

Tuvalu 2024 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

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

Significant human rights issues included the possible existence of the worst forms of child labor.

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

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

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

Although there were no formal government restrictions, the government's Media Department controlled the country's sole radio and television station. There were no local private, independent media.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The law provided for the right of private-sector workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct strikes. The law did not permit public-sector employees such as civil servants, teachers, nurses, and other essential workers to form and join unions. They could join professional associations that had the right to bargain collectively but not the right to strike.

Employers who violated laws on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining were liable to a fine, a penalty that was commensurate with those under other laws involving denials of civil rights; however, penalties were rarely applied. The law also provided for voluntary conciliation, arbitration, and settlement procedures in cases of labor disputes. In general, these procedures were not subject to lengthy delays or appeals.

Although there were provisions for collective bargaining and the right to strike, the few private-sector employers set their own wage scales. Both the private and public sectors generally used nonconfrontational deliberations to resolve labor disputes. There was only one registered trade union, the Tuvalu Overseas Seamen's Union. There were no reports of antiunion discrimination.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

There were no confirmed reports during the year that traffickers exploited domestic or foreign victims in the country or that traffickers exploited nationals as victims abroad.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The law permitted the government to set a minimum wage, but the

Department of Labor did not do so.

The law set the workday at eight hours, and the Department of Labor could specify the days and hours of work for workers in various industries.

Although the law provided for premium pay and overtime work, there were no established premium overtime rates or maximum hours of work.

Violators were liable to a fine, a penalty commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud. Penalties were rarely applied against violators.

Occupational Safety and Health

The law provided for rudimentary occupational safety and health (OSH) standards and required employers to provide adequate potable water, basic sanitary facilities, and medical care. Workers could remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, and authorities effectively protected employees in such situations. Violators of OSH laws were liable to a fine, a penalty commensurate with those for crimes such as negligence; however, penalties were rarely applied against violators.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

The Department of Labor was responsible for enforcing wage and hour regulations but did not have sufficient capacity or inspectors to regularly conduct workplace inspections, although inspectors did follow up when the Department of Labor received complaints. Inspectors had the authority to

make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions for wage, hour, and OSH violations. The government did not, however, effectively enforce overtime laws and was inconsistent in enforcing OSH standards.

Approximately 75 percent of the working-age population worked in the informal and subsistence economy, mainly in subsistence agriculture. There was no system for reporting and publishing workplace injuries or deaths, and a lack of resources hampered inspections of informal workplaces. Labor laws did not apply to informal workplaces.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

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

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.

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

There were no confirmed reports during the year that traffickers exploited domestic or foreign victims in the country or that traffickers exploited victims from abroad.

Section 3. Security of the Person

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

The constitution 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

The legal minimum age of marriage was 18, although the laws were not enforced. According to the 2019-2020 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 1.8 percent of women ages 20-24 were married before age 18. Stigma

associated with teenage unwed pregnancy likely precipitated some early marriages.

c. Protection to Refugees

There were no reported applications for asylum or refugee status during the year.

Provision of First Asylum

The law provided for granting asylum or refugee status, but the government had no established system for providing protection to refugees.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

There was no known Jewish community, and there were no reports of antisemitic incidents.