonment when the victim was a minor. The government effectively enforced the law.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law stipulated sentences varying from seven to 30 years' or life imprisonment for the sale, grooming, or sex trafficking involving children younger than 18, depending on the severity of the crime. When the government discovered the involvement of individuals or nongovernmental groups in crimes involving the commercial sexual exploitation of children, it enforced the law.

There was a statutory rape law, with imprisonment of one to three years, a fine, or both. Penalties for rape increased as the age of the victim decreased. In such cases, the law left room for consideration of possible consent if the person presenting the accusation decided not to press charges. The law did not establish an age of consent, but sexual relations with children ages 12 to 18 could be prosecuted if there was a determination of statutory rape. The government generally enforced the law effectively.

The law criminalized the possession of child pornography and punished the production or circulation of any kind of obscene graphic material with imprisonment of one to three years, a fine, or both. The law imposed seven to 15 years' imprisonment for "international trafficking relating to corrupting or pornographic conduct and the practice of prostitution" involving children younger than 16. The punishment could increase to 30 years or life in prison under aggravating circumstances.

Antisemitism

There were between 1,000 and 1,500 members of the Jewish community. There were no known reports of antisemitic incidents during the year.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's annual *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: Same-sex sexual activity, cross-dressing, and other sexual or gender characteristic-related behaviors were not criminalized.

Violence and Harassment: There were no reports of violence, but observers noted reporting was likely limited due to mistrust of police by the LGBTQI+ community, and by the government's lack of mechanisms for data collection on crimes targeting LGBTQI+ persons and repression of domestic human rights organizations.

Discrimination: The law prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, citizenship, education, and health care but did not extend the same protections to transgender or intersex individuals based on gender identity and expression or sex characteristics. The 2022 family code explicitly recognized LGBTQI+ couples and their families and granted them equal rights. NGOs reported LGBTQI+ persons continued to face social stigma and discrimination in education and employment.

Availability of Legal Gender Recognition: The law allowed legal gender recognition without requiring surgery; however, there was no legal pathway for nonbinary persons to have their gender identity recognized by the government.

Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological 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, but reporting was believed to be limited due to social stigma and fear of reprisal as well as government suppression of domestic human rights groups, limiting their ability to collect and report such information. Likewise, there were no reports of medically unnecessary and irreversible "normalization" surgeries performed on children or on nonconsenting adult intersex persons.

Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly: The government did not recognize domestic human rights groups independent from the government or permit them to function legally. Several unrecognized NGOs that promoted LGBTQI+ human rights faced government harassment for their independence from official government institutions. For example, the Ministry of Health sponsored an annual Pride celebration in May, but independent activists were barred from participating.

Persons with Disabilities

The law recommended that public buildings, communication facilities, health services, and transportation services accommodate persons with disabilities, but these facilities and services were rarely accessible to such persons. The government generally did not enforce the law effectively. UNICEF partnered with the government to support inclusive education for 33,000 children with disabilities who attended dedicated special education schools.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

The government operated four prisons exclusively for inmates with HIV or AIDS; some inmates were serving sentences for "propagating an epidemic" in relation to their HIV status. Hospitals and clinics sometimes discriminated against patients with HIV.

Medication for patients with HIV was routinely unavailable, sometimes resulting in the patients' deaths from neglect.

Section 7.

Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law severely restricted worker rights by recognizing only the PCC-controlled Central Union of Cuban Workers (CTC) as the paramount trade union confederation. To operate legally, a trade union was required to belong to the CTC.

The law did not provide for the right to strike. The law did not provide for collective bargaining; instead, it had a complicated process for reaching collective agreements. The International Labor Organization raised concerns regarding the trade union monopoly of the CTC, the prohibition on the right to strike, and restrictions on collective bargaining and agreements, including the way the law gave government authorities and higher-level CTC officials the final decision on all such agreements.

The Ministry of Labor had responsibility for enforcing all labor laws in the country, including at all foreign-owned or -invested businesses or organizations, international organizations, and foreign government agencies. The government effectively enforced its laws to maintain the primacy of the CTC and prevent the emergence of independent labor organizations rather than to provide for freedom of association or the right to strike. Workers who tried to organize or create independent unions were subject to penalties. Workers employed by these entities were subject to labor regulations common to most state and nonstate workers and were also subject to some regulations applicable to specific kinds of entities.

The government prevented the formation of independent trade unions in all sectors. The PCC chose the CTC's leaders. The CTC's principal responsibility was to manage government relations with the workforce. The CTC did not bargain collectively, promote worker rights, or advocate for the right to strike. The de facto prohibition on independent trade unions virtually eliminated workers' ability to organize independently, appeal against discriminatory dismissals, or seek redress for other workplace grievances. The government's strong influence over the judiciary and lawyers limited effective recourse through the courts. The government did not effectively enforce the laws protecting freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike for workers, and penalties were not commensurate with those for other laws involving denials of civil rights, such as discrimination.

Several small, independent labor organizations operated without legal recognition, including the National Independent Workers' Confederation of Cuba, National Independent Laborer Confederation of Cuba, and Unitarian Council of Workers of Cuba. Together they constituted the Independent Trade Union Association of Cuba. These organizations worked to advance the rights of workers by offering an alternative to the state-sponsored CTC and advocating for the rights of small business owners and employees. Police reportedly harassed the independent unions, and government agents reportedly infiltrated them, limiting their capacity to represent workers effectively or work on their behalf.

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 the worst forms of child labor. The legal minimum working age was 17, although the law permitted the employment of children ages 15 and 16 to obtain training or fill labor shortages with parental permission and a special authorization from the municipal labor director. The law did not permit children 15 and 16 to work more than seven hours per day, 40 hours per week, or on holidays. Children 15 to 18 could not work in specified hazardous occupations, such as mining, or at night.

There were no known government programs to prevent child labor or to remove children from such labor. As a result, penalties were not commensurate with analogous crimes and penalties were never applied against violators. Antitruancy programs, however, aimed to keep children in school. Children were subject to commercial sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, and the government did not report significant efforts to reduce child sex tourism.

There was no information on whether the government effectively enforced the laws on child labor. There were no reports on whether these penalties were applied against violators.

d. Discrimination (see section 6)

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Wage and Hour Laws: Authorities set a national minimum wage at a rate below the poverty line.

The standard workweek was 44 hours, with shorter workweeks in hazardous occupations such as mining. The law provided workers with a weekly minimum 24-hour rest period and one month of paid annual vacation per 11 months of effective work. These standards applied to state workers as well as to workers in the nonstate sector, but they were seldom enforced in the nonstate sector.

The law did not prohibit obligatory overtime, but it generally capped the number of overtime hours at 16 hours per week and 160 per year. The law provided few grounds for a worker to refuse to work overtime below these caps. Compensation for overtime was paid either in cash with a 25 percent bonus on top of the regular hourly rate or in equivalent compensatory time off.

Occupational Safety and Health: The government set workplace occupational safety and health (OSH) standards and received technical assistance from the International Labor Organization to implement them. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security was responsible for enforcing the minimum wage and workhour standards through offices at the national, provincial, and municipal levels.

The CTC provided only limited information to workers regarding their rights and at times did not respond to or assist workers who complained of hazardous workplace conditions. It was generally understood that workers could not remove themselves from dangerous situations without jeopardizing their employment, and authorities did not effectively protect workers facing this dilemma.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement: The government did not effectively enforce OSH laws, and penalties were not commensurate with those for other similar laws. Inspectors could make unannounced visits and impose administrative sanctions. Information regarding penalties for violations of wage, hour, and OSH law, the number of labor inspectors on duty, or the number of inspections carried out was not publicly available. Reports from recent years suggested there were very few inspectors and OSH standards frequently were ignored. Civil society organizations reported working conditions for doctors in hospitals were unsanitary and doctors worked long hours without sufficient access to food.

The Ministry of Finance and Prices set the salaries for state employees. Foreign companies operated in a limited number of sectors, such as hotels, tourism, and mining. Such companies operated via joint ventures in which the government contracted and paid company workers in pesos for a salary that was a small fraction of what the foreign company remitted in hard currency to the government for labor costs. Employers, including international businesses and organizations, were generally prohibited from contracting or paying workers directly, although many reportedly made informal supplemental payments in the form of gratuities. In some cases where workers were paid directly by their foreign employers, they were required to give a significant portion of their wages to the state.

Despite criminal penalties for doing so, a significant number of workers participated in the informal economy, including individuals who traded on the black market or performed professional activities not officially permitted by the government. There was no publicly available information regarding the size of the informal sector. The government did not enforce labor laws in this sector.

