

Norway 2023 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

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

There were no credible reports of significant human rights abuses.

The government had mechanisms in place to identify and punish officials who may have committed human rights abuses.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person

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

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

b. Disappearance

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

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

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

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions were good with high material standards. Prisoners had access to services and activities such as health care, education, job training, and physical exercise. The parliamentary ombud and equality and antidiscrimination ombud expressed concerns over conditions in two women's prisons, Ullersmo and Bredtveit, involving the use of isolation and medical restraints.

Administration: Authorities conducted proper investigations of credible allegations of mistreatment. There were no significant reports regarding prison or detention center conditions that raised human rights concerns. The parliamentary ombud filed a pleading to the Borgarting Appellate Court expressing concerns over conditions at the Trandum detention center where asylum seekers whose asylum claims had been denied were detained prior to deportation. The ombud protested the detention of noncriminals and called practices at the center, which included routine and intrusive body searches, and the use of isolation for persons who were in crisis or with mental health challenges, as “ongoing human rights violations.” The

criticism was echoed by nongovernmental organization (NGO) Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS).

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted visits, including unannounced visits, by independent human rights observers.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

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.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Detainees needed to be informed of charges against them immediately after an arrest, and to detain suspects, the prosecutor needed to arraign them within three days after arrest. The arraigning judge determined whether the accused should be held in custody or released pending trial. There was a bail system, but it was rarely utilized. Officials routinely released defendants, including nonresident foreigners, accused of minor crimes pending trial. Defendants accused of serious or violent crimes usually remained in custody until trial.

By law, authorities provided detainees access to a lawyer of their choice before interrogation or, if the requested lawyer was unavailable, to an

attorney appointed by the government. The government paid the attorney fees in all cases. Criminal detainees benefited from legal aid if the period of police custody was expected to last more than 24 hours (for adults) or 12 hours (for juveniles). Consequently, because most questioning and detention took place within 24 hours, it was not uncommon for criminal suspects to be subjected to police questioning without a lawyer present.

The law mandated detainees be transferred from temporary police holding cells to a regular prison cell within 48 hours. The law provided that a court needed to determine whether and for how long a detainee could be held in solitary confinement during pretrial detention. There were no reports these rights were not respected.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

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

Trial Procedures

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

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

f. Transnational Repression

Not applicable.

g. Property Seizure and Restitution

Not applicable.

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

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

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media

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. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of expression, including for media members.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

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

c. Freedom of Religion

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

d. Freedom of Movement and the Right to Leave the Country

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

e. Protection of Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner

for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

Access to Asylum: The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government had established a system for providing protection to refugees.

NOAS was critical of the perceived lack of openness and transparency in the Immigration Appeals Board, an entity under the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. It noted the board's strict criteria to hear cases that resulted in few hearings granted with the appeals board in 2022, particularly family reunification applicants. Applicants could not contest a final decision by the appeals board, but the appeals board could make a final decision based on an issue not originally in question, which removed the applicant's opportunity to respond to the board's grounds for rejecting the case. NOAS reported most asylum applicants were granted protection in the initial review.

Access to Basic Services: NOAS criticized the lack of routine access to health care and other fundamental human rights for the approximately 50 paperless and irregular migrants present in the country. Such individuals included, for example, those who were not able to return to their home countries because their governments refused to accept them, issue travel documents, or both. These individuals could access the public health system

only when they required acute medical attention.

Durable Solutions: The government offered resettlement for refugees in cooperation with UNHCR. The government's Directorate of Immigration had several programs to settle refugees permanently in the country. Through the International Organization for Migration, the government assisted the return of unsuccessful asylum seekers to their countries of origin through voluntary programs offering financial and logistical support for repatriation. Identity documents issued by either the Norwegian or the returnee's government were required to use this program. The government routinely offered migrants cash support in addition to airfare to encourage persons with rejected asylum claims to leave the country voluntarily.

Individuals granted refugee status could apply for citizenship when they met the legal requirements, which included a minimum length of residence of seven of the previous 10 years, completion of an integration course on Norwegian society, and successfully passing a language test.

Temporary Protection: The government provided temporary humanitarian protection to individuals who could not otherwise qualify as refugees. As of October 5, the government granted temporary protection to 56,980 Ukrainians. Permits for temporary protection were renewable and could become permanent.

f. Status and Treatment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Not applicable.

g. Stateless Persons

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Inclusion, an estimated 1,600 stateless persons lived in the country as of October; they were not counted as refugees. The Directorate of Immigration provided for stateless persons to apply for asylum. The birth register did not register the father of stateless persons born in the country on birth certificates. According to Norwegian law, a person automatically became a citizen by birth if one of the parents was a citizen. Children born to stateless persons were as such not recognized as Norwegian and were considered stateless persons. If the parents were granted permanent residency in the country, the stateless child could be granted citizenship within a year after birth.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

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

Elections and Political Participation

Abuses or Irregularities in Recent Elections: Observers considered the parliamentary elections held in September 2021 to be free and fair.

Section 4. Corruption in Government

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

Section 5. Governmental Posture Towards

International and Nongovernmental Monitoring and Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Civil society and NGOs generally worked very closely with the government, shared similar agendas, received government grants, and in some cases managed government funds. Government officials and NGOs were mindful of their well-established relationships and took steps to ensure independence and avoid the appearance of government oversight.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The country had ombuds for public

administration (the parliamentary ombud); children, equality, and discrimination (the equality and antidiscrimination ombud); and health-care patients. All ombuds enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government interference. Although the ombuds' recommendations were not legally binding, authorities usually complied with them.

The National Human Rights Institution, an independent body funded by parliament, submitted an annual report to parliament on human rights in the country.

Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalized rape of a person, regardless of gender, including spousal rape, and the government generally enforced the law effectively. The penalty for rape was up to 21 years in prison depending on the severity of the assault, age of the victim, and circumstances of the crime. Guidelines for rape cases without aggravating circumstances called for sentences of up to four years. The law provided penalties of up to six years in prison for domestic violence and up to 21 years for aggravated rape. There were instances of gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence.

Public and private organizations operated 43 government-funded shelters

and managed five 24-hour crisis hotlines. Government funding for shelters was managed through local municipalities. The Crisis Center Secretariat operated 22 of the 43 shelters and noted local municipalities routinely faced budget shortfalls and were unable to provide shelters with the resources needed.

Discrimination: The law provided for the same legal status and rights for women as for men, including under family, religious, personal status, and nationality laws, as well as laws related to labor, property, inheritance, employment, access to credit, and owning or managing businesses or property. The government enforced the law effectively. Publicly listed companies, including those with as few as 20 employees, largely complied with the law requiring 40 percent of the members of boards of directors to be women.

Although women had the same legal status as men, they experienced discrimination in terms of gaining employment, as well as discrimination in the workplace itself.

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

The government provided access to sexual and reproductive health services for sexual violence survivors, including postexposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception.

Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination

Racial profiling and violence and discrimination against members of racial or ethnic minority groups were against the law, but the government did not always enforce these laws effectively. Members of the Nordic Resistance Movement, members of Stop the Islamization of Norway, and neo-Nazis interrupted the release of a report on racism by the Center against Racism during the August 14-18 Arendalsuka conference, despite the Center against Racism asking police to prevent their attendance. The center reported police only searched the protesters after the center insisted, and protesters entered the conference with weapons even after the search. Police also failed to investigate violent online threats against a representative of the Center against Racism. Authorities did not keep records relating to the stop and search of members of vulnerable groups. NGOs reported complaints of police profiling of members of ethnic and racial minority groups, particularly young men. Discrimination against immigrants, including asylum seekers and irregular migrants, and ethnic minorities was a problem. As of October, the Antidiscrimination Tribunal received 91 reports of ethnic discrimination. Ethnic discrimination occurred in employment and housing.

NGOs and research institutes, including the Center against Racism, reported a rise in hate speech on the internet against ethnic minorities. In addition to the Sami Indigenous persons, five ethnically non-Norwegian groups with long-standing attachment to the country had a special protected status

under the law: Kvens/Norwegian Finns, Jews, Forest Finns, Roma, and the Romani/Tater community (a distinct group of travelers who emigrated to Norway and Sweden in the 1500s).

Indigenous Peoples

There was no official registry of Sami in the country. In addition to participating freely in the national political process, the Sami elected their own parliament, the Samediggi, which exercised certain administrative and financial powers according to the law. Members of the Sami parliament represented their constituents in international fora and organizations, including the Arctic Council and the United Nations. The constitution provided a right for the Sami to safeguard and develop their language, culture, and community. NGOs and Sami officials expressed concern over Sami children's lack of access to Sami language education due to a dearth of qualified teachers.

In 2021 the Supreme Court ruled the government violated the rights of the Sami community under the 2005 Consultations Agreement by permitting the construction of wind farms on Sami land. In February and October, demonstrators and Sami activists protested the government's failure to address the Supreme Court's ruling, blocked access to several ministries, and conducted a sit-in at parliament.

Children

Child Abuse: The law criminalized child abuse, and the government generally enforced the law.

In September, the European Court of Human Rights completed review of and found against the government in three child protection cases involving nine families, one for separating children from their parents and two for forced adoption.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: The minimum legal age for marriage in the country was 18 for both women and men, and the government effectively enforced this law.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: Commercial sexual exploitation, sale, grooming, or using children younger than 18 for commercial exploitation, including child sex trafficking, was illegal, both in the country and abroad when committed by a citizen of the country. In both cases the punishment was either a fine or a prison sentence of up to two years. Child pornography was also illegal and punishable by a fine or a prison sentence of up to three years. The government generally enforced the law. The minimum age for consensual sex was 16.

Antisemitism

At least 1,500 Jews lived in the country, 741 of whom belonged to Jewish

congregations, according to Statistics Norway. The government did not keep statistics requiring citizens to report their religion.

Jewish community leaders reported the public and government generally supported the community, although they acknowledged incidents of antisemitism. According to NGOs and research institutes, including the National Human Rights Institution and Jewish community leaders, hate speech on the internet against ethnic minorities and religious groups increased. The government funded initiatives to combat antisemitism through the national budget guided by its national action plan. The action plan provided programmatic support and coordination for addressing antisemitism by integrating targeted education programs into all schools, supporting Jewish museums and cultural institutions, funding research on antisemitism and Jewish life, and funding public advocacy programs to combat antisemitism. The government provided funding to the Dembra Program to train teachers to increase awareness and prevent and combat antisemitism, prejudice, discrimination, and harassment of minorities in schools. The Dembra Program was coordinated by the Holocaust Center.

Trafficking in Persons

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

<https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics

Criminalization: No laws criminalized consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults, cross-dressing, or other sexual or gender characteristic-related behavior. Seemingly neutral laws were not disproportionately applied to target lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex (LGBTQI+) persons to justify arbitrary arrest.

Violence and Harassment: There were reports of violence and harassment by nonstate actors. Hate speech on the internet against LGBTQI+ persons was a problem. Police received 281 reports of hate crimes against LGBTQI+ persons in 2022, the latest numbers available, including instances of hate speech, violence, and property damage.

Following the 2022 shooting attack at the LGBTQI+ bar, the London Pub in Oslo, authorities acknowledged deficiencies and initiated an action plan to address information sharing between law enforcement agencies, and communication between police services and the LGBTQI+ community.

Discrimination: The law prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, employment, citizenship law, and access to government services such as health care and recognized

LGBTQI+ individuals, couples, and their families. The government enforced these laws. Violence motivated by discriminatory attitudes towards transgender persons was not considered a hate crime.

According to NGOs and researchers, including the Norwegian Organization for Sexual and Gender Diversity (FRI), access to health services for transgender individuals was the biggest challenge facing the LGBTQI+ community. The Health Directorate developed standards for treatment and health services for transgender individuals based on World Health Organization guidelines, but the National Treatment Center – the only organization permitted to administer gender affirming health care in the country – rejected those guidelines. The National Treatment Center treated gender dysphoria as a mental health issue and required a psychiatric diagnosis prior to treatment.

Availability of Legal Gender Recognition: The Gender Recognition Act of 2016 permitted citizens age 16 and older to change their legal gender by submitting an electronic form to the National Population Register. Children younger than 16 required the consent of all legal guardians to change their legal gender.

Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological Practices: There were no reports conversion therapy was practiced in recent years. In an FRI survey of LGBTQI+ individuals, 25 percent responded that in their lifetime they had experienced intolerant actions that could be interpreted as a rejection of

their sexual orientation or gender identity. Most respondents expressed the belief that a ban on so-called conversion therapy would lessen that intolerance.

There were no reports of surgeries on children or nonconsenting adult intersex persons. Medical treatment on children was regulated by law and required parental or legal guardian consent.

Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly:

There were no laws or other restrictions on individuals speaking or media reporting on LGBTQI+ matters, on the ability of LGBTQI+ individuals to assemble in public or private or to form associations, or on the ability of LGBTQI+ organizations to legally register or convene events.

Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities could access education, health services, public buildings, and transportation on an equal basis with others. The constitution and law prohibited discrimination against persons with disabilities, and the government provided information and communications in accessible formats. The government effectively enforced and implemented these provisions. The law mandated access to public buildings, information, and communications for persons with disabilities.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

Media and the Norwegian Center against Racism reported anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment in society. Stop the Islamization of Norway held multiple protests throughout the year that were attended by known neo-Nazis.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provided for the right of workers, including migrant workers (those who had a work permit in the country), to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The law prohibited antiunion discrimination and required reinstatement of workers fired for union activity.

The right to strike excluded members of the military and senior civil servants. With the approval of parliament, the government could compel arbitration in any industrial sector if it determined a strike threatened public safety.

The government effectively enforced applicable laws. The penalties were commensurate with those for other laws involving denials of civil rights,

such as discrimination. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

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

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibited all of the worst forms of child labor. Children between ages 13 and 15 could be employed up to 12 hours per week in light work that did not adversely affect their health, development, or schooling, such as assistant work in offices or stores. Children age 14 and younger needed parental permission to work, and those 15 and older could work as part of vocational training, if supervised. Between ages 15 and 18, children not in school could work up to 40 hours per week and a maximum eight hours per day. The government effectively enforced these laws, and both civil and criminal penalties were commensurate with those for other analogous serious crimes, such as kidnapping. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

There were no confirmed reports during the year of the worst forms of child labor.

d. Discrimination (see section 6)

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Wage and Hour Laws: The law did not mandate an official minimum wage. Instead, minimum wages were set in collective bargaining agreements. An estimated 10 percent of the population had an income below the relative poverty limit, which Statistics Norway set at 60 percent of the median household income after tax. The law provided for premium pay of 40 percent of salary for overtime and prohibited compulsory overtime in excess of 10 hours per week. Violations of wage, hour, or overtime laws were not common.

Occupational Safety and Health: The law provided for safe and physically acceptable working conditions for all employed persons. The occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were appropriate for the main industries in the country. Workers could remove themselves from situations endangering health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, and authorities effectively protected employees in this situation.

The Norwegian Labor Inspection Authority (NLIA) could close an enterprise immediately if the life or health of employees was in imminent danger and could report enterprises to police for serious breaches of the law.

The Norwegian Working Environment Act required employers to prevent

work-related accidents and maintain a safe and healthy working environment for all employees. The law required employers with 50 or more workers to establish environment committees composed of management, workers, and health-care personnel. Employers with 10 or more workers needed to have safety delegates elected by their employees.

The country's Transparency Act compelled companies to respect human rights and decent working conditions in connection with the production of goods and services and ensured the public had access to information on how companies handled negative consequences on human rights and decent working conditions.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement: The NLIA was responsible for enforcing wage, hour, and OSH laws, and in consultation with nongovernment experts, it set OSH standards and effectively enforced laws and standards in the formal sector. Penalties were commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud or negligence, and were regularly applied against violators. The law provided the same benefits for citizens and foreign workers with residency permits but forbade employment of foreign workers without residency permits. The number of labor inspectors was sufficient to enforce compliance. Inspectors could conduct unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions. The NLIA and the Norwegian Tax Directorate carried out inspections to ensure employers upheld their responsibilities and to combat potential informal markets. The size of the informal sector was negligible

due to a high level of digitalization, monitoring and enforcement, and strong welfare support.