

MONTENEGRO 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montenegro is a mixed parliamentary and presidential republic with a multiparty political system. Voters choose both the president and the unicameral parliament through popular elections. The president nominates, and parliament approves, the prime minister. An observation mission of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe stated that the August 2020 parliamentary elections were overall transparent and efficient but highlighted that the ruling party gained an undue advantage through misuse of office and state resources and dominant media coverage, which undermined the quality of information available to voters. Milo Djukanovic, president of the Democratic Party of Socialists, was elected president in 2018 with nearly 54 percent of the vote in the first round for his second term as president. He had already served six terms as prime minister. Observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Parliament, and the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly noted the election proceeded in an orderly manner but had minor irregularities that did not affect the outcome. Despite opposition protests, elections were generally considered free and fair.

The National Police Force, which includes Border Police, is responsible for maintaining internal security. It is organized under the Police Administration within the Ministry of Interior and reports to the police director and, through the director, to the minister of interior and prime minister. The Armed Forces of Montenegro are responsible for external security and consist of an army, navy, and air force that are overseen by the Ministry of Defense. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. Members of the security forces committed some abuses.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: alleged torture by the government; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; serious restrictions on free expression; serious government corruption; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting persons with disabilities and members of national, racial, or ethnic minority groups; and crimes involving violence or threats

sometimes taking years. This led to an increase in the number of persons seeking recourse through alternative dispute resolution. Most disputes reviewed by the Agency for Peaceful Resolution of Labor Disputes involved accusations of government institutions violating laws on overtime, night work, holidays, social insurance contribution requirements, or other administrative regulations.

Occupational Safety and Health: The government set occupational health and safety standards that were current and appropriate for the main industries. Regulations require employers and supervisors to supply and enforce the use of safety equipment, conduct risk assessment analysis, and report any workplace deaths or serious injuries within 24 hours.

The Labor Inspectorate is responsible for enforcing wage, hour, and occupational health and safety laws. The number of labor inspectors was sufficient to enforce compliance in the formal economy. Resources, remediation efforts, and investigations were not adequate to successfully identify, enforce, or prevent violations in the informal economy. The Union of Free Trade Unions reported that approximately 40,000 persons were employed in the informal economy. Penalties for violations of occupational health and safety standards were generally commensurate with those for other similar crimes in the formal sector. Labor inspectors have the legal authority to close an establishment until it corrects violations or to fine owners who commit repeated violations, although they rarely exercised this authority. Labor inspectors have the authority to make unannounced inspections.

Employment in the construction, energy, wood-processing, transportation, and heavy industries presented the highest risk of injury. During the year two electricians working for the country's electricity distribution system died, one in Danilovgrad and one in Bar. The electric company confirmed they died on the job while repairing transmission lines. Press reports noted that falling from a significant height was the cause of death of three out of four construction workers in 2020; falling also caused at least a third of serious injuries on construction sites throughout the country. Most of the injuries were among foreign nationals. Common causes of injuries on construction sites were unsecured workstations at a height and lack of use of protective equipment. The most frequent reasons cited for unsafe working conditions were the lenient fines for violations of safety rules,

