

United Arab Emirates 2024 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in the United Arab Emirates during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: disappearances; arbitrary arrest or detention; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including censorship; and prohibiting independent trade unions or significant or systematic restrictions on workers' freedom of association.

The government did not take credible steps or action to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Section 1. Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings domestically 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 government regularly restricted freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media. Human rights organizations reported the government detained political activists and human rights defenders on expression-related charges.

The constitution and law imposed limits on freedom of expression, including a prohibition on criticism of national rulers and on speech that could create or encourage social unrest. Authorities enforced laws prohibiting cursing, rude gestures, and insults, and imposed penalties of up to two years in prison, fines, and deportation. The law imposed criminal punishments for “spreading rumors or false news” and for use of the internet to disseminate information that insulted a foreign country.

The government imposed restrictions on speech related to and in support of Islamist political activities, calls for democratic reforms, criticism of or perceived insults against the government and government institutions, and,

in rarer cases, criticism of officials and private citizens.

In June, authorities arrested a foreign Ph.D. student at New York University in Abu Dhabi after the student pulled a keffiyeh from under their gown and yelled “free Palestine” when crossing the stage at their commencement ceremony. The student was detained for one week and subsequently deported.

During the year, there were multiple public reports of citizens being fined for sending insulting and derogatory private messages over WhatsApp. In one case, authorities confiscated the individual’s mobile phone and banned him from using the internet for up to six months.

Penalties for insulting or ridiculing the head of state or harming “his reputation or standing” ranged from 15 to 25 years in prison. The law also imposed a five-year prison sentence on persons who “ridiculed, insulted, or harmed the reputation or prestige of the state, its institutions, its founding leaders, the state’s flag, national emblem or anthem or any of its national symbols.”

The law prohibited any person from “publishing any information, news, caricatures or any other kind of pictures that would pose threats to the security of the state and to its highest interests or violate its public order.” Violators faced imprisonment and fines not exceeding 1 million dirhams (\$273,000).

The law on combating discrimination, hatred, and extremism restricted freedom of expression in cases related to blasphemy, discrimination, or hate speech. The court could impose additional measures such as travel bans, surveillance, or house arrest. Breach of these measures could result in a custodial sentence of up to one year.

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

Authorities threatened to imprison individuals for misusing the internet. Self-censorship was widely practiced on social media, with the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Freedom House reporting “state security agencies engage in extensive surveillance and hacking activities aimed at perceived opponents of the government,” and authorities “monitor public and private online communications for critical speech and are believed to use advanced commercial spyware products.”

The law imposed restrictions on media activities. Media outlets also conformed to additional, unpublished government guidelines; editors and journalists avoided crossing government “red lines” for acceptable media content and reported commonly practicing self-censorship on socially sensitive topics such as government criticism and human rights violations due to fear of government retribution. Most journalists were foreign nationals and therefore vulnerable to deportation.

International NGOs categorized the press, both in print and online, as not free. The government owned and controlled most newspapers, television stations, and radio stations, except for regional media outlets located in Dubai's and Abu Dhabi's free-trade zones.

In September, the government introduced additional media regulations mandating that authorities preapprove the hiring of journalists and editors-in-chief and outlining specific criteria for the appointment of directors in foreign media offices. The regulations emphasized respecting the country's culture, identity, and values, and outlawed damaging its national security or external relations by prohibiting praise for antigovernment groups.

Additionally, the regulations stipulated that the government's Media Council had to preapprove the publication, use, or release of works of art, advertisements, recordings, theatrical scripts, and films. Authorities did not allow importation or publication of books they viewed as being critical of the government, Islam, or local culture, as well as books that the government perceived as supporting the Muslim Brotherhood or its ideology.

By law, the Media Regulatory Office (MRO) licensed electronic media and all publications, including those of private associations. The MRO removed any criticism of the government, ruling families, or friendly governments, and censored content that threatened "social stability." It often removed online content without transparency or judicial oversight and held domain hosts or administrators liable if their websites were used to promote violence,

hatred, racism, or sectarianism, or to “damage the national unity or social peace or prejudice the public order and public morals.”

In August, authorities censored the Indian movie “*Khel Khel Mein*” because it involved scenes and references to a homosexual character.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining.

The law did not grant workers the right to organize or bargain collectively or permit them to form or join unions. Given the absence of unions, there were no laws prohibiting antiunion discrimination or regulating freedom of association and no reports of government enforcement of laws respecting their establishment or operation. Penalties for violations of freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike were less than those for analogous violations such as civil rights violations and were never applied against violators.

The law explicitly prohibited strikes by public sector employees, security guards, and migrant workers. Private sector workers had access to a labor dispute process that did not recognize work suspension as a form of protest or bargaining. Barring instances of dangerous work conditions, workers who walked off the job were subject to disciplinary measures ranging from temporary suspensions to wage deductions and full termination, depending

on their employer's assessment of the strike's financial and reputational impact.

The country had separate labor laws for the private sector, public sector, armed forces, security agencies, and duty-free zones. Public and private sector labor laws were routinely enforced, but information was not available on enforcement within the armed forces, security agencies, and duty-free zones. Domestic workers ranging from housemaids, cooks, and private coaches to agricultural engineers were subject to a separate law. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization regulated the private and domestic worker sectors, enforcing legal provisions, conducting inspections, serving as the initial arbitrator of labor complaints, and, as of January, adjudicating claims under 50,000 dirhams (\$13,600). The ministry reported in June that it amicably settled 98 percent of the complaints it received, up from 81 percent reported in June 2023, and attributed the increase to its authorization to adjudicate smaller claims. Persons who lacked legal residency status, including those with either short-term visitor visas or expired visas, were generally not legally eligible for employment.

All private sector foreign workers and domestic workers had the right to file labor-related grievances with the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization. Reports on the length of administrative procedures varied, with workers citing both speedy and delayed processes. The ministry sometimes intervened in foreign workers' disputes with employers and

helped negotiate private settlements.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization referred unresolved collective disputes – those filed by 50 or more private sector employees of the same entity – to a specialized committee whose decisions were final. Unresolved individual labor complaints involving claims over 50,000 dirhams (\$13,600) were referred to a specialized labor court. Public sector employees could file an administrative grievance or a case in a civil court to address a labor-related dispute or complaint. Administrative remedies were available for labor complaints, and authorities commonly applied them to resolve problems such as delayed wage payments, unpaid overtime, or substandard housing. Public information on government action remained limited, however.

The law mandated deportation of noncitizen public-sector workers for “refusing to work.” The threat of deportation discouraged noncitizens from expressing work-related grievances. The law permitted employers to reduce wages or place workers on unpaid leave with workers’ consent in “extraordinary emergency situations” determined by the cabinet.

Professional associations were not independent, and authorities had broad powers to interfere in their activities. The Ministry of Community Development was required to license and approve professional associations, which was necessary to receive government approval for international affiliations and travel by members. The government granted some

professional associations with majority citizen membership a limited ability to raise work-related matters, petition the government for redress, and file grievances.

Foreign workers could join local professional associations and constitute 30 percent of association governing boards, provided they had resided in the country for more than three years, although regulators could waive that requirement. In Dubai, the CDA regulated and provided licensing services to nonprofit civil society organizations and associations that organized social, cultural, artistic, or entertainment activities. All voluntary organizations and individual volunteers were required to register with the CDA within six months. In addition, all voluntary activities required a CDA permit, but there were no prescribed penalties for noncompliance.

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

There was no national minimum wage for citizens or foreign residents.

There was limited information on average domestic, agricultural, and construction worker salaries in addition to limited information on public

sector salaries. In some sectors, starting wages were determined by workers' nationality and years of experience. Full-time, part-time, and temporary workers in the private sector and some duty-free zones were subject to the labor law and were covered by Wages Protection System (WPS). The WPS payment requirement did not apply to foreign workers under the authority of the Ministry of Interior, such as agricultural workers, or to most domestic workers.

The WPS excluded seamen, but ship owners and operators who defaulted on wages for more than two months were liable to fines, loss of access to state waters, and revocation of licenses. The government could also seize and sell derelict and unseaworthy ships and use the proceeds to compensate unpaid crews. There were no such penalties reported by year's end.

The private sector labor law capped the workweek at 48 hours and limited daily work hours to eight, beyond which the law provided for workers to receive overtime pay. Overtime could not exceed two hours a day unless the work required would prevent serious loss or accidents. If a ministerial decision deemed work in an area had to be continuous, workweeks could extend to 56 hours. Domestic workers, however, were legally required to work eight to 12-hour days and were entitled to one weekly rest day or an alternative day off or cash in lieu of that day. The law protected them from being required to relinquish their weekly rest day for two consecutive

weeks, but the government did not enforce these laws effectively. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization mandated that domestic workers and employers sign standardized, two-year contracts that detailed job requirements, salaries, working hours, overtime, and time off.

In the public sector, the law capped the work week at 40 hours and 48 hours for employees working fulltime or rotating shifts, respectively. It stipulated overtime for additional hours worked during the week, and only compensatory time in lieu of hours worked during rest days and national holidays. It allowed employees to file complaints regarding their work environment but legally forbade employees from objecting to work hours, salaries, and bonuses.

Domestic and construction workers and other manual laborers were the groups most likely to experience excessive work hours, uncompensated overtime, delayed wage payments, and withheld rest days and leave entitlements. Domestic workers frequently worked more than 12 hours a day, seven days a week, with few or no holidays. Some employers forced workers to compensate them for hiring expenses such as visa fees, health exams, and insurance, which the law required employers to pay, by withholding passports and wages or having these costs deducted from their contracted salary. For low-skilled laborers, these expenses were as high as the equivalent of a year's pay.

Employees of duty-free zones – such as the Abu Dhabi Global Market

(ADGM) and Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC) – were subject to their respective zone’s internal employment regulations. Provisions dealing with discrimination, harassment and coercion, probation and notice periods, weekly work hours, end of service benefits, maternity leave and pay, workplace safety, and access to grievance procedures were comparable to private sector labor law. Free-zone employees received less annual leave and fewer paid sick days and could not take their grievances to the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization or the court system. ADGM regulations contained provisions on overtime hours and pay and excessive work hours, but DIFC regulations did not.

Workers in agriculture and other categories overseen by the Ministry of Interior were subject to a different regulatory regime. These workers were not covered by private and public sector labor law but had some legal protections regarding working hours, overtime, timeliness of wage payments, paid leave, health care, and the provision of adequate housing. These rules were often not enforced, leaving these workers more vulnerable to wages, hours, and overtime violations.

Occupational Safety and Health

Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were generally appropriate for the main industries in the country, such as construction. All industrial establishments and construction companies employing more than 100 workers were legally required to hire at least one OSH officer.

The law authorized inspectors to conduct unannounced inspections at any time, summon and question employers and workers, access documents, and take samples of materials suspected of being harmful to workers, but could not initiate sanctions. Employers who did not comply with OSH regulations were subject to fines and suspension of operations.

Government OSH standards required employers to provide employees with a safe work and living environment; conduct periodic safety inspections, assessments, and training; cover all treatment costs for injuries that were not a worker's fault; and pay a worker partially or in full for up to one year while undergoing treatment. The law entitled employees to compensation if left with disabilities from work-related injuries and protected them from termination before receiving such compensation. OSH experts proactively identified unsafe working conditions, although no information was available on whether they responded to workers' complaints. Workers could remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety without jeopardizing their employment if employers failed to resolve documented dangerous conditions.

A ministerial decree mandated heat mitigation provisions between June 15 and September 15 for laborers working in exposed open areas such as construction sites, unless working on projects that could not be delayed for emergency or technical reasons, such as laying asphalt or repairing critical infrastructure. Federal and local authorities proactively identified unsafe

conditions through site inspections meant to ensure adherence to the midday work ban and other work-specific safety precautions. Motorcycle delivery drivers reported they were often ineligible for periodic breaks as they were not classified as outdoor laborers. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization and the Dubai Roads and Transport Authority set up cooling stations for delivery drivers.

Employers with 50 or more employees making 1,500 dirhams (\$400) or less a month were required to provide living accommodations that met standards for ventilation, air conditioning, sanitation, and on-site medical services. In February, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization unveiled a new edition of the Labor Accommodation System, a national database of approved labor accommodations available to companies that were required to provide housing accommodations for their workers.

Full-time, part-time, and temporary workers in the private sector and some duty-free zones were subject to the labor law and OSH protections.

The law required employers to provide domestic workers with adequate means of protection against occupational injuries and diseases. Failure to compensate the worker for work injuries and diseases could result in a fine. Although workplace inspection of a private home was permissible, the law required a public prosecutor's permission coupled with a complaint or evidence of a violation. Inspectors were authorized to request that workers be medically examined and that work conditions be assessed for potential

health and safety risks. Obstructing the work of these inspectors by using force or threats carried a prison sentence of up to six months and a fine of 20,000 to 100,000 dirhams (\$5,450 to \$27,300). The law permitted domestic workers to leave their jobs, while maintaining their rights, in instances of salary reduction, general contract violations, and humiliation or assault of any kind, provided they reported the violation to the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization. Unsafe work conditions were not listed as grounds for work abandonment.

Laws did not provide for specific monetary fines for different health and safety violations. In April, Dubai Civil Court ordered a restaurant and two of its supervisors to pay 500,000 dirhams (\$136,000) to a worker whose right hand was amputated after getting stuck in meat grinding machine. The court decision relied on the fact that the worker did not receive training, the safety sensor on the machine was ineffective, and warning messages and guidance instructions were not provided.

WPS registration by employers was mandatory for five classes of domestic workers and optional for the remaining 14, which included housekeepers and nannies, who constituted the majority of domestic workers. Failure to register a worker in the WPS or nonpayment of wages could result in a modest fine for employers as well as a six-month hiring ban if they withheld domestic worker wages for longer than two months.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization and other relevant entities, primarily municipalities, effectively enforced wage, hour, and OSH laws and standards in most of the private sector, but were ineffective in the agriculture, domestic, and informal sectors. Penalties were not commensurate with analogous abuses such as civil rights violations.

Penalties were regularly applied against violators in the construction sector, but only sometimes in other sectors. The number of labor inspectors was sufficient to enforce compliance in the private sector, with the exception of the domestic workers sector due to limited access to private homes.

In June, 30 labor inspectors from the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization completed a training program organized in collaboration with the International Labor Organization on forced labor indicators.

The government sometimes enforced fines for employers who withheld foreign workers' salaries, entered incorrect information into the WPS, or made workers sign documents falsely attesting to receipt of benefits. Media and diplomatic sources continued to report some companies retained foreign workers' bank cards or accompanied them to withdraw cash, coercively shortchanging the employees even though the WPS showed the proper amount paid.

From January to September, the Ministry of Human Resources and

Emiratization conducted more than 300,000 inspection visits of private sector facilities for adherence to labor laws and to raise awareness. The ministry recorded more than 145,000 violations that included substandard labor accommodations, non-adherence to the summer mid-day break, violations of the WPS, failure to report work injuries, employers forcing laborers to cover recruitment fees, and unlicensed recruitment operations. Undisclosed legal measures and fines were imposed against violating facilities.

Community leaders reported some employers refused to apply for a work permit for their domestic workers, rendering them undocumented and denying them access to labor legal protections. Some employers denied domestic workers food or access to a telephone. While such actions were illegal, the relevant laws were not effectively enforced. Although workplace inspection was permissible under the law, there was a significant cultural barrier to entering and inspecting private households (particularly those of citizens) where domestic workers were employed. There were no reports of domestic worker OSH violations during the year.

The domestic workers law, in effect since 2022, did not carry over previous provisions granting workers an end-of-service bonus equivalent to two-weeks' salary for each year of service. Instead, it required the cabinet to adopt rules and regulations for calculation and payment of these gratuities, but no such regulations were in place at year's end.

The Abu Dhabi Municipality and Sharjah's Supreme Council for Family Affairs and Prevention and Safety Authority launched separate campaigns to raise worksite awareness of health, environment, and safety problems, including heat stress. In June, the Salama Training Center for Preventive Training and the Sharjah Prevention and Safety Authority conducted a Heat Stress Awareness Week event for 500 workers in sun-exposed jobs.

There were cases in which workers were injured or killed on job sites, but authorities typically did not disclose statistics of workplace injuries and deaths or discuss the adequacy of safety measures, despite a requirement that companies report all labor injuries and cases of occupational disease. A June report from the NGO Equidem found workers of an online retailer experienced intimidation and threats, retention of identity documents, withholding of wages, abusive working conditions, and unpaid overtime, as well as health impacts from working excessive hours in extreme heat.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization and local regulators conducted inspections of labor camps and workplaces such as construction sites, routinely fined employers for violating the midday break rule, and published compliance statistics. The ministry reported in September that it conducted 134,000 inspections from mid-June to mid-September and documented 51 violations of the midday break rules, but did not specify its response to these violations. Nevertheless, some low-wage foreign workers faced substandard living conditions, including overcrowded apartments or

unsafe and unhygienic lodging in labor camps. During some camp inspections, the ministry employed interpreters to assist foreign workers in understanding employment guidelines. It operated a multilingual, toll-free complaints hotline, and its mobile van units visited some labor camps to inform workers of their rights.

The Abu Dhabi Judicial Department and Dubai courts also employed buses as mobile courts to allow workers to register legal complaints on site.

There was no official information available on the informal economy, legal enforcement within this sector, or an estimate of its size; however, anecdotal reports indicated it was common for individuals to enter the country on a nonwork visa and seek informal employment, subjecting them to exploitative conditions.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities. During the year, there were reports of persons held incommunicado and without charges because of their political views or affiliations, which often involved alleged links to Islamist organizations.

In January, the NGO MENA Rights Group reported authorities arrested Yemeni student Muaadh Hailan in 2019 and detained him in al-Wathba

Prison without formal charges. Hailan's last known contact was with his family in 2020. In January, MENA Rights Group asked the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to call for Hailan's immediate release and the disclosure of his whereabouts.

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 for detainees charged under the criminal system; however, the law allowed for individuals detained under state security-related charges to be held for up to 106 days without charges.

The government reportedly often held persons in custody for extended periods without charges or a preliminary judicial hearing, according to Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

Police investigations regularly took up to three months, during which time detainees were often held incommunicado and without public knowledge of their whereabouts. In some cases, authorities did not allow detainees contact with attorneys, family members, or others for indefinite periods.

The civil procedures law allowed prosecutors to temporarily detain suspects for up to 14 days before bringing charges against them. Judges could extend this period in 30-day increments that judges could renew indefinitely.

Multiple detainees complained authorities did not inform them of the charges or other details of their cases for months.

Authorities treated prisoners arrested for state security-related reasons, which included individuals arrested for political dissent, differently from other prisoners. These prisoners were held in separate prison facilities by the State Security Department. Some prisoners and detainees were held in undisclosed locations for extended periods.

Public prosecutors could hold suspects detained in terrorism-related cases without charges for six months. Once authorities charged a suspect with terrorism, the Federal Supreme Court could extend the detention indefinitely. The counterterrorism law provided for the establishment of rehabilitation centers under the *munasaha* (counseling) program, which aimed to use psychosocial techniques to reform persons, including juveniles, deemed to pose a terrorist threat or convicted of terrorist offenses. The law on combating discrimination, hatred, and extremism was applied against individuals with what the government considered to be extremist tendencies. Individuals charged with crimes related to insulting religions, discrimination, or hatred were also placed in Munasaha centers.

There were no reports the government carried out arrests without informing the individual of the charge.

According to a June Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN) report,

Ryan Cornelius, a British entrepreneur, remained arbitrarily detained under harsh conditions. Cornelius was arrested in 2008 on charges of fraud related to a property development project in Dubai. According to DAWN, there was a lack of evidence in the case; the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declared his detention arbitrary and called for his release.

Lengthy pretrial detention was a problem, especially in cases involving state security. Diplomatic officials noted cases where the time defendants spent waiting for a court date surpassed the maximum sentence for the crime.

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/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, and there were no

credible reports government officials employed them.

Human rights groups reported authorities held detainees in state security-related cases, including for political dissent, in prolonged solitary confinement. The law did not explicitly define prolonged solitary confinement as a form of “degrading treatment,” and authorities therefore did not deem the practice unlawful. The Emirates Detainees Advocacy Center, as well as other human rights groups, reported in February that a defendant in the “UAE 84” trial suffered from a deteriorated mental state after spending a prolonged period in solitary confinement.

In November, *The New Arab* and *The Independent* reported that two British nationals, Matthew Hedges and Ali Issa Ahmad, submitted a criminal complaint to the Scottish police against the Emirati Interpol President and Major General of the UAE Interior Ministry Ahmed Naser al-Raisi, accusing them of overseeing torture at the detention facilities where they were incarcerated in 2018 and 2019.

The law prohibited female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and the Ministry of Health forbade hospitals and clinics from performing the procedure, but private clinics and ritual or traditional circumcisers reportedly continued to carry it out, most commonly on infants and children. Some tribal groups and foreign residents from countries where FGM/C was common undertook the practice. It was reportedly declining as a traditional custom, but little information was available regarding its

prevalence.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

There was no significant presence of the worst forms of child labor. The law prohibited all of the worst forms of child labor. The government consistently conducted workplace inspections to ensure adherence to child labor laws.

The minimum age for employment was 15. Conditions for employing juveniles – those older than 15 but younger than 18 years of age – included guardian consent, medical clearance, insurance, a six-hour limit on shifts, a prohibition on evening and overnight work, and a ban on work that might harm their health, safety, or morals. In June, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization banned private sector establishments from employing and training students across 31 categories of work and professions that were deemed hazardous. This included work in or involving mines and quarries, metal extraction, smelting furnaces, bakery ovens, petroleum refineries, cement and ice plants, fireworks, and welding.

Violating labor law provisions on juvenile employment carried the same penalties as misusing work permits, hiring workers without work permits, failing to provide workers with work, and suspending businesses without

settling the rights of their workers. In September, the fine for these violations was raised from a maximum of 200,000 dirhams (\$54,500) to a maximum of 1,000,000 dirhams (\$273,000) per case. Penalties were commensurate with those for analogous crimes and were regularly applied against violators.

Child Marriage

The legal age of marriage for both men and women was 18, unless a judge gave approval for an earlier marriage. No statistics were publicly available on the prevalence of marriage for individuals under 18.

c. Protection to 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.

Provision of First Asylum

The law did not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government did not have a formal system for providing protection to refugees and asylum seekers. The government worked with UNHCR on a case-by-case basis to address refugee matters. The government informally permitted persons seeking protection to remain in the country temporarily

on an individual basis. This nonpermanent status sometimes presented administrative, financial, and social hardships.

While the government extended informal protection from return to refugees and asylum seekers in some cases, any persons lacking legal residency status were technically subject to local laws on unauthorized immigrants, and authorities could detain them. In some cases, authorities confined individuals seeking protection to airport facilities while they awaited resettlement in another country. The government supported efforts to resettle or relocate to other countries individuals relocated from Afghanistan.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

There was no indigenous Jewish community and although specific numbers varied, local community members estimated the size of the country's noncitizen Jewish population at less than 10,000. On November 24, UAE-based Israeli-Moldovan dual national Rabbi Zvi Kogan was found dead near the country's border with Oman three days after he was reported missing. UAE authorities reported the arrest of three suspects in coordination with Turkey. Emirati authorities had not established a motive by year's end, but Israeli officials stated the rabbi was targeted because he was Jewish.

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/religiousfreedomreport/>.

e. Instances of Transnational Repression

The government engaged in acts of transnational repression.

Extraterritorial Killing, Kidnapping, or Violence or Threats of Violence

The BBC, drawing on investigations by the NGO Reprieve, reported in January that the government hired mercenaries to conduct targeted assassinations of its political enemies in Yemen. The BBC reported the government carried out 137 killings in Yemen between 2015 and 2018 of Yemeni individuals lacking links to terrorism. Targets included lawyer and investigator Huda al-Sarari and politician Ansaf Ali Mayo.

Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, or Coercion

According to a June DAWN report, the government engaged in widespread spying and surveillance tactics both within and outside its borders.