

2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Greece

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Greece is a constitutional republic and multi-party parliamentary democracy. Legislative authority is vested in the unicameral parliament. In 2012 the country held parliamentary elections that were considered free and fair. A coalition government headed by a prime minister led the country. Authorities maintained effective control over security forces.

The most important human rights problems included substandard conditions and poor treatment in migrant detention centers and prisons, abuse of detainees by security forces, and societal discrimination and instances of violence against migrants or individuals perceived to be foreigners.

Other human rights problems included prolonged detention of undocumented migrants, minors, and asylum seekers; limited access to the asylum application process; inadequate capacity to provide legal aid and social support for asylum seekers and refugees; some restrictions on freedom of speech and religion; domestic violence; incidents of anti-Semitism; trafficking in persons; limits on the freedom of certain ethnic minority groups to self-identify; discrimination against and social exclusion of the officially recognized Muslim minority in Thrace; discrimination against Roma and exploitation of Romani children; and discrimination in employment and occupation based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV-positive status, and against migrant workers.

The government took steps to prosecute and punish officials who committed abuses, whether in the security services or elsewhere in the government.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

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

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances, abductions, or kidnappings. On June 27, the government amended the law to impose penalties against persons perpetrating forced disappearances, including prison sentences for perpetrators or their superiors who knew or disregarded information of such crimes or who exercised control and responsibility. Prison

sentences are a minimum of 10 years if the victim was pregnant or a minor, had a disability, or suffered serious bodily harm. If the victim died, the penalty is a life sentence.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices and provide safeguards for criminal suspects and undocumented migrants in detention, but there were reports of mistreatment and abuse of undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, prison and detention center inmates, and Roma by police and coast guard personnel. On February 11, the government institutionalized the powers of the ombudsman, granting the ombudsman jurisdiction to conduct regular or unannounced visits to detention facilities; assess the situation inside the facilities; request investigations; publish findings; and provide recommendations to prevent torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

In its April 4 report, Amnesty International highlighted cases of police brutality. The media also reported the excessive use of violence by police against demonstrators on several occasions. On April 7, prosecutors charged 15 prison officers in the March 27 death of an Albanian convict. Six of the accused were detained pending trial, and the minister of justice, transparency, and human rights suspended them from duty. On October 22, authorities ordered 13 of the accused to stand trial, and two were acquitted for lack of evidence.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) claimed that coast guard personnel "pushed back" vessels containing undocumented migrants from the country's territorial waters without properly identifying refugees and asylum seekers. In its April report, Amnesty International detailed 38 such allegations, with many migrants describing a pattern of physical abuse by coast guard officials. On January 10, the minister of shipping informed the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights that the coast guard had ordered investigations into three separate cases of alleged mistreatment of third-country nationals from August to December 2013. At year's end these cases were pending.

On October 16, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) published the report of its 11th visit to the country in April 2013. The report expressed serious concerns regarding the lack of effective action to tackle systemic deficiencies in detention facilities for irregular migrants and the situation in prisons, as well as credible allegations that police mistreated persons in custody in prisons and detention centers. These allegations mainly concerned kicks, slaps, punches, and blows with batons and other objects upon or after apprehension. Based on the 2013 CPT visit findings, the report maintained the conditions of detained irregular migrants and the situation in prisons and detention facilities mostly had not improved since the CPT's 2011 visit. The report also noted that the problem of police mistreatment appeared to be growing, with little evidence that authorities promptly and thoroughly investigated allegations of mistreatment, leading some police officers to believe they could act with impunity. During its 2013 visit, the CPT delegation visited 31 police stations, border stations, and prisons as well as nine immigration and coast guard detention facilities, met with numerous detainees, and documented numerous examples of poor conditions and abuse in its report.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Conditions in prisons and detention facilities, including holding cells, did not meet national or international standards. Problems included severe overcrowding; inadequate supplies of material

resources such as blankets, clothing, and hygiene products; problems with inadequate diet, sanitation, access to natural light, and ventilation; access to health care; and the mixing of convicted criminals, pretrial detainees, and undocumented migrants as well as the mixing of adult and juvenile detainees.

The October CPT report covered all these problem areas but highlighted overcrowding, describing as "totally unacceptable" the conditions in which authorities held irregular migrants for prolonged periods in police establishments throughout the country. In one station, for example, the report noted that authorities held several women for months in a tiny, dark, moldy, and dilapidated basement cell with no access to outdoor exercise or hygiene products.

Physical Conditions: As of November the Ministry of Justice, Transparency, and Human Rights stated the prison population consisted of 11,988 prisoners, including 588 female inmates in the two women's prisons and 380 incarcerated juveniles. The president of the Hellenic League for Human Rights estimated in November that police detained approximately 800 individuals in police stations and holding cells. The capacity of prison facilities was 9,886 inmates. The CPT report noted the cramped conditions of most of the prisons visited, stating that some operated at up to 300 percent of their capacity, resulting in some prisoners having to share beds or sleep on mattresses on the floor. Prison guards conducted work stoppages in June and July to protest prison overcrowding and understaffing. Prisons detained women and minors separately from adult males, although authorities reportedly detained underage migrants in the same quarters as adults.

Conditions in detention centers for migrants were reportedly inadequate. Prisoners and detainees generally had access to potable water; there were reports, however, that water was limited in one prison. On several occasions inmates conducted hunger strikes and protested overcrowding and poor conditions in prisons and detention facilities. One prisoner reportedly committed suicide to protest conditions.

The Council of Europe and the ombudsman called on authorities in March to improve prison detention conditions. On April 2, the NGO Doctors without Borders issued a report on the deleterious impact of long-term detention under extremely poor conditions on detainees' physical and mental health.

Administration: Recordkeeping on prisoners was adequate. Alternative sentencing for nonviolent offenders sentenced to up to five years' imprisonment was available. In May the Ministry of Justice, Transparency, and Human Rights reported that one thousand convicts received alternative sentencing. The Prisons' Inspectorate, a semiautonomous body headed by a judge, conducted routine and unscheduled prison visits. Inmates may submit complaints to the inspectorate and also send complaints to prosecutors assigned to prisons and to the ombudsman. The deputy ombudsman for human rights conducted frequent short-notice visits to prisons and detention centers. Prisoners had access to visitors, could observe religious practices, and could submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted independent nongovernmental observers to monitor prison and detention center conditions.

Improvements: As a result of 2013 legislative amendments, the law allows seriously ill inmates to qualify for early release under certain conditions and for the electronic monitoring of certain

prisoners and pretrial detainees. On May 15, the Ministry of Finance allocated one million euros (\$1.25 million) for a pilot program for 250 electronic bracelets. On January 2, the human rights minister removed the director of a prison facility in Patras in response to a letter from 603 detainees complaining of poor prison conditions. In June the government issued a decree resulting in the transfer of 1,800 of 3,000 former municipal police officers to correctional facilities to increase staffing.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

Although the constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, there were reports that police at times abused their arrest and detention authority.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The police are responsible for law enforcement and the maintenance of order under the authority of the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection; the coast guard is responsible for law enforcement in territorial waters under the authority of the Ministry of Shipping and the Aegean. The military forces, under the authority of the Ministry of Defense, and the police jointly share law enforcement duties in certain border areas. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the police, coast guard, and military, and the government had effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. There were reports of impunity involving security forces, and in September the media reported that the Hellenic Police Internal Affairs Unit had investigated 2,060 allegations of state and municipal agency corruption and police impunity.

The Racist Violence Recording Network noted that 44 of 143 reported cases of racially motivated violence against migrants involved law enforcement officers and that 23 such cases occurred in detention facilities. The government maintained a hotline for reports of racially motivated acts, and special police units were responsible for combating and preventing racist violence. According to official data, in the first half of the year, 31 racially motivated crimes were reported and involved 13 police officers as assailants.

Police and coast guard personnel received human rights training from universities, NGOs, and service academies.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires judicial warrants for arrests, except during the commission of a crime, and prohibits arbitrary arrest. Police did not always follow these provisions.

Within 24 hours of detention, police are required to bring detainees before a magistrate, who must issue a detention warrant or order the detainee's release; authorities generally observed these provisions. Pretrial detention may last up to 18 months, depending on the severity of the crime, or 30 months in exceptional circumstances. A panel of judges may release detainees pending trial. Expedited procedures may be applied to individuals accused of misdemeanors. Bail is available for defendants detained on felony charges and on lesser charges unless a judicial officer deems the defendant a flight risk.

Authorities generally respected the law allowing detainees to contact a close relative or third party, consult with a lawyer, and access medical services. According to the latest CPT report, however, a number of interviewed detainees complained of not being allowed to contact a relative or third party within the time required by law. Since police are required to bring detainees before an examining magistrate within 24 hours of detention, the short time period allegedly limited the ability of detainees to present an adequate defense. Defendants may request a delay to prepare a defense.

Asylum seekers and refugees, including unaccompanied minors, were systematically detained, often in harsh conditions, for up to 18 months pending determination of nationality, deportation procedures, or asylum application adjudication. The detention of immigrants and unsuccessful applicants for asylum often exceeded 18 months. As of October the media reported that 300 individuals had detention periods of 18 months or more. NGOs, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other international organizations expressed concern over the State Legal Council's May opinion allowing a prolonged detention (beyond 18 months) for all foreign nationals subject to deportation. The media reported in October that in approximately 150 first-instance court decisions, trial courts ruled extensions beyond 18 months to be legally groundless.

Authorities informed foreign detainees of asylum procedures, their rights as detainees, and International Organization for Migration-assisted (IOM) voluntary return programs through UNHCR-assisted briefings and distribution of multilingual leaflets and information packages. There allegedly were instances in which foreign detainees did not have access to a court-appointed interpreter, were unaware of their right to legal assistance, or did not enjoy this right without payment for services rendered. Only indigent defendants facing felony charges received legal representation from the bar association. Limited legal aid was provided by NGOs to some detained migrants and asylum seekers.

Arbitrary Arrest: Police conducted large-scale sweeps of public spaces, temporarily detaining individuals presumed to be undocumented migrants, allegedly based on their physical appearance. In April Amnesty International reported that between July 2012 and February several legal immigrants claimed authorities targeted and detained them due to their skin color, despite their having proper identification documents.

Pretrial Detention: Prolonged pretrial detention remained a problem. As of November approximately 21 percent of the country's total prison/detainee population was in pretrial detention. Courts were overburdened and understaffed, and litigation often proved to be a lengthy process. Legislation provides for separation of pretrial detainees and convicted prisoners. NGOs, however, alleged authorities did not always respect this distinction due to lack of infrastructure.

Detention of Rejected Asylum Seekers or Stateless Persons: Authorities detained unsuccessful applicants for asylum, sometimes for more than 18 months. NGOs charged that these individuals were often held in harsh conditions.

The October CPT report termed the conditions under which authorities held irregular migrants for prolonged periods in police establishments throughout the country as "totally unacceptable" (see section 1.c.).

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence. NGO observers reported the judiciary was at times inefficient and sometimes subject to influence and corruption.

Trial Procedures

The constitution and law provide for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. The law grants defendants a presumption of innocence, and defendants have the right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges. Delays were mostly due to backlogs of pending trials and understaffing. Trials are public in most instances, and most felony cases use juries. The law permits denial of a jury trial in cases of terrorism. Defendants have the right to be present at trial and to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. The government provides attorneys to indigent defendants facing felony charges. Defendants may present witnesses and evidence on their own behalf as well as question prosecution witnesses. Defendants and their attorneys have access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases and have the right of appeal.

Defendants who do not speak Greek have the right to a court-appointed interpreter, although some NGOs and the media criticized their quality and availability. There was some progress with respect to provision of interpretation services to asylum seekers. On February 11, parliament passed legislation to institutionalize and make more accessible the right to interpretation, translation, and information in criminal proceedings.

In 2013, 12 of the 38 cases in which the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled against the state concerned lengthy trial procedures. In February the president of the Union of Administrative Court Judges reported there were 399,000 pending administrative court cases, with a projected timeframe for hearings between two and one-half and five years. On February 20, the government passed legislation to provide for effective remedies in the form of financial compensation, including payment of legal and other fees, for lengthy trial proceedings.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The judiciary was generally independent and impartial in civil matters. The law provides citizens with the ability to sue the government for compensation for alleged violations of rights.

The government recognizes sharia (Islamic law) as the law regulating family and civil concerns of the Muslim minority of Thrace. Muslims married by a government-appointed mufti are subject to sharia family law. Members of the Muslim minority also have the right to a civil marriage and the right to take their cases to civil court.

Regional Human Rights Court Decisions

The country is subject to the jurisdiction of the ECHR. According to a media report, as of August 25, the government had not implemented 517 ECHR decisions and judgments finding violations by

the state of the European Convention on Human Rights; this data could not be confirmed independently.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and law prohibit such actions. There were a few reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions. NGOs reported that police did not always respect the requirement to obtain a warrant before entering property during police raids of Romani settlements and migrant neighborhoods.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and press, and the government generally respected these rights. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of speech and press.

Freedom of Speech: The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech but specifically allow restrictions on speech and sanction individuals who intentionally incite others to actions that could provoke discrimination, hatred, or violence against persons or groups based on their race or ethnic origin or who express ideas insulting to persons or groups because of their race or ethnic origin. Authorities invoked these provisions once during the year, in the case of a member of the far-right Golden Dawn party convicted on September 16 of inciting racist violence in 2012.

On September 9, parliament amended the antiracism/antidiscrimination law to set stricter penalties for individuals or legal entities convicted of incitement to violence, discrimination, or hatred based on race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Courts may sentence violators to three months to three years' imprisonment, deprivation of political rights for one to five years, and a fine from 5,000 to 50,000 euros (\$6,250 to \$62,500). The punishment increases if incitement to violence leads to a criminal act or is carried out by a civil servant in the course of duty. The law also criminalizes approval, trivialization, or malicious denial of the existence or seriousness of genocides, war crimes, crimes against humanity, the Holocaust, and crimes of Nazism if such behavior leads to incitement of violence or hatred, or if it is threatening or abusive toward groups of individuals based on race, color, religion, genealogy, nationality/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. Violators may be sentenced to three months to three years in prison and a fine of 5,000 to 20,000 euros (\$6,250 to \$25,000). A new legal provision also sets stricter penalties for racially motivated crimes, in which case a court may sentence violators to an additional six months to three years and a doubled fine.

Press Freedoms: Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restrictions. The law permits a prosecutor to order the seizure of publications that insult the president, offend any religion, contain obscenity, advocate for the violent overthrow of the political system, or disclose military secrets. The National Radio and Television Council, an independent regulatory agency, supervised radio and television broadcasts. The law requires television stations to broadcast at least 25 percent of their programming in Greek; the percentage for radio broadcasts

varies, depending on the nature of the radio station. The law allows the government to exercise immediate control over radio and television stations in case of national emergency and establishes ownership limits on media frequencies.

On February 27, police arrested six suspects, including a member of the country's secret service, on a variety of criminal offenses, including conspiracy to murder and drug charges. Kostas Vaxevanis of *HotDoc* magazine earlier had alleged that these individuals tried to ambush him at his home because of his publicly declared intention to publish a list of more than 2,000 Greeks with foreign bank accounts. The case was pending at year's end.

Violence and Harassment: Journalists were subjected to arrest and imprisonment, physical attack, harassment, and intimidation due to their reporting. Some incidents involved anarchist groups, Golden Dawn members, or police officers; police opened investigations into several cases.

In May a businessman involved in a car accident in which he was a driver and his bodyguards attacked three newspaper photojournalists covering the incident. Police officers allegedly detained the journalists temporarily, confiscated cameras, and erased footage. Authorities ordered an administrative investigation into the incident.

In July, Golden Dawn supporters attacked two photojournalists covering the trial of a Golden Dawn member. The victims filed a complaint with judicial authorities and criticized police officers for not intervening.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: There were a few reported instances of censorship and content restrictions. In February a judge attempted to prohibit Mega TV, a national private television station, from presenting an investigative report about a migrant boat accident, asserting the program could compromise a continuing official investigation, but the station broadcast the report. In April a Supreme Court prosecutor instructed the country's prosecutors to arrest anyone publishing illegally obtained video footage following the release of a video of a private meeting between a Golden Dawn member of parliament and a government official.

Libel Laws/National Security: The law provides criminal penalties for defamation. In April the Hellenic police chief announced that a prosecutor's order was required for a journalist to be arrested for alleged slander in order to determine whether criminal procedures should be followed in such cases. There were reported incidents of journalists arrested for libel, although authorities released all after they testified.

In January a court determined that a journalist had used insulting language in referring to a Greek monastery and had defamed an abbot in two articles published in 2010 and 2012 and ordered him to pay 10,000 euros (\$12,500) in damages.

On February 11, a prosecutor ordered an investigation into the possible illegal transmission of military secrets or militarily important information by a journalist who publicly alleged Greek Navy SEALs had cooperated with police in guarding nonport areas, such as a prison facility. The journalist claimed to have been pressured to remove her report from the internet.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports that the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. According to the country's national statistics agency, approximately 63 percent of the population used the internet as of March.

On January 16, a court issued a 10-month suspended sentence to a blogger charged with malicious blasphemy and insulting religion for a 2012 Facebook page using a name that played on the name of a legendary monk. In a defamation suit against a Wikipedia editor, on February 13, a court ordered the removal of a revised entry about Theodoros Katsanevas, the former son-in-law of a late prime minister. The court order was reversed on September 1. On February 27, a public prosecutor ordered disciplinary action against an inmate who posted photographs online of conditions in a prison hospital, but no penalty was imposed.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly, and the government generally respected this right.

In April during the country's presidency of the European Council, the government cited public safety and security reasons and banned demonstrations during both the visit of the German chancellor and two other EU-related meetings. The government banned demonstrations during the December visit of the Turkish prime minister on similar grounds.

b. Freedom of Association

Although the constitution and law provide for freedom of association, the government continued to place legal restrictions on the names of associations of nationals who self-identified as ethnic Macedonians or associations that included the term "Turkish" (see section 6).

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's [International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The constitution and law provide for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights. The government cooperated with the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers.

The Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, continued to suspend deportation of Syrian refugees and issue free-of-charge, six-month permits that allowed them to stay in the country but prohibited their travel to other EU countries. The permits were renewable without charge every six months (dependent on the situation in Syria).

In-country Movement: A new immigration law, effective July 1, simplified the granting of residence permits to non-EU nationals. It provides migrants with long-term residence permits, allowing them to seek work in other EU countries. It also provides favorable terms for some documented migrants, affected by unemployment and the economic crisis, to bypass employment and other requirements to renew existing residence permits.

According to official data, as of October 31, the government had registered 587,102 residence permit holders. By November authorities established 57 "one-stop shops" designed to reduce and eliminate delays in the permit issuance and renewal system.

Based on police data, authorities facilitated the deportation or voluntary return of 25,602 migrants to their home countries from January to November. On June 27, the minister of public order and citizen protection stated that the number of repatriations rose by 33 percent during the first half of the year.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government established a system for protecting refugees. In June 2013 the government instituted a new autonomous, civilian-staffed asylum service under the authority of the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection. The new system functioned concurrently with the old police-operated system, with plans to phase out the old one after the police adjudicate a backlog of 25,000 cases. Asylum legislation requires decisions on asylum be issued within 90 days; under the new system, the average was 122 days. Applicants have access to certified interpreters. Applicants may appeal negative decisions to the appeals authority and may be detained but not deported. Applicants also received information on the voluntary return program managed by the IOM.

In the period from January to June, authorities reported that both the police and the appeals committee rejected 7,965 applications and approved 606. The new asylum service reportedly registered 7,806 new claims and issued 4,984 decisions from January until October. During the same period, the appeals authority received 2,036 appeals and issued 1,693 negative and 343 positive decisions. The recognition rate reported by the asylum service from June 2013 to November was approximately 24 percent. As of July 1, the government reduced the number of appeals committees from 19 to eight, raising concerns about access to the appeals system.

NGOs and activists expressed concerns about problems related to the asylum system, including the lack of permanent reception centers; problems with registration of claims and examination of appeals; insufficient welfare, integration, counseling, legal, and interpretation services; discrimination; poor detention conditions; and the detention of asylum seekers.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: The country adheres to the Dublin III Regulation, according to which authorities may return asylum seekers to the EU member state of first entry for adjudication of asylum claims.

Refoulement: The government provided only limited protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. In July a court, referring to a Geneva Convention determination, suspended the deportation of a Kenyan woman

and her three children who had applied unsuccessfully for asylum and found that the woman faced the risk of genital mutilation if returned to Kenya.

Refugee Abuse: NGOs and independent experts described conditions in which authorities detained undocumented migrants and asylum seekers as inhumane, specifically criticizing prolonged detention and inadequate, overcrowded facilities. They noted a number of specific deficiencies, including the detention of unaccompanied minors with adults, insufficient spaces in shelters to accommodate adult asylum seekers' needs; unsanitary conditions; and a lack of adequate health care, nutrition, legal assistance, and social support.

A major complaint about predeparture centers cited in the October CPT report involved the fact that officials frequently treated irregular migrants as though they were criminal suspects, and while many behaved correctly, there were numerous detailed, coherent, and consistent allegations that police officers physically mistreated individual (see section 1.c-d.). The allegations mainly concerned kicks, slaps, punches, and blows with batons or other objects on or after apprehension. The CPT specifically cited the Amygdaleza predeparture center in this regard.

In a June press statement, the UNHCR noted the government's implementation in 2013 of the First Reception Service, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection. The service receives non-EU nationals who are arrested or detained due to illegal entry into the country and provides services in cooperation with international organizations and NGOs, including identification, registration, information on rights and obligations, medical screening, sociopsychological support, and referrals for vulnerable persons such as unaccompanied minors.

Mobile first-reception units operated on the islands of Lesbos and Samos. From November 2013 through August, the First Reception Service received 4,916 persons primarily from Afghanistan and Syria, 16 of whom requested asylum. According to data from the National Social Solidarity Center (EKKA), authorities satisfied 73 percent of shelter requests from asylum seekers in 2013, compared with 56 percent in 2012. The UNHCR noted that the shelters lacked standard operating procedures and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and expressed concern that insufficient funding threatened the sustainability and quality of shelter services.

Unaccompanied migrant children were not always properly registered, lacked safe accommodations or legal guardians, and were vulnerable to homelessness, and labor and sexual exploitation. According to 2013 EKKA data, the agency dealt with 1,150 referrals of unaccompanied minors needing shelter, requiring an average of 25 days to conclude the referral process. In the interim, minors were detained, homeless, or living in precarious circumstances. In November the ombudsman asked the minister of public order and citizen protection to end the practice of holding unaccompanied minors together with adults and to add these minors to the welfare system.

Employment: Discrimination against noncitizens in the labor market, lack of sufficient legal protections against exploitation, and abusive working conditions persisted.

Temporary Protection: The government also provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees, although no data was available on the number of persons receiving temporary protection during the year.

Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The constitution and law provide citizens the ability to change their government through free and fair elections, which they exercised through elections based on universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In 2012 the country held parliamentary elections that observers considered free and fair. Observers also considered municipal, regional, and European parliamentary elections held in May to have been free and fair.

Political Parties and Political Participation: An unknown number of Roma were believed not registered to vote.

Participation of Women and Minorities: There were 63 women in the 300-seat parliament and two women in the 21-member Ministerial Council following the June 10 government reshuffle. An additional four women served as alternate or deputy ministers. A quota system requires that 30 percent of all party candidates for local government be women. There were three members of the Muslim minority of Thrace in the parliament. There were no minority members in the cabinet.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government did not always implement the law effectively, and officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. NGOs and other observers expressed concern over perceived high levels of official corruption. Permanent and ad hoc government entities charged with combating corruption were understaffed and underfinanced.

The government implemented structural reforms as part of its financial bailout program with the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which included measures, such as automating tax payments and other services, designed to increase transparency, reduce opportunities for official corruption, and impose stricter penalties. During the year the government implemented administrative procedures for the dismissal of corrupt state officials. Changes introduced in 2013 in disciplinary procedures and penalties resulted in the removal of 218 state employees in 2013 for breach of faith and 562 employees during the first eight months of the year. In 2013 the government appointed independent public prosecutors against corruption within the public prosecutor's offices in Athens and Thessaloniki. A law enacted on July 14 deprives members of parliament of certain parliamentary privileges if an appeals court finds them guilty of felonies and certain misdemeanors.

Corruption: On February 3, the European Commission's anticorruption report noted that corruption continued to pose considerable challenges in the country and highlighted public procurement as a risk area. A Eurobarometer poll on corruption, conducted in February-March 2013 and published the following February, reported 99 percent of Greek respondents considered corruption to be a widespread problem and 93 percent stated that bribery and the use of connections was often the easiest way of obtaining public services.

Although the government intensified efforts to combat tax evasion by increasing staff, inspections, and fines imposed and reported some successes, the media alleged instances of complicity by tax officials in tax evasion by individuals and businesses. Reports of police corruption continued. The police bureau of internal affairs conducted investigations and took numerous disciplinary measures, including dismissal and suspension, against officers involved in corruption. Corrupt practices reportedly included blackmail, bribery, human smuggling, and drug and cigarette trafficking.

In February the Supreme Court upheld a 2011 appeals court decision imposing a three-year suspended sentence on a former transport minister for filing false tax statements in 2006 and 2007. His separate trial for accepting 230,000 euros (\$287,500) in bribes and money laundering was pending at yearend. On December 11, a Supreme Court judicial council ruled that a former finance minister involved in the mismanagement of a list of more than 2,000 citizens with foreign bank accounts should stand trial for allegedly tampering with an official document and breach of faith.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires income and asset disclosure by appointed and elected officials, including nonpublic sector employees, such as journalists and heads of state-funded NGOs. Several different agencies are mandated to monitor and verify disclosures, including the General Inspectorate for Public Administration, the police internal affairs bureau, the Piraeus Appeals Prosecutor, and an independent permanent parliamentary committee. Declarations are made publicly available. The law provides for administrative and criminal sanctions for noncompliance. Prison penalties range from two to 10 years and fines, from 10,000 euros to one million euros (\$12,500 to \$1.25 million).

On April 2, a court sentenced a former defense minister, who was serving a 20-year prison term for taking kickbacks to approve defense ministry arms programs, to an additional five years and six months in prison and fined him 210,000 euros (\$262,500) for submitting an inaccurate statement of wealth. The added prison sentence was convertible to a fine of 10 euros (\$12.50) per day.

Public Access to Information: The law provides for the right of access to government-held information, with the exception of cases pertaining to national security or privacy. NGOs and media observers noted that bureaucratic delays sometimes hindered access to information.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials often were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The Office of the Ombudsman, considered independent and effective, investigated complaints by individuals of human rights problems. Five deputy ombudsmen dealt with human rights, children's rights, citizen-state relations, health and social welfare, and quality of life issues. The office received adequate resources to perform its functions. In its 2013 annual report, the office reported receiving 14,738 complaints, of which 54 percent were deemed justifiable and 81.5 percent were considered to have been resolved satisfactorily for the affected citizens.

The autonomous, government-funded National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) advised the government on protection of human rights. The NCHR was considered independent, effective, and adequately resourced.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, or social status. Some laws also include antidiscrimination provisions on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. While the government generally enforced these provisions, some societal discrimination continued against women, persons with disabilities, migrants, Roma, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals.

Protection of Refugees

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, including spousal rape, is a crime. Penalties range from five to 20 years' imprisonment. Conviction rates for rape were low for first-time offenders, but sentences were robust for repeat offenders. According to police statistics, survivors reported 108 cases of rape in the first nine months of the year, a reduction of approximately 12 percent compared with the same period in 2013. Data on prosecutions, convictions, and prison sentences for rape and domestic violence crimes were unavailable. The Greek Helsinki Monitor noted that the state did not provide legal aid or translation of key documents to foreign victims of rape.

According to the secretary general for gender equality, police, and NGOs, domestic violence, including spousal abuse, continued to be a problem. The General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) estimated that fewer than 10 percent of domestic violence victims contacted police and only a fraction of complaints went to trial. NGOs reported long delays in trial procedures prior to a final verdict. In December the GSGE reported that its hotline for female victims of violence received more than 184,000 calls from March 2011 to November 2014. Through early December the media reported five cases of women killed by their partner or husband. The GSGE trained police to work with domestic violence victims. In August 2013 the GSGE, in cooperation with police, updated the police directive with respect to addressing domestic violence cases. The updated directive was available to all police stations.

The government and NGOs usually made medical, psychological, social, and legal support available to rape survivors. EKKKA operated a hotline that provided referrals and psychological counseling for individuals in need of help. The government operated 21 shelters for victims of violence and 25 counseling and support services centers. The GSGE also oversaw 15 separate centers in each governing region. The GSGE reported that through November, 4,035 women benefitted from services offered at shelters and counseling centers operated by the GSGE and local authorities. It also reported the allotted state budget and EU funds would provide approximately 3.6 million euros (\$4.5 million) to 52 projects administered by women's rights NGOs from 2013 to 2015.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law does not prohibit FGM/C. There were no known cases of FGM/C performed in the country. There were anecdotal reports by health and

human rights groups that some female migrants from Africa were subjected to FGM/C before entering the country.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment and provides penalties ranging from two months to five years in prison. Of the gender-equality complaints handled by the ombudsman in 2013, approximately 7 percent involved sexual and other harassment. The ombudsman noted the absence of a policy against sexual harassment in most businesses and workplaces, private and public.

Reproductive Rights: The government generally respected the right of couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children; to have the information and means to do so; and to attain the highest standard of reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. Contraception was widely available in stores and hospitals. Both public and private hospitals provided modern, skilled attendance during childbirth; public hospitals provided services free of charge.

Discrimination: The constitution provides for gender equality. Women enjoy the same legal status and rights as men under family, labor, property, and inheritance laws, with exceptions related to the practice of sharia law involving the Muslim minority of Thrace.

The law provides for equal pay for equal work. According to European Commission data, working women on average were paid 15 percent less than men (see section 7.d.). Women occupied 25 percent of senior private sector positions.

According to the International Labor Organization, the country's economic crisis had a disproportionate impact on women. In September the unemployment rate for women overall was approximately 29 percent and for women under age 24 was nearly 57 percent. In March the ombudsman expressed concern about a 25 percent overall increase in reported cases of gender discrimination in employment in 2013. Most reported cases involved illegal dismissal from employment and changes in work terms imposed by the employer due to pregnancy.

The government recognizes sharia applied by muftis as the law regulating family and civic matters for the Muslim minority of Thrace, with local courts routinely ratifying the muftis' decisions. The NCHR advised the government to limit the powers of muftis to religious duties because they might otherwise restrict the civil rights of citizens. On February 7, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs announced the establishment of an appointed, unpaid committee, consisting of the three muftis in Thrace, to edit the *Handbook on Interpersonal Relations according to the Hanafi School of Islamic Law*, a nonbinding guide for family and succession law for the officially recognized Muslim minority.

Muslims married by a government-appointed mufti are subject to sharia family law. Members of the Muslim minority also have the right to a civil marriage and the right to take their cases to civil court. Muslim women in Thrace may choose to be subject to sharia as interpreted by official muftis. According to a 2009 report on the visit of a UN independent expert on minority problems, women's rights under sharia law were inferior to those of men. In some instances sharia subjects Muslim women to norms incompatible with the constitution, law, and international standards. Activists claimed sharia limited Muslim women's access to divorce. The UN expert noted that Muslim and

Romani women experienced severe inequalities in access to education and consequently suffered disproportionately high levels of illiteracy and unemployment.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived from one's parents at birth; a single parent may confer citizenship on a child. Parents are obliged to register their children within 10 days of birth. The law allows belated birth registration but imposes a fine. Birth registration takes place at the municipal level. Parents of children who were not born in private or public clinics or hospitals may submit written statements from two witnesses to confirm their parentage.

On January 7, the minister of interior directed ministry personnel to conduct birth registration data checks and make recommendations regarding fines for belated registrations. Cases could be referred to the public prosecutor for review. In June the ombudsman reported that the Ministry of Interior ordered municipal authorities, when registering citizenship of immigrant children, to coregister (for identification purposes only) any foreign family members to make the identification of relatives easier.

In February 2013 the Council of State ruled that a 2010 citizenship law pertaining to alien children born in the country or abroad was unconstitutional. On July 30, the media reported that 6,074 of 200,000 children born in the country to migrant parents had been granted citizenship since February 2013 based on the invalid citizenship provisions. Various scattered municipalities unevenly processed birth certificates with minimum documentation. On September 5, the media reported that a review of the birth certificates issued by the city of Athens between January and October 2013 revealed that authorities had processed 400 births without appropriate documentation.

On March 31, the parliament passed an immigration law under which alien children born in the country who either resided there permanently or had completed six years of education there could be granted a long-term resident permit before age 21, valid for and renewable every five years.

Education: Romani children continued to face discrimination in education (see section 6, National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities). Problems included segregated classes, schools for Roma only, and the lack of transportation for Roma to certain schools, preventing their attendance.

Child Abuse: Violence against children, particularly street and Romani children and undocumented migrants, remained a problem. The law prohibits corporal punishment and mistreatment of children, but government enforcement was generally ineffective. Welfare laws provide for treatment and prevention programs for abused and neglected children as well as for alternative family care or institutionalization. Government-run institutions were understaffed, however, and NGOs complained of insufficient places for all children who required alternate placement. In November the NGO Smile of a Child stated it received 629 child abuse reports involving 1,254 children during the first half of the year.

According to the UN Children's Fund and local NGOs, exploitation of Romani children by their parents was a problem. In the majority of cases, these children were forced to beg or sell small items on the streets. Government efforts to prevent this form of child exploitation were inadequate.

Early and Forced Marriage: The legal age for marriage is 18. While official statistics were unavailable, NGOs reported that child marriage was common in the Romani community, with Romani girls often marrying between ages 15 and 17 (some as early as 13) and Romani boys marrying between ages 15 and 20.

State-appointed muftis in Thrace, who may apply sharia law in family matters for the Muslim minority, noted that the marriage of children under age 15 was not allowed and marriages involving minors between ages 16 and 18 required a prosecutor's decision. There were a limited number of marriages of children under 18 in Athens and among the Muslim minority, performed with the permission of a prosecutor.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law does not prohibit FGM/C; there was no evidence that FGM/C was practiced in the country.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The legal age of consent for heterosexual sex is 15 and for sex between men, 17. The law does not specify an age of consent for sex between women. The law criminalizes sex with children under the age of 15. In cases where a victim is under 10, there is a mandatory sentence of at least 10 years' imprisonment; if the victim is between ages 10 and 13, up to 10 years' imprisonment. If the victim is between ages 13 and 15, the court determines the length of imprisonment. Amendments enacted in June prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children and child pornography and impose penalties if the crime was committed using information and communications technology accessed from the country. Authorities generally enforced the law with harsher penalties of up to life imprisonment and a fine of up to 500,000 euros (\$625,000). During the first half of the year, police reportedly investigated 40 internet child pornography cases.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's country-specific information at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/english/country/greece.html.

Anti-Semitism

Local Jewish leaders estimated the Jewish community consisted of approximately five thousand individuals. Anti-Semitic rhetoric remained a problem, particularly in the extremist press, social networking sites, and certain blogs. Members of the extremist Golden Dawn party publicly used Nazi salutes and made anti-Semitic statements. Parliament amended antiracism laws in September (see section 2.a.) that criminalize approval, trivialization, or malicious denial of the Holocaust and crimes of Nazism and increase penalties for violations. The Central Board of Jewish Communities also expressed concern about anti-Semitic attitudes among representatives of a number of political parties.

Anti-Semitic incidents included desecration of Jewish cemeteries in Thessaloniki and Larisa and anti-Semitic graffiti on the Athens Holocaust Memorial and at a law school in Thrace. Police reportedly responded quickly to reports of vandalism.

Some government officials condemned anti-Semitism and participated in Holocaust remembrance events.

On January 22, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs signed a memorandum of understanding with the Jewish Museum of Greece to promote the history and culture of Greek Jews, train educators on teaching the Holocaust, organize activities to promote sensitivity among citizens, and provide the museum's support to the ministry on these topics. On June 24-25, the museum organized, under the ministry's auspices, a Holocaust education seminar for primary and secondary school teachers on the island of Zakynthos.

On March 7, a Thessaloniki court imposed a 16-month suspended sentence and a 2,500 euro (\$3,125) fine on a doctor for violating the antiracism law by putting up a sign outside his office, stating in German, "Jews not welcome." In a search of his home, police found extremist propaganda and Nazi symbols. The doctor appealed the verdict.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's [*Trafficking in Persons Report*](#).

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, and access to health care and provides for other government services, such as transportation and education. NGOs and organizations for disability rights reported that government enforcement of these provisions was uneven.

Persons with disabilities, including children, continued to have poor access to buildings, transportation, and public areas. The law mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities as well as accessible transportation and ramps for sidewalks and public transportation vehicles. Disability rights advocates, however, claimed that 9 percent of public buildings were fully accessible and 40 percent were partly accessible. The law allows service animals to accompany blind individuals in all mass transit, but blind activists maintained they faced serious problems when attempting to use city transportation with their dogs. NGOs and other groups supporting rights for persons with disabilities criticized government health-care funding cuts for such persons, the lack of qualified personnel to provide health and educational support to children with disabilities, the lack of social welfare support for migrants with physical disabilities, and the lack of quality education and appropriate educational support services at all levels.

In 2013 the ombudsman handled 56 complaints related to persons with disabilities. In his 2013 antidiscrimination report, the ombudsman noted that the law was not completely compatible with the rights of children with disabilities in education and support services sectors. The report also noted that state media failed to implement a 2010 EU directive to adapt and provide services for deaf and blind persons. On February 10, the National Radio and Television Council issued a directive requiring that all noninformation-based television stations change their programs to accommodate the needs of the blind and the deaf.

Understaffed government offices responsible for issuing disability certificates led to waits of up to a year, during which applicants were unable to collect disability benefits. On March 4, the Ministry of Finance announced exemptions from salary and pension deductions for tax purposes for persons with serious disabilities. Advocates claimed the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities exceeded 90 percent. Under certain conditions the government exempted public sector employees

with disabilities or those having dependents with disabilities from public sector job cuts that were part of a wide-ranging structural reform program. On February 23, the deputy minister of labor, social security, and welfare announced that a 5 percent public sector hiring quota, introduced in a 1998 law but not enforced due to a suspension of hiring under current austerity measures, would be implemented for individuals with disabilities.

The Manpower Employment Organization, an independent agency of the Ministry of Labor, continued to offer EU- and state-funded programs to enhance the employability and entrepreneurship of individuals with disabilities, including subsidies for employers of such persons and subsidies for new businesses run by them.

Two newly established state-funded institutes for vocational training for blind and deaf students started classes at the end of April.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

While the constitution and law prohibit discrimination against members of minorities, Roma and other minority group members continued to face discrimination and harassment.

Although the government recognized an individual's right to self-identification, many individuals who defined themselves as members of a minority group found it difficult to express their identity freely and maintain their culture. A number of citizens identified themselves as Turks, Pomaks, Vlachs, Roma, Arvanites, or Macedonians, and some members of these groups unsuccessfully sought official government identification as minorities or linguistic minorities. Use of the terms *Tourkos* and *Tourkikos* (Turk and Turkish) is prohibited in the titles of organizations, although individuals may legally call themselves *Tourkos*. Government officials and courts denied requests by Slavic groups to use the term Macedonian in identifying themselves, stating that more than two million ethnically (and linguistically) Greek citizens also used the term Macedonian in their self-identification.

The government officially recognized a Muslim minority, as defined by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, consisting of approximately 120,000 persons descended from those Muslims residing in Thrace at the time of the treaty's signature and separate from ethnic Turkish, Pomak, and Romani communities. Some Pomaks and Roma claimed members of the Turkish-speaking community pressured them to deny the existence of a Pomak or Roma identity separate from a Turkish one and alleged that some Turkish-speaking community members provided monetary incentives to Pomak and Roma community members to self-identify as Turkish.

Roma continued to face widespread governmental and societal discrimination, social exclusion, and harassment, including alleged abuse or mistreatment while in police custody, regular police raids and searches of their neighborhoods, discrimination in employment, limited access to education, and segregated schooling. Approximately 70 Romani dwellings and camps, located mostly in unauthorized sites, often lacked running water, electricity, and waste removal. Municipal authorities occasionally demolished such sites or threatened forced evictions. NGOs and Romani community representatives reported that government efforts to address these problems and enforce the law were inconsistent, especially at the municipal level. The Greek Helsinki Monitor reported that authorities had not provided compensation to victims in three cases where police officers abused Roma or

evicted them illegally. The exclusion of longstanding Romani settlements from municipal planning ordinances prevented legal construction of schools and other infrastructure, such as sewage systems.

In his 2013 antidiscrimination report, the ombudsman reported that frequent police raids in Romani settlements unfairly linked the whole Romani community with criminal acts. In August after a Romani man killed an off-duty police officer during a May robbery in the Peloponnese, a local chamber of commerce reportedly disseminated an e-mail request, leaked to the press, urging its members to deny Roma access to retail stores to show respect for the memory of the officer.

In 2013 the ombudsman examined 54 discrimination cases submitted by Roma or their legal representatives, 18 from 2013 and 36 pending from previous years. The ombudsman also reported on 32 separate pending cases, mostly concerning housing problems. The ombudsman noted that municipal planning authorities levied disproportionate fines on Roma for establishing makeshift homes without permits. The ombudsman further concluded that in 255 reports of unauthorized construction by local Roma from Karditsa in central Greece in 2013, local municipal planning services did not follow proper procedures. Karditsa authorities informed the ombudsman that appeals were still pending in 185 of these cases.

Poor attendance, illiteracy, and high school dropout rates among Romani children were high. Authorities did not enforce the mandatory education law for Romani children; local officials often excluded Romani pupils from schools or sent them to Roma-only segregated schools. Government projects to attract Romani children to education had very limited success. The government operated 29 employment support centers throughout the country for Roma and other vulnerable populations.

A European Commission report on the implementation of the EU framework for national Roma-integration strategies noted that 38 percent of Romani women in the country reported having no medical insurance, compared with 7 percent of non-Romani women.

Local and international NGOs criticized authorities for continuing to conduct large-scale sweeps of public spaces and temporarily detaining individuals presumed to be undocumented migrants, allegedly based on their physical appearance. The UNHCR, local media, and NGOs continued to report racially motivated attacks on migrants by far-right groups, including members of Golden Dawn, whose members of parliament publicly expressed anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, and homophobic views.

On March 28, a court sentenced a man to 14 years and three months in prison for beating two Pakistani men and the stabbing of a Greek man who tried to intervene. Despite a recommendation from the prosecutor, the court did not consider racial motivation. On April 14, an Athens court handed down life sentences to two men for murdering a 27-year-old Pakistani in January 2013.

In April the Racist Violence Recording Network presented data from 2013 documenting 166 incidents of racially motivated violence, 75 of which were linked to extremist groups. Observers believed the actual number of incidents was higher. The network criticized law enforcement officials for inadequately investigating racial factors in such attacks.

The network also noted a significant decrease in incidents of racist violence following the fatal stabbing of a leftist musician by a self-professed Golden Dawn member in September 2013 and the government's subsequent arrest and investigation of Golden Dawn's leadership on charges ranging

from running a criminal organization to weapons charges. On October 16, the prosecutor responsible for the criminal investigation of Golden Dawn released a 700-page document recommending the indictment and trial of 70 party members, including all 18 parliamentary representatives. Of the original 78 defendants, 30 were in custody at year's end, and all the original Golden Dawn members of parliament were stripped of their parliamentary immunity from prosecution.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Some antidiscrimination laws do not specify sexual orientation or gender identity. Violence against LGBT individuals remained a problem, and societal discrimination and harassment were widespread. The legal age of consent for heterosexual sex is 15 and for sexual intercourse between men, 17. The law does not specify an age of consent for sex between women. The NGO Lesbian and Gay Community of Greece (OLKE) stated that the higher age of consent for gay men and the lack of any legal framework for lesbians constituted discrimination, and it criticized the laws against hate speech for not including sexual orientation or gender identity.

The only way to obtain a formal change of gender identity in identification documents was to undergo a gender reassignment operation, followed by an additional administrative legal process with a court.

In its 2013 report the Racist Violence Recording Network documented six victims of attacks based on sexual orientation. The network also recorded 16 victims of violence due to gender identity, the majority involving allegations of arbitrary detention of transgender women in Thessaloniki. While the law includes sexual orientation and gender identity as aggravating circumstances in hate crimes, crimes targeting sexual orientation or gender identity are not expressly included in the official mandate of offices combating racist violence. LGBT activists alleged that authorities were not motivated to investigate incidents of violence against LGBT individuals and criticized the absence of hate crimes training for police.

On January 13, a member of parliament reported in parliament on the harassment of a transgender student that continued despite the intervention of the Office of the Ombudsman and an educational program to combat homophobia organized by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The parliamentarian's complaint was referred to the ministry for a response.

In March the Greek Transgender Support Association (GTSA) criticized the exclusion of gender identity as a prohibited ground for discrimination in the workplace. The antiracism law passed September 9 (see section 2.a.) prohibits discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. The GTSA also criticized discrimination against transgender individuals in employment, which led to limited access to housing and medical care (see section 7.d.). According to an April 11 media report, police arrested a Thessaloniki teacher for making homophobic and threatening comments against one of his students. According to the media, his school took no disciplinary action against the teacher, and the outcome of his trial was pending at year's end.

The Athens metro declined to sell advertising space for the 10th annual Athens Pride parade in June, claiming that space was unavailable. For the third time a gay pride parade under the auspices of the local mayor took place in Thessaloniki in June. The Orthodox Citizens of Thessaloniki, a

conservative organization backed by the local orthodox metropolitan, gathered 19,500 signatures opposing the parade and held a demonstration that drew 200 persons. The metropolitan publicly described homosexuality as a "perversion" and the annual pride festival as a "disgrace."

In July the National Television and Radio Council fined a journalist 3,000 euros (\$3,750) for making homophobic comments during a March radio program, although the fine was imposed for "the use of low-quality language" rather than its homophobic substance.

Members of parliament, LGBT activists, and journalists reported that five separate attacks against LGBT individuals took place in Athens and Thessaloniki between June 29 and August 22. In four incidents perpetrators harassed and physically attacked victims. In one case police arrested and detained a suspect, and the case was pending trial. In another instance three political parties issued statements denouncing the attack. The fifth incident reportedly involved police, who allegedly intimidated, harassed, and used violence against two victims.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

While the law prohibits discrimination with respect to employment of HIV-positive individuals, societal discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS, including employment discrimination, remained a problem. Persons with HIV/AIDS were exempt from military service on medical grounds. There were no reports of dismissal from work due to HIV/AIDS during the year.

HIV-positive inmates in the country's only prison hospital refused medication for several days in February and April to protest overcrowded conditions, inadequate medical staff, and a lack of hygiene products. On February 14, the Ministry of Health created a special committee to focus on HIV among intravenous drug users, which convened for the first time on June 23. On February 26, the municipality of Athens abolished HIV tests as a prerequisite for social housing applications, such as for homeless shelters. Such requirements reportedly continued to exist for government homeless shelters elsewhere, although authorities did not enforce them.

On April 4, in response to a lawsuit filed by two women whom authorities arrested in 2012 on suspicion of being engaged in prostitution, detained, and forced to undergo HIV tests, a court ruled that their imprisonment was unjust and ordered that they receive 10 euros (\$12.50) compensation for each day spent in jail.

A Council of State ruling in cases brought by three NGOs, concerning regulations permitting the detention of individuals with an infectious disease, remained pending at year's end.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right of workers, with the exception of members of the military services, to form and join independent unions, conduct their activities without interference, and strike. The law does not allow trade unions in enterprises with fewer than 20 workers and places restrictions on labor arbitration mechanisms. The law also generally protects the right to bargain collectively but

restricts the right to bargain collectively on wages for persons under age 25. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and requires reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. The law allows company-level agreements to take precedence over sectoral-level collective agreements in the private sector. Civil servants negotiate and conclude collective agreements with the government on all topics except salaries.

There are some legal restrictions on strikes, including a mandatory notice of four days for public utility and transportation workers and 24 hours for private sector workers. The law mandates minimum staff levels during strikes affecting public services. Police have the right to organize and demonstrate but not to strike. The law also gives government authorities the right to commandeer services and prohibit strikes to deal with national emergencies through civil mobilization orders, including for workers in essential services. Anyone receiving a civil mobilization order is obliged to comply or face prison and unemployment. Since 2013 the government has invoked civil mobilization orders, thus prohibiting the right to strike for ship workers, secondary education teachers, Public Power Corporation employees, and employees of the metro, underground rail, and tram systems. In October the government ended a civil mobilization order for transportation employees after 20 months. On May 15, the Council of State rejected appeals of metro employees and secondary education teachers to end their continued mobilization.

Apart from the limitations to the right to strike for these sectors, the government generally protected the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining and effectively enforced applicable laws. Penalties for violations of laws on freedom of association and collective bargaining could include up to one year in prison and fines of up to 14,674 euros (\$18,340) but reportedly were insufficient to deter violations in all cases. Courts may declare a strike illegal for reasons including failure to respect internal authorization processes and secure minimum staff levels, failure to give adequate advance notice of the strike, or introduction of new demands during the course of the strike. Unions complained that this deterred some members from participating in strikes. Courts declared strikes illegal by air traffic controllers, civil servants, and electricity company employees on a few occasions. In general administrative and judicial procedures to resolve labor problems were subject to lengthy delays and appeals.

Cases of antiunion discrimination were reported. For instance, the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) and the Center of Athens Labor Unions criticized cases of what they viewed as illegal dismissals of active union members, and on May 5, the GSEE criticized a hotel company that asked employees to sign contract agreements stating they were not union members. On June 13, the hotel company reportedly withdrew the objectionable clause from its contracts.

The GSEE also raised concerns regarding limitations on collective bargaining. On January 15, the GSEE argued to the Council of Europe that government wage cuts and pension reductions implemented as part of public sector structural reforms supervised by the European Commission, European Central Bank, and IMF restricted labor rights, including undermining the right to collective bargaining.

On February 26, the minister of labor, social insurance, and welfare transferred the minister's right to approve mass dismissals in the private sector to a seven-member Supreme Labor Council chaired by the ministry's secretary general. On April 24, the Council of State ruled that civil servant positions were abolished unconstitutionally during the first wave of suspensions in the public sector early in the year and in late 2013.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor and provides additional protections for children, limiting their work hours and their work under certain conditions. Although several government entities, including the police antitrafficking unit, worked to prevent and eliminate labor trafficking, there were reports of forced labor of women, children, and men in the agricultural sector and of forced begging (also see section 7.c.). Penalties for violations included more than 10 years in prison and fines of up to 100,000 euros (\$125,000) but were not sufficient to deter violations.

On July 3, the media reported that approximately 800 foreign farm workers went on strike to protest delays in payment, inhumane living conditions, and racist treatment by the police. On July 30, a court acquitted a businessman and three foremen of labor trafficking related to an incident in April 2013 in which the foremen shot at least 35 migrant workers after they demanded unpaid wages. Police granted the 35 victims status as victims of trafficking. The court convicted one of the four defendants of causing grievous bodily harm and another of complicity, imposed suspended prison sentences of 14 years and 7 months and 8 years and 7 months, respectively. Both men appealed, and authorities freed them pending a new trial.

Also see the Department of State's [*Trafficking in Persons Report*](#).

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The minimum age for employment in the industrial sector is 15, with higher limits for some activities. The minimum age is 12 in family businesses, theaters, and cinemas. A presidential decree permits children age 15 or older to engage in hazardous work in certain circumstances.

The Labor Inspectorate is responsible for enforcing child labor laws, with penalties for violators ranging from fines to imprisonment. Employers generally observed child labor laws in the formal economy. Trade unions, however, alleged that enforcement was inadequate due to inspectorate understaffing. The government did not adequately protect exploited children.

Child labor was a problem in the informal economy. On June 11, the GSEE estimated the total number of minors working in the country to be 100,000. Younger family members often assisted families in agriculture, food service, and merchandising on at least a part-time basis. Family members compelled some children to beg, pickpocket, or sell merchandise on the street or trafficked them for the same purposes. The government and NGOs reported that the majority of such beggars were indigenous Roma or Bulgarian, Romanian, or Albanian Roma. In June the NGOs ARSIS and PRAKSIS estimated that more than 400 children were working or begging in the streets of Thessaloniki. There were reports that unaccompanied migrant children were particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation and worked mainly in the agriculture and, to a lesser extent, manufacturing sectors.

d. Discrimination with respect to Employment or Occupation

The law prohibits discrimination with respect to employment based on race, sex, gender, disability, sexual orientation, HIV-positive status, or social status. The government did not effectively enforce these laws and regulations.

Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV-positive status (see section 6). Discrimination occurred against migrant workers (see section 7.e.).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The national minimum wage in the private sector for persons age 25 or older was 26.18 euros (\$33) per day and 586.08 euros (\$733) per month. The minimum wage for persons under age 25 was 84 percent of the minimum wage of workers older than 25, or 22.83 euros (\$29) per day and 510.95 euros (\$640) per month. The government determines public sector salaries, including the minimum wage, without negotiating with civil servant unions. According to the country's national statistics agency, 34.6 percent of citizens, approximately 3.8 million individuals, lived on less than 60 percent of the national median income in 2013.

The maximum legal workweek is 40 hours. The law provides for at least one 24-hour rest period per week, mandates paid vacation of one month per year, and sets limits on the amount of overtime work. The law regarding overtime work requires premium pay, and employers must submit information to the Ministry of Employment and Social Security for authorization. Premium pay ranged from 20 to 75 percent of the daily wage, based on the total number of extra hours and the day (Sundays, holidays, nights, etc.). Employers also provided compensation time.

The law provides for minimum standards of occupational health and safety. The country has very complex safety and health legislation, consisting of 2,659 laws and presidential decrees. Workers have the right to lodge a confidential complaint with the Labor Inspectorate regarding hazardous working conditions and to remove themselves from such situations without jeopardizing their employment.

The Labor Inspectorate is responsible for enforcement of labor legislation. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security is responsible for all concerns regarding occupational safety and health at the national level. The General Directorate of Working Conditions and the Health and the Labor Inspectorate are the principal competent state authorities. The inspectorate's mandate includes the private and public sectors, except for domestic employees, mines, and merchant marine ships (which fall under the Ministries of Economy and Competitiveness, and Shipping and the Aegean). The GSEE characterized health and safety laws as satisfactory but stated that enforcement by the Labor Inspectorate was inadequate.

The number of inspectors entitled to conduct labor inspections reportedly exceeded 1,000, including the Labor Inspectorate personnel, staff of the Ministry of Employment, the Social Insurance Fund, and economic crimes division of the police. No data on the number of dedicated labor inspectors in the Labor Inspectorate were available. Trade unions and the media, however, alleged that enforcement was inadequate, especially in the shipping, tourism, and agricultural sectors, due to insufficient inspectorate staffing. Enforcement was also lacking among the approximately 180,000 small enterprises (employing 10 or fewer persons). In December the Ministry of Labor reported that from September 2013 to October 2014, authorities conducted inspections of 29,079 businesses in all sectors and fined businesses 60 million euros (\$62.5 million) for employing undeclared workers. Authorities verified the employment status of 157,085 workers and found 5751 undeclared workers. In May the ministry estimated that approximately 23 percent of employment was undeclared work. Penalties were not sufficient to deter violations. As of September 2013, fines for undeclared and

uninsured work were 10,550 euros (\$13,190) for each undeclared employee. Data issued in April from the Social Insurance Fund and its special insurance inspection service pointed out that social insurance did not cover approximately 38 percent of the workforce.

The GSEE's Institute of Labor data indicated that approximately one million individuals were in a state of undeclared employment, were typically paid lower wages without benefits, and worked full-time shifts despite being registered as part-time employees. On June 18, the institute reported that labor violations were rising, citing employee compensation in the form of supermarket coupons, meals, and hotel accommodations in lieu of wages; delays of up to one year of salary payments; payment of partial wages for full-time work; nonpayment of holiday pay; nonissuance of benefits; contracts for below-minimum-wage part-time work; and up to 30 consecutive days of work without weekends off. Such violations were mostly noted in the sectors of tourism, security, and housekeeping services.

The Labor Inspectorate estimated in September 2013 that more than 35 percent of migrants received salaries below the minimum and did not have social security coverage. While wages are officially the same for local and foreign workers, there were numerous reports that employers paid foreign workers below the minimum wage.