

# Cyprus 2024 Human Rights Report

## Executive Summary

Note: The Government of the Republic of Cyprus was the only internationally recognized government on the island, but since 1974 the northern third of Cyprus was administered by Turkish Cypriots. This area proclaimed itself the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” in 1983. The United States did not recognize the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus;” Turkey (Türkiye) was the only country that did. A substantial number of Turkish troops remained on the island. A buffer zone, or “Green Line,” patrolled by a UN peacekeeping force, separated the two areas. This report outlines developments in both communities.

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in the Republic of Cyprus or the area administered by Turkish Cypriots during the year.

Significant human rights issues in the Republic of Cyprus included credible reports of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Although the Republic of Cyprus government took steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses, there were limited instances of impunity.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, significant human rights issues

included credible reports of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against human rights activists and journalists.

“Authorities” in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots rarely took credible steps or action to identify and punish “officials” who committed human rights abuses. There was evidence of widespread impunity.

## **Section 1. Life**

### **a. Extrajudicial Killings**

There were no reports of arbitrary or unlawful killings by or on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) government. The same was reported for the area administered by Turkish Cypriots.

In November 2023 a trial began of three prison guards and four inmates charged with the premeditated murder of prisoner Tansu Cidan in the ROC central prison in 2022. The trial continued at year’s end.

### **b. Coercion in Population Control**

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

A nongovernmental organization (NGO) reported police and the Social

Welfare Services did not respond to its calls to investigate suspicious cases of persons with intellectual disabilities being subjected to abortions while living in homes for persons with disabilities.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, there were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization by Turkish Cypriot “authorities.”

## **Section 2. Liberty**

### **a. Freedom of the Press**

ROC law provided for freedom of expression, including for the press and other media, and the government generally respected this right. An independent media, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of expression, including for media members.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, the “law” provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, but “authorities” did not respect this right.

ROC law criminalized incitement of hatred and violence based on race, color, religion, genealogical origin, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation. Such acts were punishable by up to five years’ imprisonment, a fine, or both.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, it was a criminal offense to insult the Turkish Cypriot “government” and “officials,” as well as the Turkish government and its officials. While individuals were sometimes able to criticize “authorities” publicly without reprisal, human rights defenders, NGOs, and press reported a marked increase in harassment and threats against critics of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) president,” “TRNC government,” Turkish military, Turkish interference into Turkish Cypriot affairs, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

The trial of Left Movement member Abdullah Korkmazhan and three others charged with “conspiracy to create a secret alliance” and insulting the “TRNC president” continued. Korkmazhan was released on bail and required to report to a “police” station weekly.

### **Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure**

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, “authorities” usually respected press and media freedom; however, at times they harassed, intimidated, or arrested journalists or otherwise obstructed their reporting. According to NGOs, journalists, and human rights defenders, Turkish Cypriot “authorities” advised some journalists not to criticize the Turkish president or the Turkish government. An NGO reported that due to perceived pressure and potential reaction from Turkey, some journalists did not express critical opinions and preferred to remain silent.

On August 29, “President” Ersin Tatar criticized a report published by the leftist newspaper *Yeniduzen* that alleged nonrecognition of the “TRNC” encouraged illicit activity, including human trafficking to the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. Tatar alleged the report damaged the honor of the “state” and called on the “government” and the “attorney general” to prepare legislative amendments to stop individuals, the press, or both from “belittling the state, state authorities, and insulting other people.”

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

ROC law penalized use of geographical names other than those included in *A Complete Gazetteer of Cyprus of 1987*, with offenses punishable by up to three years in prison, a fine, or both.

According to a human rights NGO, “authorities” in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots investigated several cases against journalists accused of writing with “malicious intent” and spreading “fear and concern,” among other charges.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, journalists could not interview or report on persons under jurisdiction of the “armed forces.” In August 2023 the “attorney general’s office” filed a suit in “court” against Ali Kismir for “humiliating the Turkish military.” Kismir was charged under the

“Military Crime and Penalties Law” for “insulting and defaming the morality of the TRNC security forces command” in an article he wrote in 2020.

Kismir’s trial began in December and continued at year’s end. He faced up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

## **b. Worker Rights**

### **Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining**

ROC law provided for workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. Both antiunion discrimination and dismissal for union activity were illegal.

The law required labor unions to register with the Registrar of Labor Unions within 30 days of their establishment. An agreement among the government, labor unions, and employers’ organizations established the procedure for dispute resolution for essential services personnel.

The government generally enforced applicable labor laws, and investigations were adequate in the formal sector. Penalties for violations, which occurred primarily in the informal sector, were less than those for similar civil rights violations. Violations rarely occurred in the formal sector, and penalties were regularly applied against violators.

The ROC government generally protected the right of unions to conduct their activities without interference, and employers generally respected the

right of workers to form and join independent unions and to bargain collectively. Although collective agreements were not legally binding, they were governed by a voluntary agreement between the government and employer organizations. Unions, employers, and employees effectively observed the terms of collective bargaining agreements. Workers covered by such agreements were employed predominantly in larger sectors of the economy, including construction, tourism, health care, and manufacturing.

There were isolated reports private-sector employers discouraged union activity due to the ROC's sporadic enforcement of labor regulations prohibiting antiunion discrimination and employers' implicit threat of arbitrary dismissal for union activities.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, the "law" protected the rights of workers, except members of the "police" and other Turkish Cypriot security forces, to form and join independent unions of their own choosing without prior authorization. The "law" allowed unions to conduct activities without interference and provided for the right to strike, with the provision a union notified "authorities" in writing when members planned to strike for longer than 24 hours. The "council of ministers" could prohibit a strike in any individual sector two times per year for up to 60 days if the strike affected the general health, security, or public order, or prevented the provision of essential services. There was no list of what constituted essential services.

The “law” provided for collective bargaining. The “ministry of labor” reported employers could not condition employment on membership or lack of membership in a union or participation in strikes. The “law” did not provide for reinstatement of workers fired for union activities. The “government” did not effectively enforce applicable “laws.”

Despite freedom of association and the right to engage in collective bargaining, very few private-sector workplaces were unionized, according to labor union representatives, who also stated employers would likely dismiss private-sector workers if they affected business operations while exercising their rights. Some companies pressured workers to join unions led or approved by the company. Officials of independent unions claimed “authorities” created public-sector unions as rivals to compete with and weaken independent unions.

Labor “authorities” did not effectively enforce labor “laws.” Penalties for violating labor “laws” were less than those for violating other “laws” involving the denial of civil rights and were sporadically enforced. Penalties were sometimes applied against violators.

Union members reported “police” sometimes maintained a heavy presence and took measures at demonstration areas to deter union members from engaging in union activity and peaceful protests. Union members also reported “police” habitually arrested some union members during peaceful demonstrations to intimidate other demonstrators. Some union members



were charged with “preventing the police from doing their job” or “causing damage to public property” because of a confrontation with “police.”

Teachers’ unions reported education authorities threatened “investigations” of recently appointed teachers if they participated in demonstrations the teachers’ unions held against “authorities” decision to require full-day instruction. Teachers’ unions also reported some of their members’ salaries were deducted by education “authorities” for participating in the protest.

Members of teachers’ unions reported the “ministry of education” disproportionately deducted wages of union members who participated in strikes, deducting wages for nearly double the hours that members went on strike. Union members reported they were preparing a “court” case to challenge the unfair deductions.

## **Forced or Compulsory Labor**

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

## **Acceptable Work Conditions**

### **Wage and Hour Laws**

ROC law provided for a national minimum wage. The minimum wage was more than the official estimate for the poverty income level. The national minimum wage did not apply to foreign domestic workers, workers in

agriculture and animal farming, and seafarers. The Ministry of Interior established a minimum wage for domestic workers that was less than the national minimum wage. Collective bargaining agreements covered workers in most occupations, including unskilled labor, and wages set in these agreements were significantly higher than the poverty level.

The legal maximum workweek was 48 hours, including overtime. The law did not require premium pay for overtime or mandatory rest periods. The law stipulated equal treatment for foreign and local workers. The law protected foreign domestic workers who filed a complaint with the Ministry of Labor from deportation until their cases were adjudicated.

Violations of wage, hour, or overtime laws occurred in the informal sector primarily in agriculture and construction. Domestic workers caring for elderly employers often worked beyond the legal maximum work week.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, the minimum monthly wage, according to labor unions, was below the poverty line. There was premium pay for overtime in the public sector; premium pay for overtime was required in the private sector but not frequently paid. The “law” prohibited compulsory overtime and provided for paid annual holidays.

The legal maximum workweek for both the public and private sectors was 40 hours, and the “law” provided for premium pay for overtime work in the public sector. There were limits to overtime in the health-care sector.

Private-sector labor “laws” were not enforced, and almost all private-sector employees worked beyond 40 hours per week without overtime pay or compensation.

## **Occupational Safety and Health**

Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards in the ROC were appropriate for the main industries, and safety and health experts were responsible for identifying unsafe situations. The government proactively identified unsafe conditions; however, workers could not always remove themselves from situations endangering health or safety without jeopardizing their employment. Inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions in most industries but were not allowed to inspect the working conditions of domestic workers in private households without a court warrant.

Violations of OSH standards were common in the agricultural sector and in construction.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, OSH standards were not appropriate for the main industries, and implementation of laws was insufficient. Multinational companies, however, reportedly met OSH standards. Workers could not remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety without jeopardizing their employment. Accommodations for migrant workers were substandard. “Authorities” did

not proactively identify unsafe conditions and rarely responded to workers' OSH complaints.

During the year, several instances of illness and injury highlighted the vulnerability of foreign workers to OSH hazards, mainly in the agricultural, construction, and industrial sectors.

### **Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement**

The government did not effectively enforce minimum wage and overtime laws. The Department of Labor Inspection was responsible for enforcing those laws. The penalties for violating wage and hour laws were commensurate with those for similar crimes, and penalties were sometimes applied against violators. The number of inspectors was insufficient to enforce compliance laws. Inspectors had the authority to conduct unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions. Labor unions reported inspectors were unable to enter private households employing foreign domestic workers to enforce wage, hour, and OSH laws. They also reported certain employers, mainly in construction and agriculture, exploited undocumented foreign workers by paying them very low wages and forcing them to work beyond the legal working hours.

The government enforced OSH laws satisfactorily in the formal sector. The Ministry of Labor, however, did not have sufficient inspectors to effectively enforce labor laws in the agricultural sector and in the informal economy, in

which most employees were irregular migrant workers. The penalties for failing to comply with OSH laws were commensurate with those for other similar crimes, such as fraud and negligence. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

The ombudsman oversaw cases submitted to the Department of Labor by foreign workers concerning the conditions of their employment. The ombudsman reported receiving some complaints by domestic workers related to their requests to change their employer and their living and working conditions.

For hazardous sectors that posed increased safety and health risks, the government conducted targeted inspections at workplaces and took enforcement action, including criminal prosecutions, against employers who failed to comply with OSH legislation.

The Department of Labor Inspection employed 23 full time inspectors responsible for inspecting workplaces for violations of OSH laws and for enforcing workers' right to remove themselves from hazardous workplace situations. In 2023 the government prosecuted 16 employers for OSH violations and imposed more than €340,000 (\$357,000) in fines for such violations. From January to July, the government prosecuted six employers for OSH violations and imposed a total of €218,000 (\$228,900) in fines.

According to the most recent data, in 2023, the informal sector in the ROC

comprised approximately 6 percent of the workforce, including irregular migrant workers. Authorities did not enforce labor laws effectively for informal-sector workers.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, the “ministry of labor” was responsible for enforcing wage, hour, and OSH standards, but it did not do so effectively. “Authorities” could conduct unannounced inspections or initiate sanctions, but according to unions and associations, inspections were not adequately or routinely carried out.

The number of inspectors in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots was not sufficient for enforcement. Penalties for noncompliance were less than those for similar crimes and were sometimes applied against violators.

“Authorities” commonly deported irregular migrant workers who reported violations. “Authorities” did not penalize violators, and inspections were not adequate to protect worker rights.

While OSH standards applied to all working conditions, “authorities” in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots did not provide social protections for workers in the informal economy. Economists estimated the size of the informal sector was 30-45 percent.

## **c. Disappearance and Abduction**

### **Disappearance**

There were no reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of the ROC government, and the same was reported for the area administered by Turkish Cypriots.

### **Prolonged Detention without Charges**

ROC law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government generally observed these requirements.

The same requirements were reportedly practiced in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots.

Authorities could not detain a person for more than one day unless a court granted an extension. Most periods of investigative detention did not exceed 10 days before the filing of formal charges. Authorities promptly informed detainees of the charges against them in a language they could understand.

There was a functioning system of bail. In general detainees had access to an attorney. The law permitted detainees to speak to their attorney at any time, including before and during interrogation by police. In May the

Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) reported, contrary to the law, most of the detained persons CPT delegation members interviewed during their 2023 visit stated they did not have legal representation during their initial questioning by police. Some detainees stated they had met a lawyer for the first time when they were brought before a judge, which was within 24 hours of their apprehension.

In criminal cases the state provided an attorney to indigent detainees who had court confirmation of their financial need. The ROC Bar Association provided pro bono legal services to financially stressed persons. The CPT reported many foreign detainees interviewed by its delegation complained they had signed a waiver of the right to legal assistance without properly understanding the document they signed.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, “laws” required a suspect be brought before a “judge” within 24 hours of arrest and charged with a crime, and those rights were respected. “Police” could hold detainees in pretrial detention for up to three months, but a “judge” needed to review the detention after the third day and every eight days thereafter. Turkish Cypriot “authorities” generally respected this right and usually informed detainees promptly of charges against them, although they often held individuals believed to have committed a violent offense for longer periods without charge.

An NGO reported foreigners with expired work or student permits were held



in detention prior to deportation for unreasonable periods of time without “court orders,” with some cases lasting for months.

Bail could be granted by the “courts” and was routinely used, but “courts” confiscated detainees’ passports pending trial. According to an NGO and a human rights attorney, during the detention review process, “officials” pressured detainees to sign confessions to be released on bail. The human rights attorney cited situations in which “police” used the threat of prolonged detention to induce detainees to plead guilty.

According to the “constitution,” indicted detainees and prisoners had the right to access legal representation. Turkish Cypriot “authorities” usually allowed detainees prompt access to family members and a lawyer of their choice, but NGOs reported cases in which “authorities” prevented detainees from seeing a lawyer. Turkish Cypriot “authorities” provided lawyers to the indigent in cases involving violent offenses. According to NGOs and human rights attorneys, “police” sometimes did not observe required legal protections, particularly at the time of arrest. Suspects who demanded the presence of a lawyer were sometimes physically intimidated or threatened with stiffer charges.

A lawyer reported a Turkish Cypriot “central prison” regulation prohibited sentenced individuals in solitary confinement from meeting with a lawyer without permission from the “prison director,” who was authorized to deny the visit without providing justification. “Authorities” reported inmates and

detainees in solitary confinement cells were allowed one meeting with their lawyer, with the knowledge of the “prison director,” during their time in the cell.

#### **d. Violations in Religious Freedom**

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

#### **e. Trafficking in Persons**

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

### **Section 3. Security of the Person**

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

The constitution and law of the ROC prohibited such practices, but there were reports government officials employed them.

The CPT May report on its 2023 visit to Cyprus described harsh material conditions and lack of structure and routine for prisoners in the Cyprus Prisons Department that amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment.

The CPT received allegations prison staff slapped prisoners and carried

wooden sticks to intimidate them, as well as used verbal abuse, including racist comments against foreign national prisoners. The CPT separately reported mistreatment and verbal abuse of detainees, including racist comments, at the time of apprehension and during questioning by police. The alleged mistreatment consisted of slapping, punches to the head, and, in one case, blows with a metal bar that resulted in a fractured arm.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, the “law” did not refer explicitly to torture, but it prohibited “police” mistreatment of detainees under the section of the “criminal code” covering assault, violence, and battery. There were reports “police” abused detainees.

NGOs reported “police” mistreatment and abuse of detainees at detention centers and the “central prison.” Turkish Cypriot NGOs reported a lack of security cameras at detention centers and “central prisons” allowed “police” officers and prison guards to abuse detainees with impunity. NGOs further reported security cameras at the old “central prison” did not feed directly to the “ministry of interior,” allowing for abuse because camera footage could be interrupted and altered.

The “attorney general’s office” in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots reported one complaint of battery or excessive use of force by “police” during the year. An investigation of the incident continued at year’s end. The “attorney general’s office” also reported investigation of two 2023 complaints of battery and use of excessive force against a “police” officer

and that criminal charges were filed against the accused “police” officer. The case had yet to be tried by year’s end.

## **b. Protection of Children**

### **Child Labor**

ROC law prohibited all the worst forms of child labor. The law prohibited employment of children, defined as persons younger than 15, except in specified circumstances, such as combined work and training programs for children who were at least age 14 or employment in cultural, artistic, sports, or advertising activities, subject to rules limiting work hours. The law prohibited night work and street trading by children.

ROC law permitted employment of adolescents, defined as persons ages 15-17, subject to rules limiting hours of employment and prohibiting work deemed harmful or dangerous. The law also prohibited employment of adolescents between midnight and 4 a.m. The minimum age for employment in industrial work was 16. Unaccompanied children and children of irregular migrants were especially vulnerable to forced labor. Romani children were also vulnerable to forced begging. The government effectively enforced the law, and penalties for violations were commensurate with those for other serious crimes. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

Ministry of Labor inspectors were responsible for enforcing child labor laws and did so effectively. Social Welfare Services and the Committee for the Rights of the Child had investigative authority for suspected cases of exploitation of children at work. There was no significant presence of the worst forms of child labor.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, the “law” prohibited all the worst forms of child labor. The minimum age for employment was 15, the final year of compulsory education. Employers could hire students ages 15-17 in apprentice positions under the supervision of the “ministry of education” and the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Small Shopkeepers and Artisans. Children ages 15-17 were restricted to no more than six hours of work per day and 30 hours per week. The “law” prohibited children ages 15-17 from working during mealtimes, at night, in heavy physical labor, and under dangerous conditions. The “law” also stipulated employers needed to update every six months written medical certification that the physical work done by children was suitable for children. Written parental consent was also required, and children were entitled to the hourly wage of a full-time employee.

“Authorities” did not report receiving complaints to the child labor hotline.

The “ministry of labor” was responsible for child labor “laws” and policies. Inspections were not sufficient, and penalties for violations were less than those for other serious crimes. Penalties were sometimes applied against

violators.

“Authorities” did not always effectively enforce the “laws,” and NGOs reported children of Turkish immigrants often worked alongside their families in the agricultural, manufacturing, automotive, and construction sectors. NGOs reported some children worked in dangerous conditions, such as on construction sites, and were subjected to heavy physical work despite “legal” prohibitions.

Child labor in the Turkish Cypriot urban informal economy was also a problem but to a lesser extent than in agriculture and manufacturing. In family-run businesses, it was common for children to work after school in shops and for young children to work on family farms. There was no significant presence of the worst forms of child labor.

## **Child Marriage**

The legal minimum age of marriage was 18 in the ROC, and the government effectively enforced the law. Persons ages 16 and 17 could marry, provided there were serious reasons justifying the marriage and with written consent from their legal guardians. A district court could authorize the marriage of persons ages 16 and 17 if the parents unjustifiably refused consent or in the absence of legal guardians.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, the minimum age of marriage was 18, and “authorities” effectively enforced the “law.” A “court” could

authorize marriages of persons ages 16 or 17 if they received parental consent.

### **c. Protection to Refugees**

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations reported difficulty in cooperating with the ROC government to provide protection and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, there was no specific domestic asylum “legislation”; however, “authorities” unilaterally adopted various international human rights conventions through domestic “legislation.”

Turkish Cypriot “authorities” at times cooperated with the Refugee Rights Association, the NGO implementing partner of UNHCR, and other humanitarian organizations to provide protection and assistance to refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

### **Provision of First Asylum**

ROC law provided for granting asylum or refugee status, and the government had a system for providing protection to refugees.

In April, following an increase in boat arrivals from Lebanon, the ROC suspended the processing of asylum applications by Syrian nationals.

Syrians entering the country either by boat or irregularly through the buffer

zone were no longer granted international protection. They were considered asylum seekers, allowed access to material reception conditions, and were subject to the same employment and health-care restrictions that applied to asylum seekers. The government increased the number of assisted voluntary returns and deportations of asylum seekers whose applications were rejected. The government reported the number of returns exceeded the number of new asylum applications for the first time. An NGO reported forced and voluntary returns were not independently monitored and that it received complaints from returnees regarding payment of cash incentives, which it stated the government used to promote voluntary returns.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, the “law” did not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and “authorities” did not have a system for providing protection to refugees. Instead, according to an NGO, asylum seekers arriving at legal entry points without a visa or entry permits were detained and deported to Turkey. The NGO also reported asylum seekers arriving irregularly were considered prohibited irregular migrants by Turkish Cypriot “authorities” and were placed in detention facilities to await deportation. An NGO reported admittance of these asylum seekers depended on the type of visa or permit held as well as their nationality. Some asylum seekers could enter the area administered by Turkish Cypriots with tourist visas and apply to the Refugee Rights Association for UNHCR protection certificates.



In March “authorities” in the area administrated by Turkish Cypriots amended the “Regulation on Residence Permits Law” to allow asylum seekers holding valid UNHCR protection certificates to be exempted from the obligation to obtain a residence “permit.” An NGO stated the amendment should facilitate the expansion of the rights and services available to the Persons of Concern in the area administrated by Turkish Cypriots.

Asylum-seeking persons who arrived irregularly were arrested, detained, and prosecuted. Furthermore, asylum seekers were subject to arrest, prosecution, and deportation when caught attempting to cross the “Green Line” irregularly to access the available asylum mechanism in the ROC. Some persons who arrived “regularly” but with a fear of persecution applied for a UNHCR “Person of Concern Certificate,” allowing them to remain and entitling them to basic rights in the area administrated by Turkish Cypriots.

## **Resettlement**

The ROC offered recognized refugee status to asylum seekers residing in the country. From January 1 to November 30, the government granted refugee status to 1,291 asylum seekers. In June the government established a Deputy Ministry of Migration and International Protection mandated to manage matters related to migration and asylum, including reception and accommodation, asylum procedures, and integration of refugees and recipients of international protection.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, persons who arrived “regularly” but expressed a fear of persecution could obtain the UNHCR Person of Concern Certificate, which allowed them to remain and entitled them to basic rights.

#### **d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement**

There were approximately 15,000 persons in the ROC’s Jewish community, which consisted of a small number of native Jewish Cypriots and a greater number of expatriate Jews, primarily from Israel, the United Kingdom, and Russia. Due to the conflict in Israel, Jewish community representatives reported an estimated 10,000 Jewish persons temporarily relocated to the ROC. There was an increase in antisemitic attacks during the year, and Jewish community representatives provided multiple reports of antisemitic incidents against members of the Jewish community in the ROC.

Representatives from the Jewish Community Center reported a dramatic increase after Hamas’ October 2023 attack on Israel in antisemitic attacks and incidents of graffiti vandalism in areas surrounding the synagogue in Larnaca. Representatives reported individuals and groups of individuals of Arab descent verbally attacked and threatened rabbis and Jewish community members in public places. During the Jewish holiday of Sukkot in October, a rabbi leaving the synagogue in Larnaca was threatened by an individual wielding a knife.

Following the Hamas attack, police posted a small contingent 24 hours a day outside the Israeli embassy in Nicosia. Police also assigned a 24-hour patrol detail outside the building hosting the Jewish Community Center and the synagogue in Larnaca.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, Turkish media reported on antisemitic conspiracy theories involving Jewish persons in Cyprus made by National Unity Party “parliamentarian” Yasemin Ozturk.

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