

SWEDEN 2019 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kingdom of Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a freely elected multiparty parliamentary form of government. Legislative authority rests in the unicameral parliament (Riksdag). Observers considered the general elections in September 2018 to be free and fair. In January a center-left coalition led by Stefan Lofven of the Social Democratic Party assumed office. The king is largely a symbolic head of state. The prime minister is the head of government and exercises executive authority.

The national police are responsible for law enforcement and general order within the country. The Security Service is responsible for national security related to terrorism, extremism, and espionage. The Ministry of Justice provides funding and letters of instruction for police activities, but it does not control how the police perform them. According to the constitution, all branches of the police are independent authorities. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

There were no reports of significant human rights abuses.

Authorities generally prosecuted officials who committed human rights abuses.

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

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

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

b. Disappearance

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

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

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

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

There were no significant reports regarding prison, detention center, or migrant detention facility conditions that raised human rights concerns.

Physical Conditions: There were no major concerns in prisons and detention centers regarding physical conditions or inmate abuse.

Administration: Authorities conducted proper investigations of credible allegations of mistreatment.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring by independent, nongovernmental observers, including the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT).

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention and provide for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court. The government generally observed these requirements.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires warrants based on evidence and issued by duly authorized officials for arrests. Police must file charges within six hours against persons detained for disturbing public order or considered dangerous and within 12 hours against those detained on other grounds. Police may hold a person six hours for questioning or as long as 12 hours if deemed necessary for the investigation, without a court order. After questioning, authorities must either arrest or release an individual, based on the level of suspicion. If a suspect is arrested, the prosecutor has 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances) to request continued detention. Authorities must arraign an arrested suspect within 48 hours and begin initial prosecution within two weeks unless there are extenuating circumstances. Authorities generally respected these requirements.

Although there is no system of bail, courts routinely released defendants pending trial unless authorities considered them dangerous, had reason to believe they

would tamper with witnesses or evidence, or believed the suspect might leave the country. Detainees may retain a lawyer of their choice. In criminal cases the government is obligated to provide an attorney, regardless of the defendant's financial situation. The law affords detainees prompt access to lawyers. A 2015 CPT report noted that access to legal counsel was at times delayed. A suspect has a right to legal representation when the prosecutor requests his detention beyond 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances).

Restrictive conditions for prisoners held in pretrial custody remained a problem, although the law includes the possibility of appealing a decision to impose specific restrictions to the court of appeals and ultimately to the Supreme Court. According to the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, of the 1,831 persons in pretrial custody in 2018, approximately 65 percent were under restrictions on mail delivery or exercise at the beginning of their custody. Authorities stated they took this step when detainees' contact with individuals outside the detention center could risk destroying evidence or changing witnesses' statements, thereby imperiling a continuing investigation. The government reimburses defendants found not guilty for damages suffered during pretrial detention.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality.

Trial Procedures

The constitution provides for the right to a fair and public trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right.

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence, have a right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them, and have a right to a fair, timely, public trial. Defendants may be present at their trial. Cases of a sensitive nature, including those involving children, rape, and national security, may be closed to the public. Defendants have the right to consult an attorney of their choice. In criminal cases the government is obligated to provide a defense attorney. Defendants generally have adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense, with free language interpretation as required, from the moment the defendant is charged through all appeals. Defendants may confront or question prosecution or plaintiff witnesses, and present witnesses and evidence on their own

behalf. They may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt. If convicted, defendants have the right to appeal.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals and organizations may seek civil remedies for human rights violations in the general court system. Citizens may appeal cases involving alleged violations of the European Convention on Human Rights by the government to the European Court of Human Rights.

Property Restitution

The government did not confiscate property belonging to Jews, Roma, or other groups targeted by Nazi Germany during the Holocaust era, and Jewish and human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported no disputes related to restitution.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and there were no reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Expression, Including for the Press

The constitution provides for freedom of expression, including for the press, and the government generally respected this right. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of expression, including for the press.

Freedom of Expression: The law criminalizes expression considered to be hate speech and prohibits threats or statements of contempt for a group or member of a group based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation. Penalties for hate speech range from fines to a maximum of four years

in prison. In addition, the country's courts have held that it is illegal to wear xenophobic symbols or racist paraphernalia or to display signs and banners with inflammatory symbols at rallies.

Press and Media, Including Online Media: Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction. The law criminalizing hate speech applies as well to print and broadcast media, the publication of books, and online newspapers and journals.

Nongovernmental Impact: Journalists were subjected to harassment and intimidation. In February a group of seven masked persons and one unmasked woman entered Swedish Television's (SVT) editorial board in Helsingborg to create publicity around a publicly unconfirmed message. No one was hurt, and the incident was reported to the police. The woman was charged with trespassing. The SVT reported it handled an average of 35 security threats daily. Threats ranged from social media attacks on journalists and information technology breaches to physical threats against employees.

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.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

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

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution provides for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

d. Freedom of Movement

The constitution and law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.

e. Internally Displaced Persons

Not applicable.

f. Protection of Refugees

Abuse of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons: Police reported several fires involving housing facilities or planned housing facilities for asylum. While most of the fires were accidents, some of the incidents were suspected to be arson.

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. Applicants may appeal unfavorable asylum decisions.

On May 24, the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights submitted an intervention to the European Court for Human Rights in the case of Dabo v. Sweden which argued that the right of family unification for refugees overrode the country's bureaucratically set deadlines for making such requests. The case continued at year's end.

Asylum seekers who have been denied residence are not entitled to asylum housing or a daily allowance, although many municipalities continued to support rejected asylum seekers through the social welfare system at the local level.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: In accordance with EU regulations, the government denied asylum to persons who had previously registered in another EU member state or in countries with which the government maintained reciprocal return agreements.

Durable Solutions: The government assisted in the voluntary return of rejected asylum seekers to their homes and authorized financial support for their repatriation in the amount of 30,000 kronor (\$3,170) per adult and 15,000 kronor

(\$1,590) per child, with a maximum of 75,000 kronor (\$7,930) per family. The country also participated in the European Reintegration Network that offered support for the reintegration of returning rejected asylum seekers.

Temporary Protection: The government also provided various forms of temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees. In 2018 it provided temporary protection to 517 persons.

g. Stateless Persons

According to UNHCR there were 31,819 stateless persons in the country at the end of December 2018. The large number of stateless persons was due to the influx of migrants and refugees and the birth of children to stateless parents who remained stateless until either one parent acquired citizenship or a special application for citizenship (available for stateless children under the age of five) was made. Most stateless persons came from the Middle East (Gaza and the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq) and Somalia.

Stateless persons who were granted permanent residence could obtain citizenship through the same naturalization process as other permanent residents. Gaining citizenship generally took four to eight years, depending on the individual's grounds for residency, ability to establish identity, and lack of a criminal record.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution provides citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Observers considered the general elections held in September 2018 to be free and fair.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit participation of women or members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires public officials and political parties to disclose their income and assets. The declarations are available to the public, and there are criminal and administrative sanctions for noncompliance.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses 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 country had nine national ombudsmen: four justice ombudsmen; the chancellor of justice; the children's ombudsman; the consumer ombudsman; the child and school student ombudsman; and the equality ombudsman with responsibility for ethnicity, gender, transsexual identity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disabilities. There were normally ombudsmen at the municipal level as well. The ombudsmen enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government or party interference. They had adequate resources, and observers considered them generally effective.

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

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, including spousal rape and domestic violence, is illegal, and the government enforced the law effectively. Penalties range from two to 10 years in prison.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention reported 7,958 cases of rape in 2018, an increase of approximately 8 percent compared with the previous year. Women and girls were victims in more than 93 percent of the cases. In approximately 17 percent of the cases, the abuser was convicted. Domestic violence remained a problem, and 11,522 cases were reported during 2018.

The law provides for the protection of survivors from contact with their abusers. When necessary, authorities helped survivors to protect their identities or to obtain new identities and homes. Both national and local governments helped fund volunteer groups that provided shelter and other assistance for abused women.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law prohibits FGM/C. It is also illegal to perform FGM/C on a Swedish citizen abroad. The government developed a national action plan to prevent FGM/C and work with victims. In 2018 the National Board of Health and Welfare estimated approximately 40,000 victims of FGM/C were living in Sweden. In 2018, 38 cases of genital mutilation were reported to the police; all FGM/C had taken place abroad. The national clinic specializing in victims of FGM/C reported an 80 percent increase in visitors over the past two years.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: Honor-related violence often involved immigrants from the Middle East or South Asia. The national support line for honor-related crime victims reported a significant increase of callers from approximately 20 per month in 2014 to 80 in 2018. Between January and September, the support line reported 44 cases of children being sent abroad for forced marriage. In August the Skane Court of Appeals sentenced a woman to six months in prison for unlawfully threatening to kill her 22-year-old son's 19-year-old girlfriend unless she had an abortion, since the pregnancy was contrary to the older woman's religion and culture.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment and provides for criminal penalties from a fine to up to two years in prison. The government generally enforced this law.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization.

Discrimination: Women have the same legal status and rights as men, including under family, religious, personal status, labor, property, nationality, and inheritance law. Women were underrepresented in high-ranking positions in both the public and the private sectors.

Gender-based discrimination with respect to access to credit, owning or managing a business, and access to education and housing is prohibited and was not commonly reported. The government enforced the laws effectively.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived from one's parents. The tax authority immediately registered in the national population register all children born in the country, regardless of their parents' citizenship or immigration or residency status in the country.

Child Abuse: The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically. Penalties for such range from a fine up to 10 years in prison. Cases of child abuse were reported. Authorities may remove abused children from their homes and place them in foster care. The children's ombudsman published a number of reports and publications for children and those working to protect children from abuse.

Early and Forced Marriage: The minimum age of marriage is 18, and it is illegal for anyone under 18 to marry. The government will legally recognize as valid the marriage of anyone who comes to the country after the age of 18, even if they were married abroad before the age of 18. The government does not recognize a foreign child marriage if either of the parties was a Swedish citizen or resident in Sweden at the time of marriage.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law criminalizes "contact with children under 15 for sexual purposes," including internet contact intended to lead to sexual assault. Penalties range from fines to one year in prison. The law prohibits the sale of children; penalties range from two to 10 years in prison. It also bans child pornography with penalties ranging from fines to six years in prison. Authorities enforced the law. The minimum age for consensual sex is 15.

Displaced Children: Stockholm police reported underage children, mainly from Morocco, Algeria, and other countries in North Africa, lived on the streets. Many of these children had sought asylum in the country but did not qualify and were at risk of removal. Social Services offered accommodation for children or foster families regardless of asylum status.

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 *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data/reported-cases.html>.

Anti-Semitism

Leaders of the Jewish community estimated there were 20,000 Jews in the country and approximately 6,000 registered members of Jewish congregations. The National Council for Crime Prevention (NCCP) registered 280 anti-Semitic crimes in 2018, compared with 182 in 2016. Anti-Semitic crimes included threats, verbal abuse, vandalism, graffiti, harassment in schools, and Holocaust denial. Anti-Semitic incidents were often associated with neo-Nazi movements and events in the Middle East and the actions of the Israeli government. Swedish Jews were often blamed for Israeli policies.

The most common forms of anti-Semitism were hate speech (45 percent of complaints), unlawful threats or harassment (34 percent), vandalism or graffiti (8 percent), and defamation (8 percent). Of the 182 investigations opened in 2016, 52 percent were dismissed, and 37 percent were directly dismissed without a formal investigation due to lack of evidence. Formal charges were brought in only 9 percent of the cases.

Police, politicians, media, and Jewish groups have stated that anti-Semitism has been especially prevalent in Malmo. The Simon Wiesenthal Center left in place its travel warning, first issued in 2010, regarding travel in southern Sweden, because Jews in Malmo could be “subject to anti-Semitic taunts and harassment.”

In February the Supreme Court overruled the appellate court’s decision not to expel a Palestinian man with “special refugee status” sentenced to two years in prison for attempting to firebomb the synagogue in Gothenburg in 2017. The man will serve his sentence and then be expelled. He is prohibited from returning to Sweden before 2028.

At a demonstration in Malmo on May 1 arranged by the Social Democratic Youth Association (SSU) demonstrators sang, “long life Palestine--destroy Zionism.” The demonstrators were reported for hate speech to police, who initiated an investigation. The SSU stated it understood the criticism and that it would stop singing the song.

On July 2, the Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR), a neo-Nazi group, held a meeting with a few participants in Visby during the annual Almedalen conference of the country’s political leaders. Later that day NMR members shouted denials of the Holocaust and attempted to block entrance into an exhibition featuring photographs of seven Holocaust survivors, which had been arranged by the

Fotografiska Museum in central Visby. Police dispersed the NMR and initiated an investigation into hate speech.

In August an imam was convicted of hate speech following a demonstration in central Helsingborg in 2017. The imam received a conditional sentence and fines. During a speech, given in Arabic, he called Jews “the progeny of monkeys and pigs.”

A Jewish neurosurgeon at New Karolinska Hospital (NKS) reported continuing anti-Semitic harassment stemming from his 2017 report that the hospital’s chief of neurosurgery subjected him and two other Jewish colleagues to anti-Semitic harassment and discrimination. An internal investigation reportedly concluded no harassment had taken place. Following widespread media condemnation, the NKS demoted the accused surgeon in June for “violating the hospital’s core values” but without acknowledging anti-Semitism. The equality ombudsman undertook three inquiries into the hospital’s actions concerning the Jewish doctor’s claims. On October 7, the daily *Svenska Dagbladet* reported the Simon Wiesenthal Center criticized the Karolinska Institute (KI), an associated medical university that awards the Nobel Prize for Medicine but is not legally part of NKS, for failing to introduce zero tolerance against anti-Semitism and other forms of racism. Mikael Odenberg, chairman of the KI board of directors, called the criticism “expected, but unfounded.”

A report published in December 2018 by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights found that more than 80 percent of Jewish-Swedes subjected to anti-Semitic harassment chose not to report the incident to the police because they believed nothing would be done about it. Approximately one-third of the more than 1,000 respondents said they avoided carrying Jewish symbols and were thinking about moving from the country for security reasons.

A web survey published in June by the polling institute Inizio found that more than half of the 1,001 respondents it interviewed believed anti-Semitism had increased over the previous five years. More than one-third experienced anti-Semitism in their everyday lives one or more times. More than two-thirds of the respondents were worried about anti-Semitism. The survey also showed that more than half of the country’s population indicated they knew about the Holocaust rather well. Only a small minority believed it was not important to remember the Holocaust.

For 2018 and 2019, the government allocated 22 million kronor (\$2.3 million) for grants to increase security for threatened places of worship and other parts of civil

society. All religious communities and civil society actors who believe they have been threatened may apply for the grant.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency continued to cooperate with religious communities on a national level to promote dialogue and prevent conflicts leading to anti-Semitic incidents. It continued to train police officers to detect hate crimes and visited high schools to raise awareness of such crimes and encourage more victims to report abuses. The government made information available in several languages for victims of hate crimes and provided interpreters to facilitate reporting. Police hate-crime officers operated throughout the country.

The Living History Forum is a public authority commissioned to address societal problems related to religious and ethnic tolerance, democracy, and human rights using the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as its starting point. The Forum sensitized the public, and particularly the young, to the need to respect the equal value of all persons, with a specific focus on teaching about the Holocaust as a means of fighting Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism.

The Media Council, a government agency whose primary task is to train minors to be conscious media users and to protect them from harmful media influences, initiated a No Hate Speech Movement campaign and worked to stop anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. The government allocated five million kronor (\$529,000) annually from 2018 to 2020 to strengthen opportunities for study visits to Holocaust memorial sites and allow more students and teachers to visit them.

Trafficking in Persons

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

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. The government effectively enforced these provisions and held accountable those responsible for violations.

Government regulations require new buildings and public facilities to be fully accessible. Observers reported cases of insufficient access to privately owned buildings used by the public, such as apartments, restaurants, and bars. Some means of public transportation remained inaccessible.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Societal discrimination and violence against immigrants and Roma continued to be problems.

Police registered reports of xenophobic crimes, some of which were linked to neo-Nazi or white supremacy ideology. Police investigated and the district attorney's office prosecuted race-related crimes. The Security Service estimated the total membership of violent extreme right-wing groups at 500 persons, strengthened by several hundred additional supporters who attend rallies. Neo-Nazi groups operated legally (see section 2.a.). The NMR was the largest white supremacy group with approximately 160 active members. The NMR registered as a political party and participated in the parliamentary and local elections in September 2018. It did not win any seats. During the year the NMR split. Eight neo-Nazis from the top leadership formed a new group called Nordisk Styrka (Nordic Strength). The new group opposes NMR's "liberalization" and wants to focus more on "the struggle." The NGO EXPO was concerned Nordisk Styrka would try to profile themselves on radical forms of violent activism.

The National Coordinator for Vulnerable EU Citizens estimated in February that 4,500-5,000 vulnerable EU citizens, the vast majority of whom were Roma from Romania and Bulgaria, resided in the country in abject poverty at any given time. As EU citizens, they are allowed to stay in the country without permission for up to three months, but authorities did not enforce this limit. Police stated that most Roma were in the country voluntarily but that there were cases of trafficking and forced begging. In December 2018 the Supreme Administrative Court determined that municipal bans on begging were compatible with the law. Since then, 11 municipalities issued begging bans. In some cases the municipality requires an official permit for persons looking to collect funds on city grounds.

Several districts in the country where a majority of the population was of immigrant origin or parentage suffered social segregation from the rest of the country. The result was lower levels of education, higher levels of unemployment, and separation from the country's mainstream culture mainly due to poor Swedish-language skills.

In January amendments to the Act on National Minorities and Minority Languages came into force that strengthen the basic protection of the languages and culture of the national minorities. Among other things, the amendments require

municipalities and county councils to adopt goals and guidelines for their minority policy work and provide members of national minorities the right to preschool and other educational activities and to elder care in their native languages.

Indigenous People

The approximately 20,000 Sami in the country are full citizens with the right to vote in elections and participate in the government, including as members of the country's parliament. They are not, however, represented as a group in parliament. A 31-member elected administrative authority called the Sami parliament (Sametinget) also represented Sami. The Sami parliament acts as an advisory body to the government and has limited decision-making powers in matters related to preserving the Sami culture, language, and schooling. The national parliament and government regulations govern the Sami parliament's operations.

Longstanding tensions between the Sami and the government over land and natural resources persisted, as did tensions between the Sami and private landowners over reindeer grazing rights. Certain Sami have grazing and fishing rights, depending on their tribal history.

In August the Historical Museum in Stockholm repatriated the remains of 25 Sami individuals to their original resting place in an old cemetery in Lycksele. The remains were excavated in an archaeological study in the 1950s. In addition to a ceremony, both the Lycksele municipality and the Swedish Church carried out educational efforts as part of a reconciliation process.

On September 3, the Supreme Court opened the hearings in the case of Girja's Sami village versus the state, a legal process started 10 years ago. The conflict centers around who holds the right to hunting and fishing in the Sami village area, the Sami village, or the state.

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

Antidiscrimination laws exist; apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals; and were enforced.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

In 2018 the NCCP identified 7,090 police reports with a hate crime motive, a majority with xenophobic motives.

In May the Staffanstorp municipal council voted to forbid veils, burqas and niqab among staff and students in preschools and schools up to grade six. The decision was appealed to the Administrative Court as a violation of religious freedom.

Police in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmo have democracy and anti-hate crime groups. A National Center for Preventing Violent Extremism under the auspices of the NCCP serves as a clearinghouse for information, best practices, and support of municipalities, agencies, and other actors.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The government effectively enforced the law and penalties were sufficient to deter violations. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and provides for protection of workers from being fired because of union activity. If a court finds a dismissal to be unlawful, the employee has the right to reinstatement.

Foreign companies may be exempt from collective bargaining, provided they meet minimum working conditions and levels of pay. Public-sector employees enjoy the right to strike, subject to limitations in the collective agreements protecting the public's immediate health and security. The government mediation service may also intervene to postpone a strike for up to 14 days for mediation. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) claimed the law restricts the rights of the country's trade unions to take industrial action on behalf of foreign workers in foreign companies operating in the country. The law allows unions to conduct their activities largely without interference. The government effectively enforced applicable laws. The Labor Court settles any dispute that affects the relationship between employers and employees. An employer organization, an employee organization, or an employer who has entered into a collective agreement on an individual basis may lodge claims. The Labor Court may impose prison sentences sufficient to deter violations. Administrative and judicial procedures were not subject to lengthy delays and appeals.

Workers and employers exercised all legal collective bargaining rights, which the government protected. The government and employers respected freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. There were few reports of antiunion discrimination. ITUC quoted the Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees that employee representatives and occupational safety and health (OSH) representatives were most affected by antiunion discrimination.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, including by children, and the government effectively enforced the law. Penalties of imprisonment were generally sufficient to deter violations. Forced labor involving trafficked men and women occurred in agriculture (including involving companies providing foreign labor for berry picking), construction, hospitality, domestic work, forced begging, and theft, and there were reports of forced begging involving trafficked children (see section 7.c.). In some cases employers or contractors providing labor seized the passports of workers and withheld their pay. Resources and inspections were adequate.

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

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits the worst forms of child labor. It permits full-time employment from the age of 16 under the supervision of local authorities. Employees younger than age 18 may work only during the daytime and under supervision. Children as young as 13 may work part time or perform light work with parental permission. The law limits the types of work children may or may not engage in. For instance, a child may not work with dangerous machinery or chemicals. A child may also not work alone or be responsible for handling cash transactions. The law considers illegal employment of a child in the labor market a civil rather than a criminal violation. According to the law, forcing a child to work may be treated as coercion, deprivation of liberty, or child abuse, and it carries a wide range of penalties, including fines and imprisonment. The government effectively implemented these laws and regulations. Penalties were sufficient to deter violations.

According to the National Method Support against Prostitution and Trafficking, an umbrella organization under the auspices of the Equality Agency, 19 girls and 38

boys from outside the country were subjected to trafficking in 2018. This was a decrease compared with previous years. The boys were mainly subjected to forced begging and forced petty theft. The girls were mainly subjected to sexual exploitation, forced begging, and child marriage. Police and social services reportedly acted promptly when cases were reported. The most common country of origin for trafficked children was Morocco.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The law prohibits discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The government effectively enforced applicable law, and penalties were sufficient to deter violations. The law requires equal pay for equal work. Discrimination in employment or occupation occurred. The equality ombudsman investigated complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. In 2018 the ombudsman received 807 complaints of discrimination in the labor market, of which 170 were related to gender. Workers with disabilities faced workplace access discrimination. Of the complaints of ethnic discrimination, 254 involved the labor market. Complaints may also be filed with the courts or with the employer. Labor unions generally mediated in cases filed with the employer.

In November 2018 the Center for Multidisciplinary Research on Racism at Uppsala University reported on discrimination against Afro-Swedes in the labor market. Afro-Swedes with a three-year post-secondary education have significantly lower salaries than the rest of the population with the same level of education. Afro-Swedes born in Sweden had an income level 50 percent below the average.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no national minimum wage law. Annual collective bargaining agreements set wages within industries, which were greater than the poverty income level. By regulation both foreign and domestic employers must offer conditions of employment on par with the country's collective agreements. Nonunion establishments generally observed these contracts as well.

The labor law and collective bargaining agreements regulate overtime and rest periods. The law allows a maximum of 200 hours of overtime annually. Collective agreements determined compensation for overtime, which could take the form of money or time off. The law requires a minimum period of 36 consecutive hours of rest, preferably on weekends, over a seven-day period.

OSH standards were appropriate. The responsibility for identifying unsafe situations remains with OSH experts and not the worker.

The Swedish Work Environment Authority, a government agency, effectively enforced these standards. During the year the government conducted more than 400 unannounced visits to check on work permits, taxes, and working environment regulations, in the process uncovering widespread violations. In 2018 the authority conducted approximately 27,000 labor dialogue visits of which 19,000 were labor inspections. The number of inspectors was sufficient to enforce the law. The government's increase of the authority's budget resulted in an increase in inspections. The Swedish Work Environment Authority reported 50 industrial accidents that caused death of workers in 2018.

The Swedish Work Environment Authority issued occupational health and safety regulations, and trained union stewards and safety ombudsmen whom government inspectors monitored. Safety ombudsmen have the authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and to call in an inspector. The authority effectively enforced these rules. An employer may be fined for violating work environment regulations. Penalties were sufficient to deter violations.

Many foreign seasonal workers, including berry pickers from Asia and Bulgaria, faced harsh working conditions, including the seizure of passports, withholding of pay, and poor living and working conditions. The guidelines of the Swedish Retail and Food Federation cover EU citizens who pick berries in the country but not workers from outside the EU. Under the guidelines berry pickers are to be informed that they have the right to sell their berries to all buyers and that nobody has the right to control their workhours. A foreign company providing berry pickers to a local company must also demonstrate how it expects to pay workers in case of limited work or a bad harvest. The guidelines task food and retail organizations and brokers with ensuring their implementation.