

# **Hungary 2024 Human Rights Report**

## **Executive Summary**

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

There were no credible reports of significant human rights abuses.

The government took credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses and identified areas in which it could improve.

## **Section 1. Life**

### **a. Extrajudicial Killings**

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

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

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

## Section 2. Liberty

### a. Freedom of the Press

The constitution and law provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, and the government generally respected this right. Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views. Government policy and practices, however, influenced public service and some private media outlets as well as the media market, which disadvantaged some kinds of media.

In February, the government established the Sovereignty Protection Office (SPO), which, with the assistance of law enforcement, targeted organizations with ties to foreign actors.

The law prohibited hate speech. Criminal law provided that any person who incited hatred against any national, ethnic, racial, religious, or certain other designated groups of the population could be prosecuted and convicted of a felony punishable by imprisonment for up to three years. The constitution included hate speech provisions to “protect the dignity of the Hungarian nation or of any national, ethnic, racial, or religious community.” The law prohibited public denial of, expression of doubt regarding, or minimization of the Holocaust, genocide, and other crimes of the National Socialist (Nazi) and communist regimes; such crimes were punishable by up to three years in prison. The media law also prohibited media content intended to incite

hatred or violence against specific minority or majority communities and their members. The law included a provision prohibiting media content that could instigate an act of terrorism.

Under the law, the government could impose a 25 percent tax on civil entities that contravened the government's policy and aided or promoted foreign immigration. There were no reports of any entity paying tax during the year and no reports of any tax office investigation or audit conducted to that effect.

On June 18, the SPO launched investigations against Transparency International Hungary and the watchdog nongovernmental organization Atlatszo in order to review whether they served the interests of a foreign lobbying network. By law, SPO had a mandate to collect information from organizations and individuals.

On October 28, the SPO released the report based on its review of Atlatszo that concluded that having accepted foreign funding, Atlatszo also engaged in activities aimed at influencing state and social decision-making processes and was part of a complex international network representing the interests of its financiers, causing significant political, economic, and social harm to the country.

## **Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police**

## **Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups.**

The law provided content regulations and standards for journalistic rights, ethics, and norms that were applicable to all media, including news portals and online publications. The law mandated public service media providers pursue balanced, accurate, detailed, objective, and responsible news and information services. Government advertising was a significant source of revenue for several outlets that some journalists reported led to self-censorship and outlets moderating criticism of the government.

The National Media and Info-Communications Authority (NMHH), subordinate to parliament, was the central state administrative body for regulating media. The mandate of the NMHH included overseeing the operation of broadcast and media markets, as well as “contributing to the execution of the government’s policy in the areas of frequency management and telecommunications.” The NMHH president, appointed by the president of the country at the recommendation of the prime minister, served as chair of the five-member Media Council, the decision-making body of the NMHH that supervised broadcast, cable, online, and print media content and spectrum management.

The Media Council, including the president of the NMHH, was elected by the parliament with a supermajority.

## **b. Worker Rights**

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

The labor code provided for the right of workers to form and join independent unions without previous authorization and conduct their activities without interference, although trade unions were required to register. The labor code prohibited any worker conduct that could jeopardize the employer's reputation or legitimate economic and organizational interests and explicitly provided for the possibility of restricting workers' personal rights in this regard, including their right to express an opinion during or outside of working hours.

Except for law enforcement and military personnel, prison guards, border guards, health-care workers, and firefighters, workers had the right to strike. In other spheres of the public sector, including education or government services, "minimum service" had to be maintained. The law permitted military and police unions to seek resolution of grievances in court. The law provided for collective bargaining. The law prohibited antiunion discrimination and provided for reinstatement of workers fired for union activity.

The government passed legislation in 2020 which prescribed that trade unions and the government needed to conclude an agreement for each planned strike. Several unions requested the International Labor

Organization to petition to the government, requesting it negotiate with air traffic controllers.

The government effectively enforced laws providing for freedom of association and collective bargaining in the business sphere, whereas in the public sphere, legislation limited exercising the right to strike. Penalties for violations were generally commensurate with those under other laws involving denials of civil rights. Penalties were sometimes applied against violators. In the public sector, administrative and judicial procedures to determine adequate services were sometimes subject to lengthy delays and appeals.

In the private sector, labor rights were generally respected and enforced. In the public sector, trade unions representing strategic sectors reported challenges including delays in legal proceedings, perceived constraints on strike actions, and isolated allegations of antiunion dismissals or contract nonrenewals. Legal remedies were available. While the law provided for reinstatement of workers fired for union activity, court proceedings on unfair dismissal cases sometimes took longer than one year to complete, and authorities did not always enforce court decisions.

## **Forced or Compulsory Labor**

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

## **Acceptable Work Conditions**

### **Wage and Hour Laws**

The law provided for a minimum wage, and the national minimum wage was above the poverty level. The law set the official workday at eight hours, although it could vary depending on industry. A 48-hour rest period was required during any seven-day work period. The regular workweek was 40 hours with premium pay for overtime. The labor code limited overtime to 400 hours per year. The code also provided for 10 paid annual national holidays. Overtime was calculated based on a three-year period, i.e., employees had a right to overtime pay only if, during a three-year period, they worked an average of more than 40 hours per week. Observers noted this provision could allow employers to avoid paying overtime for work in one year by requiring employees to work less than full time during both or one of the two other years if it lowered their average workweek during the entire three-year period to 40 hours or less.

### **Occupational Safety and Health**

Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were appropriate in the main industries, and OSH experts actively identified unsafe conditions and responded to complaints. In 2020, the government rewrote OSH standards to include pandemic protection measures, which remained in force.

Workers had the right to remove themselves from situations endangering

their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, and authorities effectively protected employees in such situations.

Most injuries occurred in the processing, manufacturing, transport and warehousing, retail, administration and education, health and social care, and construction sectors, in this order. Most deaths occurred in the construction, agriculture, transport, retail, processing, and manufacturing sectors. In-depth inspections were announced, whereas other inspections were based on an annual plan; reports of irregularities, spot checks or follow-up inspections were unannounced. Measures taken against violators included penalties, suspensions, bans, and prescriptions to eliminate irregularities.

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

The government effectively enforced wage, hour, and OSH laws, and penalties for violations were commensurate with those for other similar violations, such as fraud or negligence. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

The Labor and Employment Supervision Directorate of the Ministry for Economic Development was responsible for the enforcement of wage, hour, and OSH laws. The number of inspectors was sufficient to enforce compliance. According to the Ministry's Labor Protection Directorate, the number of inspectors was also sufficient. The inspectors had the authority



to make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions. Labor inspectors regularly provided consultations to employers and employees on safety and health standards. Labor laws also applied to foreign workers with work permits.

According to a World Bank 2024 estimate, the informal sector comprised 22.5 percent of the GDP. Labor and work safety standards applied to the informal economy but were not enforced.

## **c. Disappearance and Abduction**

### **Disappearance**

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

### **Prolonged Detention without Charges**

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

Police were obligated to take into “short-term arrest” individuals apprehended while committing a crime or subject to an arrest warrant. Police could take individuals suspected of a crime or a petty offense into

short-term arrest if they were unable or unwilling to identify themselves or were unaccompanied children suspected of having run away. Short-term arrests generally lasted less than eight hours but could last up to 12 hours in exceptional cases. Police could hold persons under “detention for the purposes of public safety” for 24 hours. Persons who absconded from probation could be detained for up to 72 hours, and police, a prosecutor, or a judge could order detention of suspects for 72 hours if there was a well-founded suspicion of an offense punishable by imprisonment. A pretrial detention motion had to be filed with a court prior to the lapse of the 72-hour period. A defendant could appeal a pretrial detention order.

Police were required to inform suspects of the charges against them at the beginning of the first interrogation, which needed to occur within 24 hours of detention. Authorities generally respected this right.

There was a functioning bail system. Representation by defense counsel was mandatory in the investigative phase if suspects faced a charge punishable by more than five years’ imprisonment; had restricted personal liberty; were deaf, blind, unable to speak, or had a mental disability; were unfamiliar with the Hungarian language or language of the procedure; were unable to defend themselves in person for any reason; were juveniles; or were indigent and requested appointment of a defense counsel. The court, prosecution, or investigating authority (police) could also order a defense counsel in certain cases. Local bar chambers assigned legal counsel to

defendants who lacked legal representation.

Police were required to inform suspects of their right to counsel before questioning them. Detainees were allowed prompt access to a lawyer of their choice, or one provided by the state. The law required police or the prosecutor to suspend interrogation and wait for up to two hours for an attorney to arrive if a suspect invoked this right. Some attorneys reported the right to an effective defense was violated in several cases. For example, in some instances detainees and their defense counsels were required to meet where security cameras could monitor them. If bar chamber-appointed attorneys refused the case or did not respond within one hour of appointment, authorities assigned the defense counsel. Investigative authorities were required to notify relatives of a detainee's short-term detention and location within eight hours, and the law permitted short-term detainees to notify relatives or others of their detention within eight hours unless the notification would jeopardize the investigation.

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

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

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

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at

[https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/.](https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/)

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

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

The constitution and law prohibited such practices, but there were reports government officials sometimes conducted acts of inhuman and degrading treatment and abuse.

On March 7, a Romani man was reportedly abducted and assaulted by villagers in Jaszkarajeno, then dumped in a well. The man described his ordeal in a live video, detailing how he was allegedly beaten, abused, and threatened with death before escaping the well. The attackers reportedly used racial slurs during the assault, telling the man, “You’re going to die, filthy Gypsy, we’ll bury you alive.” Local police arrested a suspect and were investigating the case as aggravated assault and violation of personal freedom.

### **b. Protection of Children**

#### **Child Labor**

The constitution prohibited all the worst forms of child labor. The law prohibited children younger than 16 from working, with the exception that

children ages 15 or 16 could work under certain circumstances as temporary workers during school vacations or could be employed to perform in cultural, artistic, sports, or advertising activities with parental consent. Children could not work night shifts or overtime or perform hard physical labor. The government performed spot checks and effectively enforced applicable laws; penalties were commensurate with those for analogous serious crimes. The Ministry of National Economy uncovered cases of child labor, and it applied penalties against violators.

## **Child Marriage**

The legal minimum age of marriage was 18, and it was effectively enforced by the government. The Social and Guardianship Office could authorize marriage for persons between ages 16 and 18; guardianship authorities considered whether a girl was pregnant in making their determination.

## **c. Protection to Refugees**

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations and provided it access to refugees and asylum seekers, apart from those held in detention under the aliens policing procedure.

## **Provision of First Asylum**

The law provided for the granting of asylum and established a procedure for

asylum seekers outside the country to apply for asylum.

Since 2020 asylum seekers were required to initially make a declaration of intent to apply for asylum at a Hungarian embassy in Serbia or Ukraine and were issued a special entry permit for the purpose of applying for international protection. The country's asylum authority had 60 days to examine the statement of intent and make a proposal to the embassy whether to issue the asylum seekers a special single-entry travel permit. If a permit was issued, asylum seekers had to arrive at the border within 30 days of issuance and, upon arrival, immediately identify themselves to border guards, who were required to present the asylum seekers to the asylum authority within 24 hours. Those not granted a special single-entry permit at one of the country's embassies could not request asylum. During this process, the asylum seeker was not entitled to accommodation, support services, or legal protection.

In order to protect the country's borders, combat illegal immigration, and protect its sovereignty, on September 6, the government extended by another six months the "crisis situation due to mass migration," which authorized police to automatically push back any third-country national intercepted for unlawfully entering or staying in the country. The "crisis situation due to mass migration" was first declared in certain counties near the Serbian border in 2015 and broadened to the whole country in 2016; it also authorized armed forces to assist police at the borders to prevent entry

of migrants and asylum seekers.

As a matter of policy, police facilitated the movement of all third-country nationals who did not have the right to remain in the country (e.g., through a valid visa or residence permit), regardless of where they were located, to the other side of the fence along the border with Serbia.

## **Resettlement**

Refugees were allowed to naturalize, but according to civil society organizations, applications of refugees and stateless persons were approved at a lower rate than those of other naturalization seekers.

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

The government made combating antisemitism a top priority, publicly emphasizing its welcoming and open environment for Jews. According to the 2022 census, 7,635 persons identified their religion as Judaism. According to estimates from the World Jewish Congress, the Jewish population numbered approximately 100,000 citizens in the country, primarily in Budapest.

According to data from the Action and Protection League (a Hungarian antisemitism monitor), antisemitic incidents increased to 128 in 2023 (the latest year for which data was available). The vast majority of the increase, however, was in acts of hate speech, with only a single physical attack

recorded.

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/international-religious-freedom-reports/>.