

India 2024 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

The ethnic conflict between majority Christian Kuki and predominantly Hindu Meitei groups in the northeastern state of Manipur continued to result in human rights abuses. Central government forces maintained a buffer zone between the two factions, but media reported there was continued conflict with 48 civilian deaths as of October 29. Police used stun guns and tear gas to break up student-led protests criticizing government failure to resolve the conflict. The government imposed an indefinite curfew in parts of the state following the protests. A Supreme Court-ordered panel overseeing the effectiveness of humanitarian relief and rehabilitation efforts in Manipur continued its work.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious abuses in a conflict; unlawful recruitment or use of children in armed conflict by Maoist nonstate groups; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, and censorship; and instances of coerced abortion or forced sterilization.

The government took minimal credible steps or action to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir, northeastern states, and Maoist terrorism-affected areas committed abuses, including killing 20 security personnel and 18 civilians in Jammu and Kashmir as of September 10. There were reports of communal violence. Authorities investigated and prosecuted terrorism-related abuses.

Section 1. Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were several reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year. Media reported there were staged killings of accused individuals at the hands of police or security forces as “encounter killings.” The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) reported 85 deaths during police encounters as of August.

There were allegations police or prison guards killed prisoners, and these killings were sometimes misclassified as suicides or deaths from natural causes. The NHRC reported 1,372 judicial custodial deaths as of August.

On March 31, police allegedly tortured Jitesh Kumar, which led to his death in police custody in Patna, Bihar. On June 28, media reported that the state-level Bihar Human Rights Commission directed the Bihar state government

to pay compensation of 1.5 million Indian Rupees (INR) (\$18,000) to Kumar's father, conduct a departmental enquiry against Patna's senior superintendent of police, and file contempt of court charges against the Patna police. There was no information available regarding whether the Bihar state government had taken these actions.

The country's armed forces, the security forces of individual states, and paramilitary forces engaged with terrorist groups in several northeastern states and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and with Maoist terrorists in the northern, central, and eastern parts of the country. The intensity of violence in these areas continued to decline. The army and security forces remained stationed in several Indian states, including the Northeast. There were reports government security forces committed extrajudicial killings in these areas. According to human rights groups, police sometimes refused to release bodies. Authorities did not require the armed forces to report custodial deaths to the NHRC. There were few investigations and prosecutions of human rights abuses arising from these situations.

There were some reports that government security forces killed civilians during operations against alleged terrorist organizations, which the government noted were unintended deaths.

The violent ethnic conflict in Manipur between the majority Meitei and minority Kuki communities that began in May 2023 continued even though the intensity and frequency of violence decreased since June 2023. In

interethnic clashes September 1-10, at least 10 persons were killed. On September 10, Indian authorities imposed an indefinite curfew in some parts of the state following student protests against the government's failure to resolve the conflict. The conflict had claimed more than 220 lives and displaced nearly 67,000 persons since it began in 2023. As of September, media reported 198 companies of Central Armed Police Forces, and 140 army columns had been deployed in the state.

In 2023, the Supreme Court criticized the failure of the Manipur state government to halt the violence and appointed a panel of retired judges to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the re-building of homes and places of worship. The Supreme Court re-affirmed the mandate of this panel in August. In December, the Supreme Court directed the panel to submit a report regarding rehabilitation and humanitarian efforts undertaken so far.

During an October 4 operation, press reported security officials in Chhattisgarh killed 31 Naxal (Maoist) insurgents, the highest daily casualty toll for insurgents in the state's history. As of October 7, 185 Naxalite insurgents, 15 security personnel, and 47 civilians were killed during the year. Tribal rights activists in Chhattisgarh alleged security officials often claimed that civilians killed were insurgents.

According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, which compiled data from news reports, there were 193 incidents of killing by alleged terrorists as of

September 8, which included 45 members of security forces. Security forces were reported to have killed 262 terrorists, insurgents, and extremists.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities. Some women, especially poor and lower-caste women, reportedly were pressured by their husbands and families to have tubal ligations or hysterectomies. The prevalence of this practice had regional disparities. The government provided monetary compensation for the wage loss, transportation costs, drugs and dressing, and follow-up visits to women accepting contraceptive methods, including voluntary sterilization. There were no formal restrictions on access to other forms of family planning; however, despite recent efforts to expand the range of contraceptive choices, voluntary sterilization remained the preferred method due to the costs and limited availability of alternative contraceptive choices.

Policies and guidelines that penalized families with more than two children were not widely enforced but remained in place in various states. Certain states maintained quotas for government jobs and subsidies for adults with no more than two children.

Many states promoted sterilization of women as a family planning method, which resulted in risky, substandard procedures and limited access to

nonpermanent methods. The central government did not have the authority to regulate state public health policies since health fell under the state purview. Authorities in some areas paid health workers and facilities a fixed amount for each sterilization procedure and imposed quotas for sterilizations of women. Care provided to women at public health facilities, particularly to those from marginalized and low-income groups, was often inadequate, and this contributed to a reluctance to seek treatment. Government initiatives resulted in a significant increase in institutional births, but there were reports health facilities continued to be overburdened, underequipped, and undersupplied.

In March, *The New York Times* reported women in the sugar harvesting sector of Maharashtra felt economic pressures to undergo hysterectomies. The article noted women viewed menstruation as a “nuisance” that kept them from earning wages. This, combined with the lack of proper sanitary facilities that often resulted in infection and the lack of reproductive health care, caused many women to undergo hysterectomies. Activists reported some women were misinformed by private medical professionals regarding their risk of cancer if they opted against the surgery, noting some recommended the procedure for profit.

According to the article, a government investigation found that of the 82,000 women sugarcane workers in Beed District, approximately 20 percent had undergone hysterectomies. Since early 2019, the Maharashtra

government enacted measures to address the high rate of hysterectomies in the region, including mandatory government approval for the procedure and health monitoring measures for women laborers in the sugar sector. State government officials reported the rate of hysterectomies had decreased by nearly 20 percent since 2019.

Section 2. Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

Individuals exercised freedom of expression by routinely criticizing the government publicly and privately via online platforms, television, radio, or print media, but there were numerous instances in which the government or actors considered close to the government allegedly pressured or harassed media outlets critical of the government. Media organizations and individual journalists who expressed views critical of the government were at times subjected to arrest, threats, or intimidation. There were also reports of nonstate actors including criminal groups perpetrating killings, violence, and intimidation against journalists critical of the government or for exposing corruption.

The law prohibited expression deemed to harm religious sentiments or provoke enmity among groups, and authorities invoked these provisions to restrict print media; broadcast media; digital media platforms, including streaming services; and publication or distribution of books. According to

Human Rights Watch's (HRW) *2024 World Report*, authorities intensified efforts to silence civil society activists, independent journalists, and political opponents through threats and by using politically motivated charges. The report also noted authorities continued to restrict free expression, peaceful assembly, and other rights in J&K.

Some nongovernmental organizations alleged sedition laws were used to curb freedom of expression. A new law, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which took effect in July, eliminated the charge of sedition. Nevertheless, one of the new charges for words or other communications that excited or attempted to excite secession, armed rebellion, separatist or subversive activities, encouraged feelings of separatist activities or endangered the sovereignty or unity and integrity of the country had penalties up to imprisonment for life. The law clarified that expressing disapproval of government actions with a view to obtain their alteration by lawful means would not constitute an offense.

In November 2023, Reuters reported Indian company Appin allegedly provided services to spy on opposition leaders, corporate competitors, lawyers, and wealthy individuals on behalf of customers worldwide. The company sued Reuters and the individual journalists for defamation in a Delhi district court and obtained a broadly worded interim injunction forcing Reuters to take down the story globally and to stop reporting on the company. Reuters appealed the order before the Delhi High Court during

the year and both the suit and appeal were pending at year's end.

Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure

During the year, HRW reported at least 34 journalists were attacked, five arrested, and at least 175 social media accounts and web links were blocked. Journalists and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) alleged that government officials at local and national levels intimidated media outlets through physical harassment and attacks, pressuring owners, targeting sponsors, encouraging frivolous lawsuits, blocking mobile telephones and the internet, and constraining freedom of movement. NGOs alleged criminal prosecutions and investigations were used to intimidate journalists critical of the government.

The Reporters Without Borders *2024 World Press Freedom Index* described the country as “one of the world’s most dangerous countries for the media,” with an average of three to four journalists killed in connection with their work every year by police, political activists, criminal groups, and local officials. According to this report, journalists who were critical of the government were routinely subjected to online harassment, intimidation, threats, and physical attacks, including from nonstate actors linked to political parties, as well as criminal prosecutions and arbitrary arrests. The report also stated reporters in J&K were often harassed by police and paramilitaries, with some being detained for several years in pretrial detention.

On May 13, journalist Ashutosh Srivastava was shot and killed by unidentified assailants near Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh. It was unclear whether the shooting was related to Srivastava's work as a journalist. Srivastava had previously requested police protection due to his reporting on cow slaughter.

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

The press and other media sometimes enjoyed editorial independence, but the government restricted content based on broad public and national interest provisions. Press and other media reportedly practiced self-censorship due to fear of government reprisals.

On February 12, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting ordered the news magazine *The Caravan* to take down a story regarding the alleged torture of civilians in J&K by the military, citing the Information Technology Act. The magazine was reportedly told that if it failed to take down the story from its website within 24 hours, the entire website would be taken down.

The government maintained a monopoly on AM radio stations, limiting broadcasting to the state-owned All India Radio, and restricted FM radio licenses to entertainment and educational content. State governments banned the import or sale of selected books that contained material

government officials deemed inflammatory or as having potential to provoke communal or religious tensions.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The law provided for the right to form and join unions and to bargain collectively, but there was no legal obligation for employers to recognize a union or engage in collective bargaining. There were instances of employers refusing to recognize unions. Unions were required to have at least 100 members in an enterprise or 10 percent of the workforce (whichever was less) to be recognized and had to account for two-thirds of the workforce to have standing to engage in collective bargaining. In Sikkim, trade union registration was subject to prior permission from the state government, and the public could raise objections to the registration of a union.

The law provided for the right to strike but placed restrictions on this right for some workers. The compulsory grievance redressal committee was a prerequisite to settling grievances through collective bargaining, in addition to other conciliation and grievance processes in law and collective agreements. In export-processing zones (EPZs), a 45-day notice was required before a strike because of the EPZs' designation as a "public utility." The law also allowed the government to ban strikes in government-owned enterprises and required arbitration in specified "essential

industries.” Definitions of essential industries varied from state to state.

The law prohibited antiunion discrimination and retribution for involvement in legal strikes and provided for reinstatement of employees fired for union activity. Union leaders generally operated free from threats and violence from the government and employers. Employers rarely refused to bargain with unions.

Enforcement of the law varied from state to state and from sector to sector. Enforcement was generally better in the larger, formal-sector industries. Authorities generally prosecuted and punished individuals responsible for intimidation or suppression of legitimate trade union activities in the industrial sector. Civil judicial procedures addressed abuses because the Trade Union Act did not specify penalties for such abuses. Penalties were commensurate with those for other laws involving the denial of civil rights, such as discrimination. Penalties were sometimes applied against violators.

Specialized labor courts adjudicated labor disputes, but there were long delays and a backlog of unresolved cases.

Employers generally respected freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively in the formal industrial sector but not in the larger, informal economy. Most union members worked in the formal sector, and trade unions represented a small number of agricultural and informal-sector workers. Membership-based organizations such as the Self-

Employed Women's Association successfully organized informal-sector workers and helped them to gain higher payment for their work or products. Gig and platform workers also created organizations such as the All India Gig Workers' Union, which demonstrated for increased wages and fairer ratings and response requirements for maintaining platform accounts during the year.

An estimated 80 percent of unionized workers were affiliated with one of the five major trade union federations. Unions were independent of the government, but four of the five major federations were associated with major political parties.

In September, police detained approximately 600 Samsung Electronics workers and union members for organizing a street protest, as a strike at the South Korean firm's home appliances plant in Tamil Nadu entered its fourth week. More than 1,000 workers had been protesting for higher wages and union recognition until the strike was called off on October 14.

State and local authorities sometimes impeded registration of unions, repressed independent union activity, and used their power to declare strikes illegal and force adjudication. Labor groups reported that some employers continued to refuse to recognize established unions, and some instead established "workers' committees" and employer-controlled unions to prevent independent unions from organizing. EPZs often employed workers on temporary contracts. Additionally, employee-only restrictions

on entry to the EPZs limited union organizers' access.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Person's Report* at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

State governments set minimum wages and hours of work. The daily minimum wage varied but was more than the official estimate of poverty level income. State governments set a separate minimum wage for agricultural workers.

The law mandated a maximum eight-hour workday and 48-hour work week. The law mandated a minimum rest period of 30 minutes after every four hours of work and premium pay for overtime, but it did not mandate paid holidays. The law prohibited compulsory overtime and limited the amount of overtime a worker could perform. The law was generally enforced in the organized sector, but enforcement was weak in the unorganized, informal sectors of the economy.

Occupational Safety and Health

The law mandated safe working conditions, which included provisions for

restrooms, cafeterias, medical facilities, and ventilation. Federal law set occupational safety and health (OSH) standards. State governments enforced additional state-specific regulations. OSH standards set by the government were appropriate for the main industries in the country.

Small, low-technology factories frequently exposed workers to hazardous working conditions. Undocumented foreign workers did not receive basic OSH protections. In many instances, workers could not remove themselves from situations that endangered their health or safety without jeopardizing their employment.

On March 20, U.S.-based Corporate Accountability Lab published a report documenting abusive and illegal working conditions, including indicators of forced labor, in India's shrimp industry, based on a three-year investigation in Andhra Pradesh. These included overcrowded and unsafe living conditions in factory dormitories with limited toilet and bathing facilities, underpayment of wages, bonded labor arrangements with contractors, falsification of factory audits and product certifications, and the use of uncertified peeling facilities to augment production. The Seafood Exporters Association of India claimed both the association and labor inspectors constantly monitored the labor conditions at all shrimp processing sites.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

State governments were responsible for enforcing minimum wage,

overtime, and OSH laws. The number of inspectors generally was insufficient to enforce labor law. Inspectors had the authority to conduct unannounced inspections, and inspection locations were chosen at random. Inspectors were allowed to issue fines or other sanctions for violations but only after providing the employer an initial warning and time to come into compliance. Enforcement of OSH standards was poor. Violations occurred frequently in the construction and chemical sectors. Penalties for violation of OSH standards were commensurate with those for crimes such as negligence. Penalties were sometimes applied against violators.

Manual scavenging – the practice of removing human excrement by hand from sewer lines or septic tanks – was banned by law, but human rights activists said the practice remained prevalent in many parts of the country.

As of July 31, the government reported 732 out of 766 districts reported themselves as manual scavenging-free. As per the data collected by a civil society organization, 43 manual scavengers died between February 1 and July 23. The International Labor Organization estimated that 347 manual scavengers died in the previous five years.

In July, the Maharashtra government informed the Bombay High Court that it had paid compensation to the families of 81 persons who died due to manual scavenging in the state since 1993. Local officials stated that all 36 districts in the state were now free of manual scavenging.

The Ministry of Labor and Employment *Annual Report* for 2021-22 estimated there were 380 million “unorganized workers,” defined as “a home-based worker, self-employed worker, or a wage worker in the unorganized sector.” Laws on wages, hours, and OSH standards did not apply to the large informal sector, and the government did not enforce labor laws in the unorganized sector. The law and regulations did not protect informal sector workers (industries and establishments that did not fall within the purview of the Factories Act), who made up an estimated 90 percent of the workforce. The e-shram portal of the Ministry of Labor and Employment registered more than 300 million unorganized workers who would be eligible for the government’s health and social security benefits.

On August 21, an explosion in one of the plants of pharmaceutical company Escientia Advanced Sciences near Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh killed at least 17 workers and injured 36 more. Press reported a chemical solvent leak triggered the accident. State government ordered a probe into the accident and compensation of 10 million INR (\$120,000) for the family of each of the dead, 5 million INR (\$60,000) for the seriously injured workers, and 2.5 million INR (\$30,000) for those who received minor injuries.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of

government authorities. There were allegations police failed to file required arrest reports for detained persons, resulting in unresolved disappearances. Police and government officials denied these claims.

In response to a July parliamentary inquiry, the government provided data from its National Crimes Records Bureau (NCRB) that showed that 9,765 women and girls were reported missing from their homes in J&K between 2019 and 2021, an increase from the 3,300 women and girls reported missing in J&K between 2016 and 2019.

On July 26, the UN's Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance reported the country had 444 outstanding cases of enforced disappearances as of May 10. Civil society groups called for an independent inquiry into the cases of enforced disappearances and unmarked mass graves in J&K and noted families of the missing experienced grief and social stigma.

Prolonged Detention without Charges

The 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, but there were numerous reports of arbitrary arrests and several instances where police used special laws to postpone judicial reviews of arrests. Reports noted that lengthy arbitrary detentions remained a significant problem due

to a lack of legal safeguards and overburdened and underresourced court systems. There were several detention laws that allowed for extended periods of custody without trial. The new criminal laws that came into effect during the year preserved a wide scope for authorities to claim seditious activity.

The law prohibited arbitrary arrest or detention; however, police reportedly arrested persons arbitrarily, particularly under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). There were reports of police detaining individuals for custodial interrogation without identifying themselves or providing arrest warrants. According to the most recent NCRB data, there were 1,005 arrests registered under the UAPA in 2022. Of these cases, police dismissed 979, or 97 percent of charges. The court convicted 39 cases, although they were all cases from previous years, and there were 3,177 trials pending at the end of 2022.

Pretrial detention was arbitrary and lengthy, sometimes exceeding the duration of the sentence given to those convicted. The NCRB reported that as of December 31, 2022, the country had 573,000 prisoners. Of these, 434,000 were pretrial detainees, or 75 percent of the total prison population. On February 6, Minister of State for Home Affairs Ajay Kumar Mishra informed the lower house of parliament there were 134,799 pretrial prisoners who had spent at least one year in jail as of December 31, 2022. NCRB data showed 70 percent of individuals awaiting trial spent more than

three months in jail before they could secure bail. Pretrial detention disproportionately affected poor and marginalized groups, who were often unable to post bail.

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/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Section 3. Security of the Person

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

The law prohibited such practices, but there were credible reports government officials sometimes employed them. The law did not permit authorities to admit coerced confessions into evidence, but the United Nations and NGOs reported authorities used torture to coerce confessions.

Authorities allegedly also used torture to extort money or as summary punishment. There were reports that police beatings resulted in custodial

deaths. According to HRW's annual *World Report*, police allegedly used torture, other mistreatment, and arbitrary detentions to obtain forced or false confessions. In some cases, police reportedly held suspects without registering their arrests and denied detainees access to sufficient food and water. The NHRC registered 107 deaths in police custody and 1,372 deaths in judicial custody in the first eight months of the year.

In April, media reported the army set up a court of inquiry to probe the deaths of three civilians in Poonch District of J&K in December 2023. The investigation found the men were tortured to death. Newspapers quoted unnamed army officials who noted disciplinary action including a court martial would be initiated against the involved army officials. In March, J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha handed over letters of appointment to the kin of the deceased civilians for government jobs. As of December 2, there were no reports of actions taken.

Police officers were also implicated in allegations of rape, including against victims in police custody. The government authorized the NHRC to investigate rape cases involving police officers. More than 270 cases of rape in police custody were registered between 2017 and 2022, according to NCRB data, with women's rights activists attributing such instances to a lack of sensitization and accountability within law enforcement systems.

NGOs claimed NHRC statistics undercounted the number of rapes committed in police custody, and some rape survivors were unwilling to

report crimes due to social stigma and fear of retribution if the perpetrator was a police officer or official. There were claims police officials also refused to register rape cases.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

See the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings/>.

Child Soldiers

On September 9, media reported that of the 29 Maoists killed in an April 16 police operation in Chhattisgarh, four were younger than 18 and three recently turned 18, having joined as children. On September 9, the outlet reported 153 Maoists were killed in nearly 40 “encounters” so far during the year, with the possibility of one or two children among the deceased. The outlet also reported three more instances of children killed in encounters during the year.

Child Marriage

The law set the legal age of marriage for women at 18 and men at 21 and empowered courts to annul early and forced marriages. Authorities did not consistently enforce the law or address the practice of rape survivors being

forced into marriage.

According to the NCRB, there were 1,002 cases of documented child marriages in 2022. Experts highlighted a significant gap between actual cases and those reported to agencies.

The law established a full-time child marriage prohibition officer in every state to prevent child marriage. These individuals had the power to intervene when a child marriage was taking place, document violations of the law, file charges against parents, remove children from dangerous situations, and deliver them to local child protection authorities.

In 2023-24, there was an 81 percent drop in child marriages across the state of Assam. According to UNICEF, as of 2023, the country overall had made progress towards ending child marriage, although it noted it remained home to the largest number of child brides worldwide. One in three of the world's child brides lived in the country. More than half of the girls and women in the country who married in childhood lived in five states: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh.

While the national law indicated the minimum age of marriage was 18 for women and 21 for men, in practice states allowed citizens to practice their own religious laws and customs. In February, Uttarakhand enacted a law to establish a uniform civil code (UCC) reiterating the national minimum age of marriage and banned all child marriage. The UCC took precedence over

religious laws and customs.

c. Protection to Refugees

Although the country did not have a specific law to govern policy toward refugees, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported it had close coordination with the government and other humanitarian organizations in providing minimal protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, and asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

UNHCR reported 273,000 refugees, asylum-seekers, and persons in refugee-like situations as of June, mostly from Burma, Sri Lanka, and the People's Republic of China.

Refugees in the country received the constitutional protections that were afforded to noncitizens.

In many cases, refugees and asylum seekers under UNHCR's mandate reported increased obstacles to regularizing their status through long-term visas and residence permits.

Since the February 2021 military coup in Burma, media reported more than 40,000 Burmese refugees had taken shelter in the country's northeastern states, primarily in Mizoram. The Burmese refugees belonged to the Chin-Zo tribe and had similar ethnic, cultural, and traditional ties with the Mizos

of Mizoram. Most of the refugees lived in relief camps and government buildings, while many others were accommodated by their relatives or stayed in rented houses. The Mizoram government, church bodies, Mizoram's largest voluntary body Young Mizo Association, NGOs, and many individuals provided food to refugees.

Provision of First Asylum

The law did not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government did not have a system for providing protection to refugees. Absent a legal framework, the government sometimes granted asylum on a situational basis on humanitarian grounds in accordance with international law. This approach resulted in varying standards of protection for different refugee and asylum-seeker groups. The government recognized refugees from Tibet and Sri Lanka and generally respected UNHCR decisions on refugee status determination for individuals from other countries.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

The Jewish community was estimated to comprise approximately 4,800 persons in 2020. There were no reports of antisemitic incidents.

e. Instances of Transnational Repression

There were reports the government engaged in transnational repression, including against members of diaspora populations, such as civil society

activists, human rights defenders, academics, and journalists.

Extraterritorial Killing, Kidnapping, or Violence or Threats of Violence

The government was alleged by other governments, diaspora communities, and human rights groups to have killed, or used violence or threats of violence, against individuals in other countries for reprisal.

In May, three Indian men were arrested in Canada in connection with the September 2023 politically motivated killing of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who advocated for the separation of the Indian state of Punjab and the creation of an independent Sikh state. He was designated a terrorist by the Indian government. The Canadian government alleged the men were part of a hit squad directed by the Indian government. The Indian government denied any involvement.

On October 14, at a press briefing, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated the Canadian government had “clear and compelling evidence that agents of the government of India engaged in and continue to engage in activities that pose a significant threat to public safety.” The Indian government denied these allegations.

On October 17, the U.S. Department of Justice published a press release announcing the filing of murder-for-hire and money laundering charges against Indian government employee Vikash Yadav in connection with his

role in directing a plot to kill Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a U.S. citizen, in New York City. This plot was subsequently foiled by U.S. authorities.

Yadav's alleged coconspirator, Nikhil Gupta, was previously charged and extradited to the United States for the charges.

Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, or Coercion

Civil society organizations, members of diaspora populations, academics, and journalists advocating, researching, or reporting on human rights reported experiencing threats, harassment, arbitrary surveillance, visa denials, and coercion. They attributed these acts to the government or individuals alleged to be connected to the government. They reported that some of their families, friends, or associates in India also experienced harassment and pressure from local authorities because of their human rights activities. They noted these activities created a chilling effect on their advocacy efforts and led to self-censorship, due to fear of reprisals against themselves and their families in India.

Civil society activists noted the blocking of social media accounts in India, takedown requests, and proliferation of conspiracy theories as examples of transnational repression against diaspora activists working to advance human rights and religious freedom.

In December 2023, *The Washington Post* reported that an organization called Disinfo Lab was allegedly being run by an Indian intelligence officer to

research and discredit foreign critics of the government. The article noted the Disinfo Lab combined fact-based research with unsubstantiated claims to paint individuals, including Indian American rights activists, as part of a “conspiracy” against the country.

Misuse of International Law Enforcement Tools

A February media report on abuses of Interpol protocols interviewed a lawyer who claimed to have worked to block several “blue notices” and passport database entries from India that violated Interpol rules. Blue notices were used to collect information regarding a person of interest in a crime. The article noted the Indian government described the accusations of abuse of Interpol international law enforcement tools as “vague and unsubstantiated.”

Efforts to Control Mobility

There were reports the government attempted to control mobility to exact reprisal against critics abroad, including revoking benefits accrued to them via travel documents.

In its *2024 Special Report on the Freedom of Movement*, Freedom House noted that in addition to passports, the government had allegedly targeted other forms of travel documents, including revoking Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) statuses. The OCI status provided persons of Indian origin or foreigners married to Indian citizens certain benefits, including visa-free

entry and work authorization. The report noted authorities revoked OCI status for at least 102 OCI holders between 2014 and May 2023, including for journalists, academics, and activists. Individuals whose OCI status was withdrawn could also face an entry ban.

In February, a United Kingdom citizen of Indian origin and professor at the University of Westminster Nitasha Kaul was invited by the Karnataka State Congress Party to participate as a speaker at a February 24-25 conference titled, “Conference on the Constitution.” Upon arrival at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru, Kaul was told by security officials she was denied entry despite carrying a valid OCI card. Kaul reported on social media she was held for 24 hours in a cell at the airport before being sent back to the United Kingdom without being provided an explanation in writing or orally. The Ministry of External Affairs stated the entry of foreign nationals into the country was a “sovereign decision.”