

2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Slovenia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

There were no credible reports of significant human rights abuses.

The government took credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Section 1.

Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were no reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

Section 2.

Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The constitution and law 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.

The law criminalized hate speech and prohibited the incitement to hatred, violence, and intolerance based on nationality, race, religion, sex, color, social status, political or other beliefs, sexual orientation, and disability in a way that could threaten or disrupt public order, typically requiring violence to occur for the prosecution of such incitement. The penal code also prohibited the expression of ideas of racial superiority and denial of the Holocaust.

Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure

On May 22, RTV Slovenia journalists ended a two-year strike begun under previous leadership of the outlet over perceived loss of autonomy and financial instability of the public broadcaster. Members of the striking committee had reported threats of disciplinary action, dismissal, and public smearing of their reputations during the strike. In the agreement concluding the strike, RTV Slovenia leadership pledged to overhaul provisions related to journalistic and editorial autonomy and promised efforts towards strengthening journalists' job security.

The web platform for journalists to report attacks listed a total of eight reports of alleged verbal attacks or threats of physical attacks against journalists during the year, a decrease compared to the previous year. No instances of physical attacks were reported.

Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups

The press and media practiced some self-censorship. Analysts and observers noted online harassment, combined with a lack of job security, forced some journalists to avoid reporting on some topics.

In its *2024 Rule of Law Report*, issued July 24, the European Commission noted steps were taken to introduce safeguards to protect journalists. The report contended the independence of public broadcaster RTV Slovenia improved, but also asserted the government needed to change how the public broadcaster was financed. The report recommended the government provide appropriate funding for public service media to ensure its independence. The report called for strengthening the media ownership transparency framework. The report also noted efforts by the government to improve the fairness and transparency of state advertising.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The law provided for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The law did not prohibit antiunion discrimination or require reinstatement of workers fired for union activity; however, courts had ruled the right to unionize was protected in law. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported employers in the metal industry and transport sector pressured employees to refrain from organizing or to disband their unions by using threats of retaliation or consequences.

The law required unionization of at least 10 percent of workers in a sector before the sector could engage in collective bargaining. At the enterprise level, unionization of at least 15 percent of workers in a company or an organization was required before that union could engage in bargaining.

The government respected freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively and the right to strike. Local NGOs estimated approximately 20 percent of the labor force belonged to a union and approximately 80 percent of the labor force was covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

Local NGOs assessed that although penalties for violations were commensurate with those for analogous violations such as civil rights violations, a shortage of labor inspectors impeded the government's ability to effectively prevent, monitor, and deter violations of freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike for workers. Judicial and administrative procedures were not subject to lengthy delays or appeals. Penalties were sometimes applied against violators.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

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

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The national monthly gross minimum wage exceeded the poverty line. The law did not require premium pay for overtime, but collective agreements determined whether workers received premium pay for overtime. The law limited overtime to eight hours per week, 20 hours per month, and 170 hours per year.

Occupational Safety and Health

Special commissions under the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities set occupational safety and health (OSH) standards for workers that were appropriate for the main industries in the country. Workers could remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety without jeopardizing their employment. The law required employers to protect workers injured on the job. If incapacitated, such workers could perform other work corresponding to their abilities, obtain part-time work, or receive occupational rehabilitation and wage compensation.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

The Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities monitored minimum wage compliance and had inspection authority. Labor inspectors investigated potential violations of OSH laws. In cases of serious violations, police took over investigations of potential criminal acts. Labor inspectors proactively identified unsafe conditions. The government effectively enforced minimum wage, overtime, and OSH laws.

According to NGOs and advocacy groups, penalties for wage and hour violations were commensurate with those for other similar crimes, and they were sometimes applied against violators. Exceptions included some cases involving migrant workers and asylum seekers who faced conditions of exploitation such as underpayment, poor housing conditions, and demands to work overtime. Most violations took place in the wood processing industry, the metal industry, construction, transportation, hospitality, and bars and restaurants, although the government actively enforced labor laws in these sectors. Workers facing hazardous working conditions included professional divers, mountain rescuers, sailors, construction workers, and miners. Workers employed in the construction and transport sectors, the wood industry, and exotic dancers faced exploitative working conditions.

Penalties for OSH violations were generally commensurate with penalties for similar crimes such as negligence. The Labor Inspectorate carried out some labor contract and OSH inspections, identified violations, and issued penalties. Penalties were rarely applied against violators. Inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions against abusers, but according to NGOs, the number of inspectors was insufficient to monitor conformance with labor contract or OSH laws. The International Labor Organization and some NGOs reported an urgent need to increase the number of inspectors.

The government estimated informal workers accounted for 5.8 percent of the active labor force. The government enforced labor laws in the informal sector.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

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

Prolonged Detention without Charges

The constitution and law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their detention in court. The government generally observed these requirements. There were no reported cases of arbitrary or unlawful detention.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/international-religious-freedom-reports/>.

e. Trafficking in Persons

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

Section 3.

Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution and law prohibited such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

There was no significant presence of the worst forms of child labor. There were isolated reports of children being subjected to forced labor in the construction, hospitality, transportation, agriculture, logistics, and food sectors, in addition to forced begging.

The law prohibited the worst forms of child labor. The minimum legal age of employment was 15. The law limited hours, mandated rest periods, prohibited working in hazardous locations, and specified adult supervision for workers younger than 18. While no specific occupations were restricted, hazardous work locations specified by the law included those that were underground and underwater and those involving harmful exposure to radiation, toxic or carcinogenic agents, extreme cold, heat, noise, or vibrations. Penalties for child labor were not commensurate with those for other analogous crimes. Penalties for child labor law violations ranged from a fine to one year in prison. Penalties for violations of child labor and minimum age laws were regularly applied against

violators. Nevertheless, children younger than 15 in rural areas often worked during the harvest season.

Child Marriage

The minimum age for marriage was 18. With the approval of parents or legal guardians, centers for social service could approve the marriage of a person at 16. The government enforced the law effectively. Forced marriages of individuals as young as 16 occurred in the Romani community, but were not registered with the government, so numbers were difficult to confirm.

On April 12, the Office for National Minorities led a professional lecture and training program on recognizing and taking action in cases of early and forced marriages in the Romani community. Participants included judicial experts, the supreme state prosecutor, Ministry of Justice employees, social workers, representatives from Centers for School and Extracurricular Activities, and NGOs that operated in the field. The program, led by police, NGOs, social workers, teachers, assistants, and counselors in and near Romani communities, trained participants on how to recognize risks of forced marriages and how to respond in case of suspicion. Ministry of Interior officials also led a program for administrative unit officials to recognize potential risk factors and indicators of forced marriage.

c. Protection to 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.

Provision of First Asylum

The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government had a system for providing protection to refugees. On July 15, an emergency law was enacted allowing rejected asylum seekers to apply for employment-based residence permits after applications for asylum protections were denied.

The number of asylum applications decreased, alleviating some overcrowding in asylum centers. On February 29, the government announced the expansion of the asylum centers in Brežice and Središče ob Dravi, but protests and lawsuits from local municipalities delayed their opening.

On March 28, the government announced it adopted a new Immigration Strategy to improve several elements for asylum seekers, including the expansion of pathways for resettlement and relocation and the adoption of new communication strategies with local communities. Despite these changes, critics asserted the asylum processes was extremely lengthy. Asylum seekers outside EU resettlement and relocation programs often waited six months or longer for their cases to be adjudicated.

The Office for the Care of Migrants opened a new accommodation center on March 28 for unaccompanied children in Postojna, the first center of its kind in the country. Previously, unaccompanied children were primarily cared for alongside adults at social work centers.

Lack of access to information for asylum seekers staying in private housing was a problem, according to NGOs. Experts raised concerns regarding gaps in the identification of asylum seekers who were also victims of human trafficking, including a lack of uniform implementation of victim referral procedures.

Some NGOs asserted double standards existed in the government's treatment of Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion compared to asylum seekers from other parts of the world. For instance, they

alleged Ukrainian asylum seekers typically received asylum decisions within six months, compared to asylum seekers from other parts of the world who might have waited six to 24 months. Ukrainians fleeing the war were granted temporary protection beginning in 2022.

Resettlement

The government accepted refugees for resettlement, offered naturalization to refugees, and assisted refugees who voluntarily wanted to return to their home countries.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

There were an estimated 400 persons of Jewish descent in the country. NGOs reported cases of antisemitic hate speech on social media. In the wake of Hamas' October 2023 terrorist attacks in Israel and the resulting war in Gaza, numerous protests against Israel occurred in Ljubljana. While peaceful, observers noted there were also isolated incidences of antisemitic rhetoric.

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