

Solomon Islands 2024 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

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

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of trafficking in persons, including forced labor.

The government took credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses, although there were no reports of investigations or prosecutions during the year.

Section 1. Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

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

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 provided for freedom of expression, including for members of 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.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The law provided for the right of workers in the formal sector to form and join unions, conduct legal strikes, and bargain collectively. The law prohibited antiunion discrimination but did not specifically provide for reinstatement of workers fired for trade union activity. The law permitted strikes in both the public and private sectors. Strikes required a notice to the government 28 days prior to the strike to be legal. The government had discretionary power to cancel and suspend registration of unions, a power that could take effect even while under judicial review.

The law did not provide for organizing or collective bargaining rights to workers in the informal sector. Additionally, the law limited the rights of

workers to act as union representatives based on age, literacy, criminal record, and membership in more than one union.

Government enforcement of the law was inconsistent; its small penalties were not commensurate with those for other laws involving denials of civil rights. There was no reliable information on how often penalties were applied against violators. The penalty for antiunion discrimination was not effective, in part because employers could afford to pay the fine and could easily replace workers. Penalties for illegal strikes, on the other hand, served as a deterrent for workers to strike.

Collective bargaining agreements determined wages and conditions of employment in the formal economy. Unsettled disputes between labor and management were referred to the Trade Disputes Panel for arbitration, either before or during a strike. Employees were protected from arbitrary dismissal or lockout during arbitration. The three-member panel, composed of a chairperson appointed by the judiciary, a labor representative, and a business representative, was independent and neutral. The panel's decisions were binding on both parties. Administrative and judicial procedures were not subject to lengthy delays or appeals.

Workers exercised their rights to associate and bargain collectively, although employers did not always respect these rights. Since only a small percentage of the workforce was in formal-sector employment, employers could easily replace most workers if disputes were not resolved quickly.

The Workers Union of Solomon Islands actively negotiated with private sector employers.

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 national minimum wage above the poverty level for all sectors. The standard workweek was 45 hours and was limited to six days per week. The law provided for not less than one and a half times the normal rate of pay for overtime work and a rate not less than twice the regular hourly rate of pay for authorized public holidays.

Occupational Safety and Health

Occupational safety and health (OSH) laws required employers to provide a safe working environment and forbade retribution against any employee who sought protection under labor regulations. These laws were appropriate for main industries. Laws on working conditions and safety standards applied equally to foreign workers and citizens. Some workers could not remove themselves from situations endangering their health or safety, particularly in the fishing and logging industries, without jeopardy to

their employment. OSH experts did not actively identify unsafe conditions or respond to workers' OSH complaints.

Workers in the logging, construction, and manufacturing sectors were subject to hazardous and exploitative work.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

The commissioner of labor in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour, and Immigration; the public prosecutor; and police were responsible for enforcing labor laws. The government, however, did not effectively enforce wage, overtime, or OSH laws in all sectors of the formal economy. The law did not specify penalties for violations, significantly weakening effective enforcement. There was no reliable information on how often penalties were applied against violators.

While inspectors had the authority to conduct unannounced inspections, the number of labor inspectors was insufficient to monitor labor practices routinely, particularly in extractive sectors outside of the capital. The government's minimal human and financial resources also limited its ability to enforce the law in smaller establishments, the informal economy, and the subsistence sector. An active labor movement and an independent judiciary, however, helped provide effective oversight of labor law enforcement in major state and private-sector enterprises.

The United Nations reported more than 70 percent of workers were

engaged in informal and subsistence activities. Wage and safety standards applied to the informal sector but were not enforced. No government entity provided protection services to workers in the informal economy. Labor laws indirectly applied to workers in the informal sector and the Labor Division reviewed formal cases and provided consultation services to informal workers.

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

At the request of the government and subject to bilateral agreements, police from the People's Republic of China, Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea were deployed in the country in support of the country's police force and were duly authorized to act with police powers according to the country's law.

Delays in adjudication of the large number of cases before the courts resulted in lengthy pretrial detention. Pretrial detainees comprised approximately 50 percent of the prisoner population. The average length of time held in pretrial detention was approximately two years.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at 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 law prohibited such practices, and there were no credible reports government officials employed them.

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 Marriage

Both boys and girls could legally marry at age 15, and the law permitted marriage at age 14 with parental and village consent. Marriage at such young ages was not common.

c. Protection to Refugees

The law did not provide for granting asylum or refugee status, and the government had not established a system for providing protection to refugees.

Provision of First Asylum

The government did not grant refugee status or asylum, and there were no known refugees in the country.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

The Jewish community was very small, and there were no reports of

antisemitic incidents.