

Custom Report Excerpts

Afghanistan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

While the constitution prohibits discrimination among citizens and provides for the equal rights of men and women, local customs and practices that discriminated against women prevailed in much of the country. The constitution does not explicitly address equal rights based on race, disability, or social status. There were reports of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and gender.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual conduct, and there were reports that harassment, violence, and detentions by police continued. NGOs reported police arrested, detained, robbed, and raped gay men. The law does not prohibit discrimination or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Homosexuality was widely seen as taboo and indecent. Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community did not have access to certain health services and could be fired from their jobs because of their sexual orientation. Organizations devoted to protecting the freedom of LGBTI persons remained underground because they could not be legally registered. Members of the LGBTI community reported they continued to face discrimination, assault, rape, and arrest.

Albania

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, age, disability, language, religion, gender identity and/or sexual orientation, health, and family economic or social status. The government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions.

Cases of discrimination on any of these grounds may be brought to the commissioner for protection from discrimination; the commissioner has the authority to issue sanctions and did so in several cases during the year. The law allows the commissioner to testify in court as an expert witness, even in appeals on cases the commissioner's office initially rejected. Through September the commissioner participated in 20 judicial proceedings.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, including in employment (see section 7.d.). During the year the government's Commissioner for the Protection against Discrimination received several complaints from LGBTI individuals and organizations. Enforcement of the law was generally weak.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are among the classes protected by the country's hate-crime law. Despite the law and the government's formal support for LGBTI rights, homophobic attitudes persisted in private and public life. Public officials sometimes made homophobic statements. NGOs reported an increase in families evicting LGBTI persons from their homes during the year. Since 2014 the first shelter for evicted LGBTI person accommodated eight individuals. The NGOs Aleanca and ProLGBT opened it in 2014.

On May 17, activists participated in the fourth Tirana Gay Ride against Homophobia, a short bicycle ride on Tirana's main boulevard, as well as a diversity fair, both of which proceeded without incident, unlike in previous years. On June 11, a second pride event took place in Tirana as part of a "diversity festival." Police ensured activists' safety during the events.

Algeria

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on birth, race, gender, language, beliefs, or "any other condition or social circumstance." The government generally enforced the law, although women and members of the LGBTI community continued to face legal and social discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes public and consensual same-sex sexual relations by men or women with penalties that include imprisonment of six months to three years and a fine of DZD 1,000 to DZD 10,000 (\$9.50 to \$95). The law also stipulates penalties that include imprisonment of two months to two years and fines of DZD 500 to DZD 2,000 (\$4.76 to \$19) for anyone convicted of having committed a "homosexual act." If a minor is involved, the adult may face up to three years' imprisonment and a fine of DZD 10,000 (\$95).

LGBTI activists reported that the vague wording of laws identifying "homosexual acts" and "acts against nature" permitted sweeping accusations that resulted during the year in multiple arrests for same-sex sexual relations but no known prosecutions.

LGBTI persons faced strong societal and religious discrimination. While some lived openly, the vast majority did not, and most feared reprisal from their families or harassment from authorities. One activist reported that of the 100 LGBTI persons he knew, only three had "come out." During a May radio interview, Minister of Religious Affairs Mohamed Aissa said that combatting individuals who promote the deviation of morality and the dismantling of the family (a reference to the behavior of LGBTI individuals) was more important than the fight against Da'esh. In April popular Imam Sheikh Chemseddine openly called for the mistreatment and beating of LGBTI persons during his regular television program.

Activists said that the government did not actively condemn LGBTI behavior, but that was complicit in the hate speech propagated by conservative, cultural, and religion-based organizations, some of which associated LGBTI individuals with pedophiles and encouraged excluding them from family and society. Arabic-language media outlets, such as Ennahar TV and Echourouk TV, aired programs that demonized LGBTI persons.

One documentary, entitled *The Plot*, asserted that a gay activist collaborated with the French, maintained ties to the Barakat movement (a political movement that opposed President Bouteflika's campaign for a fourth term in office), and liaised with terrorist organizations. On November 23, the president of the ARAV, Miloud Chorfi, summoned the director of the private television channel Beur TV following its November 16 broadcast of a program on LGBTI behavior. Chorfi said that the content of the program was "an attack against decency" and warned that the government would take legal action if the television station did not "respect the ethics and morals of our society."

Due to the hacking of one LGBTI organization's website and increased offensive and derogatory media coverage specifically denouncing LGBTI practices, activists reported the need to focus their advocacy on personal safety and minimized their activities during the year. Activists reported that members of the LGBTI community declined, and thus lessened their capacity to report cases of homophobic abuse and rape due to fear of reprisal by authorities. Reporting that access to health services could be difficult because medical personnel often treated LGBTI patients unprofessionally, activists noted that some organizations maintained a list of "LGBTI-friendly" hospitals and several NGOs operated mobile clinics specifically for vulnerable communities.

Employers refused jobs to LGBTI persons, particularly men perceived as effeminate. Activists also reported cases of individuals denied drivers licenses due to their perceived sexual orientation. Community members said that obtaining legal assistance was also a challenge due to similar discrimination. Members of the LGBTI community reported that forced marriage was a problem, particularly for lesbians.

Abu Nawas and Alouen, Algiers-based and Oran-based LGBTI advocacy groups, respectively, continued cyberactivism on behalf of the LGBTI community.

Andorra

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law declare all persons equal before the law and prohibit discrimination on grounds of birth, race, gender, origin, religion, opinions, or any other personal or social condition. Although the government effectively enforced these provisions for the most part, in its latest report June 9, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance noted that the country's laws do not apply the principle of the sharing of the burden of proof. The law relating to hearing complaints on the grounds of race, color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or language in civil and administrative courts does not provide that, when persons establish before the court facts of alleged direct or indirect discrimination, the respondent should prove that there has been no discrimination, racism, or intolerance.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No information in this sub-section. Please see the full country report for more.

Angola

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in

Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, religion, disability, language, or social status, but the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. The constitution does not specifically address sexual orientation or gender identity. Violence and discrimination against women, child abuse, child prostitution, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against persons with disabilities were problems.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution prohibits all forms of discrimination but does not specifically address sexual orientation or gender identity. According to the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the law does not criminalize sexual relationships between persons of the same sex. Sections of the 1886 penal code could be viewed as criminalizing homosexual activity, but they are no longer used by the judicial system. The constitution defines marriage as between a man and a woman, however. Local and international NGOs reported that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals faced discrimination and harassment, but reports of violence against the LGBTI community based on sexual orientation were rare. The government, through its health agencies, instituted a series of initiatives to decrease discrimination against LGBTI individuals. For example, the National Institute to Fight HIV/AIDS worked with local NGOs and LGBTI activists to promote antidiscriminatory practices by health practitioners and communities across the country.

Discrimination against LGBTI individuals often went unreported. LGBTI individuals asserted that sometimes police refused to register their grievances. A police commander in Luanda stated police have the obligation to record all reports of discrimination and recommended LGBTI persons report improper behavior by police officers to the national police headquarters. In 2014 a group of LGBTI individuals formed the first openly gay association in civil society. The association was created to help LGBTI youth facing harassment or social alienation. During the year the association partnered with the Ministry of Health and the National Institute to Fight HIV/AIDS to improve access to health services and sexual education for the LGBTI community.

On February 2, soap opera *Jikulumesso* showed the first same-sex kiss on national television between two men. The kiss was seen as controversial and elicited discussion in mainstream and social media outlets on homosexuality in the country. No reports of violence against LGBTI individuals were reported as a result of the broadcast or subsequent social debate.

Antigua and Barbuda

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, language or national origin, political opinion, citizenship, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or HIV or other communicable disease status, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions. Going further, the constitution explicitly states “No person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner.”

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual activity for males is illegal under indecency statutes; however, the law was not strictly enforced. The law also prohibits anal intercourse. Indecency statutes carry a maximum penalty of five years in prison, and consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adult men carries a maximum penalty of 15 years. No antidiscrimination laws exist that specifically protect LGBTI persons.

Societal attitudes somewhat impeded operation and free association of LGBTI organizations, but there were a few organized groups. There were limited reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in a variety of settings.

There was one report of police brutality against a well-known transgender individual. On September 12, police apprehended this individual for following another car. While in custody, the individual stated that the police severely beat him, and as a result he lost sight in his right eye. The police are still investigating the incident, but one organized LGBTI group claimed that they believe the police will cover up the incident.

Argentina

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, nationality, ideology, social status, or physical characteristics, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions.

On March 18, the government amended regulations to the law that established the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Racism (INADI) to include members of the NGO community on INADI's board of directors.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons generally enjoyed the same legal rights and protections as heterosexual persons. No laws criminalize consensual same-sex conduct between adults. LGBTI persons could serve openly in the military.

The law gives transgender persons the right legally to change their gender and name on identity documents without prior approval from a doctor or judge. It also requires public and private healthcare plans to cover some parts of hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery, although the Ministry of Health did not effectively enforce this requirement. In September the country enacted legislation prohibiting exclusion of blood donors based upon sexual orientation.

National antidiscrimination laws do not include sexual orientation or gender identity as protected grounds, but there was no official discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care. Overt societal discrimination generally was uncommon, but media and NGOs reported cases of discrimination, violence, and police brutality toward the LGBTI community, especially transgender persons. On October 24, a group of alleged neo-Nazis wielding plastic pipes filled with cement chased a gay couple in Mar del Plata through the streets of the city and beat them. On October 13, well-known LGBTI activist

and transgender woman Diana Sacayan was found dead in her apartment; her body showed signs of violence. Two other transgender women, Marcela Chocobar and Coty Olmos, were killed in separate incidents in September. No indictments were made by year's end.

On July 25, a transgender woman, Laura Moyano, was found dead at a construction site in Cordoba Province. Moyano's face had been smashed with a stone, and her body bore signs of genital mutilation. Prosecutors believed that Moyano, who allegedly engaged in prostitution, was killed by a customer. There were no indictments by year's end.

Armenia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on gender, race, skin color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, ideology, political or other views, membership in a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances. The government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. In its July 2014 report, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) expressed concern about the absence of a comprehensive legal framework against discrimination covering all of the grounds for discrimination enumerated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Right.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Antidiscrimination laws do not apply to sexual orientation or gender identity. There were no hate crime laws or other criminal judicial mechanisms to aid in the prosecution of crimes against members of the LGBTI community. Societal attitudes toward LGBTI persons remained negative, with society generally viewing homosexuality as a medical affliction. Societal discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity negatively affected employment, family relations, and access to education and health care (see section 7.d.).

In June the NGO Public Information and Need of Knowledge (PINK Armenia) published its annual review of the human rights situation of LGBTI persons for 2014. According to the review, rather than promote equality, leading political party representatives and media affiliated with authorities continued to employ "hate speech" toward members of the LGBTI community, strengthening the environment of impunity in the country. According to the review, LGBTI persons experienced physical violence and threats of violence, blackmail, and harassment. Police were unresponsive to reports of such abuses and at times themselves mistreated LGBTI persons. The review reported instances of police responding to an LGBTI person who filed a complaint about an anti-LGBTI crime by prosecuting the complainant for filing a false crime report. As a result some LGBTI victims avoided reporting abuses to police.

According to the September newsletter of PINK Armenia, five men beat two transgender sex workers in a park in downtown Yerevan on the night of August 27. The two victims hid in a nearby hotel waiting for the attackers to leave but were subsequently followed from the hotel to the prosecutor general's office, located nearby, and attacked again near the office. According to the victims, office guards did not help them. The victims suffered numerous injuries, including head trauma. The RAIC initiated a criminal

investigation of the attack on charges of battery, and on October 7, charged one person. At the end of October, the investigation was continuing, with law enforcement agencies seeking to identify and locate the other attackers.

The media, including progovernment outlets, continued active dissemination of anti-LGBTI propaganda. According to PINK Armenia, LGBTI individuals whose Facebook profile links were included in a homophobic article published in May 2014 by the *Iravunk* newspaper continued to face social bias and harassment. One of them reported receiving a stream of hate mail from senders threatening to find his address and harm him. Because of employment discrimination, he could not find a job. PINK reported that the participants in the first Armenian LGBTI Rainbow Forum, held on October 17-18, received numerous threats both online and in person. PINK reported the threats to law enforcement bodies, who were conducting a preinvestigation as of October.

Openly gay men were exempt from military service, purportedly because of concern that fellow service members would abuse them. The exemption, however, required a medical finding, based on a psychological examination, that an individual had a mental disorder; this information appeared in the individual's personal identity documents and was an obstacle to employment and obtaining a driver's license. Gay men who served in the army reportedly faced physical and psychological abuse.

According to the Prison Monitoring Group and other human rights activists, LGBTI persons experienced the worst prison conditions. They were frequent targets for humiliating discrimination, other inmates forced them to perform degrading labor, and administrators separated them from the rest of the prison population.

Australia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Federal laws prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases. An independent judiciary and a network of federal, state, and territorial equal opportunity offices effectively enforced antidiscrimination laws.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There are no laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited by law in a wide range of areas, including in employment, housing, family law, taxes, child support, immigration, pensions, care of elderly persons, and social security.

The HRC received 35 complaints of discrimination based on sexual orientation from July 2013 through June 2014. Information on resolution of the complaints was not available.

The law provides protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status.

In September 2014 Victoria and New South Wales passed laws to expunge convictions related to consensual sex between men.

Austria

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law provides for protection against discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, language, and HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, and the government generally enforced these protections.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Antidiscrimination laws apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. There was some societal prejudice against LGBTI persons but no reports of violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Hate crime laws prohibit incitement, including incitement based on sexual orientation. LGBTI organizations generally operated freely. Civil society groups, however, criticized the lack of a mechanism to prevent service providers from discriminating against LGBTI individuals.

According to a 2013 EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) study, the situation of LGBTI rights in the country was “mediocre.” The study found that 89 percent of openly LGBTI persons under age 18 claimed to have been bullied in school or in apprenticeships because of their sexual orientation. The study also found discrimination in employment against LGBTI persons (see section 7.d.). According to the FRA study, the situation was different in Vienna, which was “at the vanguard” of LGBTI rights.

In January the Constitutional Court ruled that the ban on adoption by same-sex couples in the adoption law was illegal and was to be lifted as of January 2016.

Azerbaijan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, age, and language, but the government did not always respect these prohibitions or effectively enforce them.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Antidiscrimination laws exist but do not specifically cover lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals. Societal intolerance, violence, and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity remained a problem.

A local NGO reported that there were numerous incidents of police brutality against individuals based on sexual orientation and noted that authorities did not investigate or punish those responsible. In addition specific police stations were known to extort money from LGBTI individuals in return for not disclosing their orientation or identity.

There were also reports of family-based violence against LGBTI individuals and hostile Facebook postings on personal online accounts. A local organization reported that as of August, one gay and two transgender persons were killed and one transvestite committed suicide.

LGBTI individuals refused to file formal complaints of discrimination or mistreatment with law enforcement bodies due to fear of social stigma or retaliation. An NGO reported police indifference to investigating crimes committed against the LGBTI community.

There was societal prejudice and employment discrimination (see section 7.d.) against LGBTI persons.

Bahamas, The

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, place of origin, political opinion, or creed, and the law prohibits discrimination based on disability or HIV status. The government did not always effectively enforce these prohibitions, and the constitution and the law contain provisions that discriminate based on gender.

Information in this report reflects the situation in the highly populated areas on New Providence and Grand Bahama. Limited information was available from other less-populated islands.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Activists reported that societal discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals occurred, with some persons claiming job and housing discrimination based upon sexual orientation. Victims had no legal recourse, as the law provides no protection from such discrimination (see section 7.d.). Although sexual activity between same-sex consenting adults is legal, the law defines the age of consent for same-sex couples as 18, compared with 16 for heterosexual couples.

The country has no LGBTI hate-crime legislation. Activists reported that LGBTI individuals rarely reported abuse to authorities, often because of reluctance to reveal their sexual orientation rather from fear of police harassment.

Bahrain

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides for equality, equal opportunity, and the right to medical care, welfare, education, property, capital, and work for all citizens. The government protected these rights unevenly, depending on an individual's social status, sect, or gender. The law deprives foreign workers, who comprised approximately one-half of the population, of many fundamental legal, social, and economic rights.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not criminalize same-sex sexual activity between consenting persons who are at least 21 years of age. Society did not accept lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) activities, such as same-sex relationships and same-sex sexual activity, and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity occurred. There were no open manifestations of LGBTI activity in the country, such as gay pride parades. On rare occasions courts approved the issuance of new legal documents for those who have undergone gender reassignment surgeries.

Bangladesh

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law specifically prohibits certain forms of discrimination against women, provides special procedures for prosecuting persons accused of violence against women and children, calls for harsh penalties, provides compensation to victims, and requires action against investigating officers for negligence or willful failure of duty. Enforcement was weak. Laws regarding divorce, custody, and rape differed according to an individual's religion and were often discriminatory toward women and girls. Women, children, minority groups, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, and sexual minorities often confronted social and economic disadvantages.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual activity is illegal, but the law was not enforced. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) groups reported police used the law as a pretext to bully LGBTI individuals, particularly those seen as effeminate men. Some groups also reported harassment under a suspicious behavior provision of the police code. While the transgendered "hijra" population has long been a marginalized but recognized part of society, the government acknowledged the existence of the LGB population in its April 2013 Universal Periodic Review. This was contrary to its stance in the 2009 review, during which the foreign minister stated there were no LGB individuals in the country.

A person known as Dithi became the country's first third-gender candidate for office when she competed in a December local election in Satkhira.

There were several informal support networks for gays, but organizations specifically to assist lesbians were rare.

Attacks on LGBTI persons occurred occasionally, but those offenses were difficult to document because victims desired confidentiality. Strong social stigma based on sexual orientation was common and prevented open discussion of the subject. Some public events, such as a rainbow-themed march during the capital's main Bengali new year's celebration, elicited little reaction from mainstream society.

Barbados

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides for equal treatment regardless of race, sex, religion, political opinion, and national or social origin, and the government effectively enforced these provisions. The constitution permits the deprivation of personal liberty for preventing the spread of communicable diseases.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity between adults, with penalties up to life imprisonment, but there were no reports of the law being enforced during the year. The law does not prohibit discrimination against a person based on real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, education, or health care (see section 7.d.). Activists reported that stigma against LGBTI persons persisted.

Activists reported few violent incidents based on sexual orientation or gender identity but suggested that social stigma and fear of retribution or reprisal led LGBTI persons to underreport the problem. Anecdotal evidence suggested that LGBTI persons faced discrimination in employment, housing, and access to education and health care. Activists claimed that while many individuals lived open LGBTI lifestyles, disapprobation by police officers and societal discrimination against LGBTI persons occurred. Anecdotal evidence indicated that LGBTI persons were vulnerable to crime, specifically destruction of property, and that LGBTI persons received threats.

Activists reported that many LGBTI persons were homeless, as families often were not accepting of LGBTI children, some of whom became involved in the commercial sex trade.

Belarus

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, language, or social status, but the government did not always enforce these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults is not illegal, but discrimination against LGBTI persons was widespread, and harassment occurred.

Due to egregious official harassment of the LGBTI community, groups opted for holding private activities and events. LGBTI groups did not seek permission from authorities to hold any public events.

Mikhail Pishcheuski, a gay man who was harassed and severely beaten as he left a club in Minsk in May 2014, died from his injuries in October. The main perpetrator of the assault, Dzmitry Lukashevich, was convicted of hooliganism and inflicting severe bodily

harm in October 2014 and was sentenced to two years and eight months in prison. Independent journalists and human rights advocates who observed the trial reported that the defendant openly insulted the victim and his friends in the courtroom. Lukashevich was released as part of the government's amnesty program in September, ultimately serving only 11 months in prison.

Societal discrimination against LGBTI activists persisted with the tacit support of the regime. The police continued to mistreat LGBTI persons and refused to investigate crimes against LGBTI persons. Two individuals filed complaints but police refused to open investigations during the year. The government does not provide transgender persons with new national ID numbers, which include a digit that signifies gender. Transgender persons reportedly have been refused jobs when potential employers note the "discrepancy" between the ID number and the stated gender of the applicant.

Belgium

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions. The law identifies 18 categories of discrimination subject to legal penalty: age, sexual orientation, civil status, place of birth, financial situation, religious belief, philosophical orientation, physical condition, disability, physical characteristics, genetic characteristics, social status, nationality, race, color, descent, national origin, and ethnic origin. A separate law governs gender discrimination in the workplace.

Under a directive issued by the Board of Prosecutors General, police and prosecutors must cite racial motivation or sexual orientation if present when reporting or recording offenses. In such instances the prosecutor must escalate the case (for example, in a racially motivated crime, the charge would additionally include a hate crime offense).

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The country has a well-developed legal structure of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) rights, which are included in the country's antidiscrimination laws. Despite some progress, the underreporting of crimes against the LGBTI community remained a problem.

In December 2014 a court found the four suspects in the homophobic murder of Ihsane Jarfi guilty and recognized homophobic motives. Three of them were sentenced to life in prison, while a fourth received a 30-year prison sentence.

LGBTI persons from immigrant communities reported social discrimination within those communities. The government supported NGOs working to overcome the problem.

The law provides adequate protections for transsexual persons but not for the larger transgender community. It requires a lengthy procedure, including psychiatric diagnosis and physical adaptation of the new gender (including surgery and hormones), before allowing persons to legally change their gender.

During the year the government, in cooperation with the regional entities, implemented an antihomophobia action plan. The plan imposes requirements on government entities involved in family matters, housing, and asylum and migration, and calls for awareness campaigns to combat homophobic stereotypes in schools, youth movements, places of work, and the sports community.

Belize

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, sexual orientation, and age, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The criminal code states that “carnal intercourse” with any person “against the order of nature” shall receive a punishment of 10 years’ imprisonment. The government interpreted this law as including sex only between men. Additionally, the Immigration Act prohibits “homosexual” persons from entering the country, but immigration authorities did not enforce the law.

The legal challenge by a member of the local NGO United Belize Advocacy Movement (UniBAM) against the “carnal intercourse” law continued during the year. As of November the Supreme Court had not issued a decision.

The extent of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity was difficult to ascertain due to lack of official reporting. As of November UniBAM had registered 12 cases of violence as a result of sexual orientation and gender identity, including nine cases involving homicide, violent attacks, (political) hate speech, medical service discrimination during pregnancy, denial of education to a minor due to his sexual orientation and gender identity, and family-based violence.

In January an openly gay man was stabbed several times, shot in the face, and thrown into a nearby river, where he drowned. The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community classified the killing as a hate crime, but the police did not declare it as such. As of November police had made no arrest.

Local LGBTI rights advocates noted that LGBTI persons feared police and were harassed while reporting crimes. They also noted that police at times refused to accept reports of crime from LGBTI persons. UniBAM reported that continuing harassment and insults by the public affected its activities and that its members were reluctant to file complaints.

A private hotel and resort announced a gay pride event to be held in September and advertised it as a tourism activity. The announcement drew criticism from certain churches, after which the organizer cancelled the event.

Benin

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in

Persons

The constitution and laws prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, and social status, but societal discrimination against women continued. Persons with disabilities were disadvantaged. The government took some measures to address these problems but fell short of providing a comprehensive response.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There are no laws explicitly criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual activity. There were no reports of criminal or civil cases involving consensual same-sex sexual conduct or reports of societal discrimination or violence based on a person's sexual orientation. Although homosexual behavior was socially discouraged, it was not prosecuted. A growing number of citizens were open about their sexual orientation or gender identity, but the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community remained largely disorganized and hidden. With the support of a regional LGBTI organization, 30 members from Beninese and Togolese LGBTI communities held a conclave from April 15 to 17 in Cotonou to discuss problems pertaining to LGBTI conditions and rights.

Bhutan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language, religion, politics, or other status. The government generally respected these prohibitions in practice, although societal discrimination existed.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution guarantees equal protection of the laws and application of rights but does not explicitly protect individuals from discrimination for sexual orientation or gender identity. Laws against "sodomy or any other sexual conduct that is against the order of nature" exist. Under the penal code, the government can imprison a person for as long as one year for engaging in prohibited sexual conduct. In response to recommendations to decriminalize same-sex sexual conduct during the country's Universal Periodic Review, the government stated the law "has never been evoked since its enactment for same-sex acts between two consenting adults. These provisions can be reviewed when there is a felt need for it by the general population."

Homosexuality is a traditionally taboo subject, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) population has historically remained out of public view without an organized advocacy community. During 2014 several LGBTI groups established a public presence via social media. There were no NGOs in the country explicitly associated with LGBTI issues. There were no reports of violence directed against members of the LGBTI community, although social bias was present.

A small transgender community existed, and transgender individuals faced social stigma. The law does not provide any distinct legal status to transgender individuals,

nor does it provide explicit protections.

Bolivia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and the law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, and HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, but the government did not effectively enforce these provisions to protect all populations.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution and the law prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Nevertheless, societal discrimination against LGBTI persons was common, and government action to counter it was limited. Citizens are allowed to change their name and gender on their official identification cards, although the process was subject to significant delay and discrimination at the hands of judicial authorities. Credible LGBTI organizations reported that only seven persons had been able to complete the change since 2007. No hate crime laws aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community. On August 18, President Evo Morales stated in a press conference, "I do not understand how women can marry women and men can marry men." On November 16, the president stated that he hoped his health minister "is not a lesbian," although the Ministry of Communication later issued an official apology on his behalf.

In March 2014 the Bolivian Coalition of LGBT Organizations (COALIBOL) announced the killings of 55 members of the LGBTI community between 2003 and 2013. A study presented by the NGO Hivos and COALIBOL in January 2014 found that 93 percent of surveyed LGBTI individuals had been the subject of discrimination from a police officer, prosecutor, or judge. The study also noted that of those surveyed, 82 percent knew of at least one person whom police had arbitrarily detained due to sexual orientation or gender identity. In the educational field, 70 percent of survey participants had been the subject of discrimination from teachers and 30 percent from fellow students. Since promulgation of the Law Against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination in 2010, the armed forces have prohibited ejection from the military because of sexual orientation. Nevertheless, reports of abuse within and expulsion from the armed services continued.

LGBTI persons faced discrimination in the work place, at school, and when seeking to access government services, especially in the area of health care. The transgender community remained particularly vulnerable to abuse and violence. COALIBOL reported that 72 percent of transgender individuals abandoned their secondary school studies due to intense discrimination. Transgender activists said a majority of the transgender community was forced to seek employment in the commercial sex sector because of discrimination in the job market and unwillingness on the behalf of employers to accept their credentials. There were no developments in the 2012 killing of transgender activist Luisa Duran, who was found dead in Santa Cruz with 52 stab wounds.

Elderly LGBTI persons faced high rates of discrimination when attempting to access health-care services, and there were no legal mechanisms in place to transfer power of attorney to a same-sex partner.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases. The government did not enforce these prohibitions effectively. Government and civil society advocates cited a lack of specificity regarding protections for persons with disabilities, and members of the LGBTI community and actively sought relevant amendments to the BiH Law on Discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While law at the state level prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, authorities did not fully enforce it. Moreover the absence of explicit protections in entity-level laws left room for discrimination based on assumptions by subnational law enforcement authorities that state-level authorities were preventing it. There was also frequent societal discrimination against LGBTI persons.

LGBTI persons faced frequent harassment and discrimination, including termination of employment (see section 7.d.). In some cases dismissal letters explicitly stated that sexual orientation was the cause of termination, making it extremely difficult for those dismissed to find another job. In the face of such risks, LGBTI persons rarely reported discrimination to police. In its 2014 report on the rights and freedoms of LGBTI persons, the Sarajevo Open Center noted that most state-level institutions assumed that the prohibition of discrimination in state-level law was sufficient to protect LGBTI persons. The entities regulated many daily activities, however, and entity-level law does not provide explicit protections to LGBTI persons.

In January, a year after an attack that injured several organizers and participants in the Merlinka LGBTI Film Festival in downtown Sarajevo, the Sarajevo Canton Prosecutor's Office launched criminal proceedings against those allegedly responsible.

In July 2014 a Sarajevo court delivered BiH's first verdict in a case involving crimes targeting the LGBTI community, convicting two men for using a dating website to contact and rob LGBTI individuals. The court sentenced one of those charged to five and one-half years in prison and the other to four years and two months. In 2014 the Sarajevo Open Center documented 42 cases of hate speech and 20 cases of crimes and incidents motivated by prejudices based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

On May 17, the BiH parliament's Joint Commission for Human Rights held its first session dedicated to the rights of LGBTI individuals. The commission tasked the ombudsman with preparation of the country's first official report on the status the LGBTI community.

Botswana

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit governmental discrimination based on ethnicity, race, nationality, creed, sex, or social status, and the government generally respected these provisions. The law does not specifically mention sexual orientation or gender identity, although aspects of same-sex sexual activity remain illegal under the penal code. The employment act protects sexual orientation from discrimination. In addition, as long as a government job applicant is able to perform the duties of the position, he or she may not be discriminated against due to disability or language. The law does not prohibit discrimination by private persons or entities, and there was societal discrimination against women; persons with disabilities; minority ethnic groups, particularly the San; LGBTI persons; and persons with HIV/AIDS.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not explicitly criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity, but it includes language criminalizing some aspects of same-sex sexual activity. What the law describes as “unnatural acts” are criminalized with a penalty of up to seven years’ imprisonment, and there was widespread belief this was directed toward LGBTI persons. There were no reports police targeted persons suspected of same-sex sexual activity. LGBTI-rights organizations claimed there were incidents of violence, societal harassment, and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The victims of such incidents seldom filed police reports, primarily due to stigma but occasionally as a result of overt intimidation.

Public meetings of LGBTI advocacy groups and debates on LGBTI issues occurred without disruption or interference. In November 2014 the High Court ruled that the Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs’ refusal to register the LGBTI advocacy organization LeGaBiBo (Lesbian, Gays, and Bisexuals of Botswana) was unconstitutional, since it violated the group’s right to freedom of association. LeGaBiBo had attempted to register as an NGO since 2009 to advocate for the rights of LGBTI persons, but the government refused registration on the ground the group promoted an illegal activity. The government appealed the decision, and the case was pending before the Court of Appeals at year’s end. In the original judgment, the High Court did not address the ban on some aspects of homosexual activity.

Brazil

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits and penalizes discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, but discrimination continued against women and girls, Afro-Brazilians, indigenous persons, LGBTI persons, and persons with disabilities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Federal law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, but several states and municipalities have administrative regulations that prohibit such

discrimination and provide for equal access to government services. Social discrimination remained a problem, especially against the transgender population. Violence against LGBTI individuals remained a serious concern.

The penal code directs that for an offense to be subject to criminal prosecution, it must fall under a federal statute, leaving these hate crimes subject to administrative, not criminal penalties. Sao Paulo is the only state to codify punishments for hate-motivated violence and speech against LGBTI individuals. In July the governor of Rio de Janeiro signed a law penalizing commercial establishments that discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation. Sanctions vary from warnings and fines to the temporary suspension or termination of a business license. Fines can reach 15,600 reais (\$3,950).

According to the SDH, many transgender individuals had difficulty entering the formal labor market or study programs due to an apparent discrepancy between the photograph and name on an individual's labor card and an individual's personal appearance and "social name," which prevented some from obtaining permission to work.

The Sao Paulo city government launched a comprehensive center to provide social services to victims of homophobia as well as access to health care and other city resources. A mobile unit was also created to distribute information and provide HIV screenings at neighborhood events. The transgender population and other vulnerable LGBTI subgroups continued to be a key target of the city's outreach and social services. The city government also had a program that allocated paid internships for transgender students in City Hall to improve their future career prospects and involvement in public service.

The National LGBT Council, composed of civil society and government agencies, continued to combat discrimination and promote the rights of LGBTI persons. Meetings were open to the public and broadcast over the internet.

Brunei

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law does not contain specific provisions prohibiting discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, or social status.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Secular law makes "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" a criminal offense punishable by a fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment. In practice, this was interpreted to include sexual relations between men. The SPC specifically bans sodomy between men or between a man and a woman not his wife and prohibits men from dressing as women or women dressing as men.

Two cases of cross-dressing were investigated under the SPC, resulting in one conviction of a man who was fined BND 1,000 (\$600); one case remained open at year's end. Although there were no reports of official or societal discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex (LGBTI) persons in employment, housing, or access to education or health care, social stigma may have caused affected individuals to refrain from reporting such problems. Anecdotal information indicated that LGBTI individuals avoided disclosing their sexual orientations due to fear of

societal or legal retribution. There were no NGOs working explicitly on human rights for LGBTI persons in the country.

Bulgaria

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, and ethnic origin, but not language, HIV-positive status, or having other communicable diseases. The government investigated complaints of discrimination, issued rulings, and imposed sanctions on violators. The law allows individuals to pursue a discrimination case through the court system or through the Commission for Protection against Discrimination. As of October the commission received 645 complaints, most of them concerning allegations of workplace discrimination and discrimination based on disability and age.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, but the government did not effectively enforce this prohibition.

While reports of violence against LGBTI persons were rare, societal discrimination, particularly in employment, remained a problem. Most LGBTI persons did not reveal their sexual preferences to their families for fear of losing relationships with their loved ones. NGOs stated it was common for persons suspected of being gay to be fired, and such individuals were reluctant to seek redress in court due to fear of being identified as belonging to the LGBTI community.

In June the Sofia Administrative Court repealed for the second time a Commission for Protection against Discrimination decision that a television program statement by film director Andrey Slabakov that “homosexuals are more dangerous than smoking” did not constitute discrimination. In April the National Assembly passed an amendment shifting the burden to the alleged discriminating party to prove that he or she did not violate the equal treatment principle.

On June 27, the eighth annual LGBTI pride parade took place in downtown Sofia. As in previous years, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church issued a statement demanding cancellation of the event. The parade attracted approximately 700 participants and occurred largely without incident. While media coverage of the event was largely positive, 90 percent of online readers disapproved of the event. Police provided sufficient security, effectively deterring aggressive behavior by skinheads and others who caused problems in past years. Protestors held an anti-LGBTI event on the same day, which drew approximately 100 demonstrators.

Burkina Faso

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, but the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. Discrimination against women and persons with disabilities remained problems.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No information in this sub-section. Please see the full country report for more.

Burma

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, birth, religion, official position, status, culture, sex, and wealth, but the government did not effectively enforce antidiscrimination laws. Numerous laws, notably the 1982 Citizenship Law, contravene these provisions. The constitution and legal framework do not prohibit discrimination based on political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, and HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Political reforms in the country led to more visible support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, including the formation of LGBTI rights organizations and their growing activities during the year. These changes made it easier for the LGBTI community to hold public events and openly participate in society. Despite this progress, consensual same-sex sexual activity remains illegal under section 377 of the penal code, which contains provisions against “sexually abnormal” behavior and entails punishments up to life imprisonment. Laws against “unnatural offenses” apply equally to both men and women. These laws were rarely enforced, but LGBTI persons reported that police used the threat of prosecution to extort bribes. LGBTI activists reported harassment by police, including arbitrary arrest (for example, for loitering) and detention. They also reported broad societal and familial discrimination.

There were reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment (see section 7.d.). LGBTI persons reported facing discrimination from medical care providers. The district-, regional-, and union-level courts rejected the Myanmar LGBT Rights Network’s lawsuit filed in 2013-14 against the Mandalay police for arresting and abusing 12 gay men, transgender persons, and NGO outreach workers involved in HIV/AIDS prevention. The investigation continued as of September.

Burundi

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides for equal status and protection for all citizens, without

distinction as to race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or having other communicable disease. The government did not enforce the law in many cases.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes same-sex sexual acts with penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment of three months to two years. Since its passage in 2009, however, authorities have not applied it.

The Remuruka Center in Bujumbura offers urgent services to the LGBTI community. The government neither supported nor hindered the activities of local LGBTI organizations or the center.

Cabo Verde

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, religion, disability, language, or social status. The constitution stipulates the government should create conditions for the gradual removal of all obstacles to the full exercise of human rights and equality before the law.

The law also prohibits racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination, but violence and discrimination against women and children remained significant problems.

The government enforced the above prohibitions somewhat effectively.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Antidiscrimination laws exist and state employers may not discriminate based on sexual orientation. There was no information available on official or private discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care.

There were no reported incidents of violence against LGBTI persons during the year.

In June the Cabo Verdean Association of Gays Against Discrimination, in partnership with the Arco Iris Association and the Fundacion Triangulo of Spain, organized the country's third consecutive Cabo Verdean Gay Week, "Mindelo Pride," in June. The event occurred in the city of Mindelo, on Sao Vicente Island, to promote equality and respect for sexual diversity.

Cambodia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, religion, or social status; however, the government generally did not effectively enforce these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There were no laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct, nor was there official discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals, although some societal discrimination and stereotyping persisted, particularly in rural areas. The government donated broadcast time for programming related to LGBTI rights.

There were no reports of government discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, statelessness, or access to education or healthcare. Consensual same-sex relationships, however, were typically treated with fear and suspicion by the general population, and there were few support groups to which cases involving discrimination could be reported. Unofficial discrimination against LGBTI persons persisted; however, a local NGO reported that discrimination was on the decrease due to the LGBTI community's effectiveness in raising awareness.

A local LGBTI rights organization reported more than 100 incidents of violence or abuse against LGBTI individuals, including domestic violence by family members. Stigma or intimidation may have inhibited further reporting of incidents.

Cameroon

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits all forms of discrimination. It states that a human being, without distinction as to race, religion, sex, or belief, possesses inalienable rights. Although the government made some efforts to enforce these principles, violence and discrimination against women and girls and vulnerable populations persisted.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual activity is illegal and punishable by a prison sentence of six months to five years and a fine ranging from CFA francs 20,000 to 200,000 (\$35 to \$347). Most human rights organizations that advocate for decriminalization of sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex consider the penal code invalid for procedural reasons and because it violates the principal of equality. Government officials defended the law by claiming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights state that countries may limit freedoms in the interest of preserving public order and that individuals have the duty to preserve African values and morals.

Although reports of arrests dropped dramatically, homophobia remained a major concern. LGBTI individuals continued to face social stigmatization, harassment, and discrimination. There were increasing reports that both police and civilians extorted money from presumed LGBTI individuals by threatening to expose them.

CAMFAIDS reported that on January 19, in Yaounde a mob attacked and severely beat a transvestite individual named “Dolores” (legal name, Singa Kimie Jonas). According to the victim, she was heckled by a young man about her appearance and he demanded to see her genitals. He attacked her physically and was joined by approximately 10 others, who used sticks and stones to beat her. A passing law enforcement officer rescued her.

Suspected members of the LGBTI community continued to receive anonymous threats by telephone, text message, and e-mail. Unlike in previous years, there were few reports that LGBTI individuals who sought protection from authorities were extorted or arrested.

Despite the cultural environment, various human rights and health organizations continued to advocate for the LGBTI community by defending LGBTI individuals being prosecuted, promoting HIV/AIDS initiatives, and working to change laws prohibiting consensual same-sex activity.

Canada

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, language, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases. Provincial or territorial statutes in seven provinces and one territory prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity. The government enforced these laws effectively.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the criminal code provides penalties for crimes motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate based on personal characteristics, including sexual orientation. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity. Ontario, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Alberta, and Newfoundland and Labrador prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression. Birth certificates issued by provinces and territories provide the basis of identification for legal documents, and procedures vary for changing legal gender markers to match an individual’s outward appearance or chosen gender expression. Ontario permits individuals to change their gender designation on Ontario birth certificates with written confirmation from a physician that the applicant’s gender identity does not conform to his or her sex designation at birth.

In May, Nova Scotia revised its Vital Statistics Act, allowing residents to change the gender on their identification without undergoing gender reassignment surgery. To make the change residents must present a letter of support from their doctor or a social worker. The change is similar to a revision made by the government of British Columbia in 2014. Other provinces and territories require one or more physicians to certify that the applicant has completed gender reassignment surgery before an applicant may change the legal gender marker.

There were occasions of violence and abuse against individuals based on sexual orientation, but in general the government effectively implemented the law criminalizing such behavior. NGOs reported that stigma or intimidation was a known or likely factor in

the underreporting of incidents of abuse. Some police forces employed liaison officers to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and intersex communities and Toronto police collaborated with community organizations to develop public awareness campaigns to encourage reporting of harassment and abuse. In 2013, the last year for which data is available, the government's statistical agency reported that 16 percent (186) of police-reported hate crime incidents nationally were motivated by sexual orientation.

In June Ontario's legislature passed a law banning so-called conversion therapy on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex children in the province. The law also prevents medical practitioners from billing the public health system for such therapy.

Central African Republic

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The transitional charter stipulates that all persons are equal before the law without regard to race and gender. The government did not enforce the charter's provisions effectively, and significant discrimination existed.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The penal code criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity. The penalty for "public expression of love" between persons of the same sex is imprisonment for six months to two years or a fine of between 150,000 and 600,000 CFA francs (\$260 and \$1,040). When one of the participants is a child, the adult may be sentenced to two to five years' imprisonment or a fine of 100,000 to 800,000 CFA francs (\$173 and \$1,390); however, there were no reports that police arrested or detained persons under these provisions.

While official discrimination based on sexual orientation occurred, there were no reports the government targeted gays and lesbians. Societal discrimination against LGBTI persons was entrenched due to a high degree of cultural stigmatization and social pressure to conform to a heterosexual lifestyle. Many citizens attributed the existence of homosexuality to undue Western influence. There were no reports that LGBTI persons were targeted for acts of violence, although the absence of reports could reflect cultural biases and stigma attached to being an LGBTI individual. There were no known organizations advocating or working on behalf of LGBTI persons.

Chad

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Although the constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on place of origin, race, gender, religion, political opinion, or social status, the government did not effectively enforce these provisions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits but does not define “unnatural acts.” In September 2014 the Council of Ministers approved a draft revision of the penal code for debate in the National Assembly. One of the proposed amendments criminalized homosexual acts with 15-20 years’ imprisonment and a fine of between 50,000 and 500,000 CFA francs (\$87-\$870) as punishment for violations. The government subsequently withdrew the draft penal code from National Assembly consideration for further review, but the revisions remained pending at year’s end.

Unlike in the previous year there were no reports of violence toward the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community.

There were no LGBTI organizations in the country.

Chile

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution states that all persons are equal in terms of the law and dignity; however, it does not specifically identify groups protected from discrimination. The 2012 antidiscrimination law provides civil legal remedies to victims of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic situation, language, ideology or political opinion, religion or belief, association or participation in union organizations or lack thereof, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification, marriage status, age, affiliation, personal appearance, and sickness or physical disability. The law also increases criminal penalties for acts of violence based on discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not criminalize consensual same-sex conduct between consenting adults. The law sets the age of consent at 18 for homosexual sexual activity; heterosexual activity is permitted, under some circumstances, at age 14. Antidiscrimination laws exist and prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. In February the NGO Movement for Homosexual Integration and Liberation reported that it tracked 237 cases of discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity during 2014.

Violence against LGBTI individuals continued. In 2014 five LGBTI persons were killed by assailants who allegedly made direct reference to their victims’ sexuality during the attack. At year’s end all cases were under investigation, and none had come to trial.

Law enforcement authorities appeared reluctant to use the full recourse of a 2012 antidiscrimination law, including charging assailants of LGBTI victims with a hate crime, which would elevate criminal penalties as permitted under the law.

Laws prevent transgender persons from changing gender markers on government-issued identity documents, including national identity cards and university diplomas, to match their outward appearance or chosen expression.

In April President Bachelet signed into law legislation recognizing civil unions of LGBTI persons. The measure, which went into effect on October 22, extends legal protections, including rights to inheritance and to health and pension benefits.

During the year law enforcement and government institutions, including the Gendarmeria, Carabineros, PDI, and the civil register, participated in gender sensitivity and nondiscrimination workshops aimed at improving services for LGBTI citizens.

China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

While there were laws designed to protect women, children, persons with disabilities, and minorities, some discrimination based on ethnicity, sex, disability, and other factors persisted.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No laws criminalize private consensual same-sex activities between adults. Due to societal discrimination and pressure to conform to family expectations, most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons refrained from publicly discussing their sexual orientation or gender identity. Individual activists and organizations working on LGBTI issues continued to report discrimination and harassment from authorities, similar to that experienced by other organizations that accept funding from overseas.

Despite reports of domestic violence among LGBTI couples, the regulations on domestic violence and the draft Family Violence Law do not include same-sex partnerships, giving LGBTI victims of domestic violence less legal recourse than heterosexual victims.

Although homosexuality is no longer officially pathologized, some mental health practitioners offered “corrective treatment” to LGBTI persons at “conversion therapy” centers or hospital psychiatric wards, sometimes at the behest of family members.

NGOs reported that although public advocacy work became more difficult for them in light of the draft Foreign NGO Management Law, they made progress in advocating for LGBTI rights through specific antidiscrimination cases.

China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau) - China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau) - Tibet

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No information in this sub-section. Please see the full country report for more.

China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau) - China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau) - Hong Kong

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law provides that all permanent residents are equal. The SAR's antidiscrimination law further prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, family status, sex, or disability. The EOC is responsible for enforcing the relevant laws and in August 2014 launched a public consultation period to determine whether residents wanted the law expanded to protect residents from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and country of origin. The EOC expected to release the results of this survey in January 2016.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No laws criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity. While the SAR has laws that ban discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, and family status, no law prohibits companies from discriminating on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTI professionals are permitted to bring partners to the SAR only on a "prolonged visitor visa." Successful applicants, however, cannot work, obtain an identification card, or qualify for permanent residency. The government claimed public education and existing civil and criminal laws were sufficient to protect the rights of the LGBTI community and that legislation was not necessary. No additional legislative mechanisms existed to aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community.

China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau) - China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau) - Macau

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law stipulates that residents shall be free from discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, social status, or communicable disease status, and many laws carry specific prohibitions against discrimination. The government effectively enforced the law. The law does not address discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and it does not penalize those who have been discriminated against on the basis of HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There are no laws criminalizing sexual orientation or same-sex sexual contact and no prohibition against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons forming organizations or associations. There were no reports of violence against

persons based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTI groups openly held several public events, and one registered LGBTI group openly lobbied for an extension of protections to same-sex couples in a law on domestic violence.

Colombia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The 2011 antidiscrimination law specifically prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, or social status, but many of these prohibitions were not universally enforced. It also adds a chapter on discrimination to the penal code that includes not only racism but discrimination based on ethnic origin, religion, nationality, political ideology, sex, and sexual orientation. The law imposes a penalty of one to three years in prison or a fine of approximately COP 5.3 million to 8 million (\$1,780 to \$2,680).

During the year through June, the law was applied in 19 cases. On February 27, an official in Pereira was convicted under the law, sentenced to 16 months in prison, and fined COP 6 million (\$2,000).

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There was no official discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care. Members of the transgender community, however, cited barriers to public services when health-care providers or police officers refused to accept government-issued identification with transgender individuals' names and photographs. Some transgender individuals complained that it was difficult for them to change the gender designation on national identity documents and that transgender individuals whose identity cards listed them as male were still required to show proof that they had performed mandatory military service or obtained the necessary waivers from that service. NGOs claimed that discrimination and violence in prisons against persons due to their sexual orientation or gender identity remained a problem. In addition there were instances where authorities denied medical services to transgender individuals.

Despite government measures to increase the rights and protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, there were reports of societal abuse and discrimination. As of June the Attorney General's Office was investigating at least 55 alleged homicides of LGBTI individuals that occurred since January 1. Of these cases, 45 were in the preliminary stages of investigation as of June 30. Colombia Diversa, an NGO focused on addressing violence and discrimination due to sexual orientation, claimed at least 43 killings during the year through September 1 due to prejudice regarding sexual orientation or gender identity.

Colombia Diversa also reported five cases of police abuse of persons due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, with the majority of complaints coming from transgender individuals. According to NGOs working on LGBTI problems, these attacks occurred frequently, but victims did not pursue cases due to fear of retaliation. NGOs also reported several cases of threats against human rights defenders working on LGBTI issues as well as a high level of impunity for crimes against members of the LGBTI community. Such organizations partially attributed impunity levels to the failure of the Attorney General's Office to distinguish and effectively pursue crimes against the LGBTI

community.

The manual of administrative procedures for blood banks issued by the Ministry of Health states that, to protect the recipient of a transfusion from HIV/AIDS, it excludes those who had “male homosexual relations in the past 15 years.” In 2012 the Constitutional Court ordered the Ministry of Health to remove selection criteria based on the sexual orientation of donors, but the regulation reportedly was not changed as of September.

Comoros

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Although the law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, disability, language, or social status, there were reports of discrimination against women and persons with disabilities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual activity is illegal and can be punished by up to five years' imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 to one million Comoran francs (\$115 to \$2,300). Authorities reported no arrests or prosecutions for same-sex sexual activity during the year. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons generally did not publicly reveal their sexual orientation due to societal pressure. There were no local LGBTI organizations.

Congo, Democratic Republic of the

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution includes a general provision that all citizens are entitled to equal protection, and it specifically prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, citizenship, gender, social origin, age, disability, political opinion, language, culture, or religion. The government did not enforce prohibitions against discrimination effectively.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While no law specifically prohibits consensual sexual conduct between same-sex adults, individuals engaging in public displays of same-sex sexual conduct, such as kissing, were sometimes subject to prosecution under public indecency provisions, which society rarely applied to opposite-sex couples. The law prohibits those persons in same-sex relationship from adopting children. Same-sex relationships and identifying as LGBTI remained a cultural taboo, and harassment by the SSF occurred. For example, in May a man reported that he was harassed on the street for dressing in a way that some perceived him as a gay person, and a PNC officer arrested him, despite having committed no crime. There were no official charges brought against the man, but the officer accused of him being “gay” and released him after his lawyer paid a 5,000

Congolese francs (\$5.45) fine.

Congo, Republic of the

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on family background, ethnicity, social condition, political, philosophical or other beliefs, gender, religion, region of origin within the country, place of residence in the country, language, HIV-positive status, or disability. The constitution and law do not specifically prohibit discrimination of persons based on national origin or citizenship, sexual orientation or gender identity, or having other communicable diseases. Throughout the year the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry for Promotion of Women's Rights are the lead government bodies charged with protecting and promoting the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly, the handicapped, and indigenous people (Baka). The Ministry of Social Affairs was particularly active, but its effectiveness was impeded by limited funding and lack of coordination with other ministries.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There is no law that specifically prohibits consensual same-sex sexual conduct. The penal code prescribes imprisonment of three months to two years and a fine for those who commit a "public outrage against decency." The law prescribes a punishment of six months to three years and a fine for anyone who "commits a shameless act or an act against nature with an individual of the same sex under the age of 21." Authorities did not employ the law to arrest or prosecute lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex (LGBTI) persons. On occasion, however, police officers harassed gay men and claimed the law prohibited same-sex sexual activity in order to elicit a small bribe. There are no laws that limit freedom of speech or assembly specifically for LGBTI persons.

The Association in Support of Vulnerable Groups, a gay rights NGO, sits on the National HIV/AIDS Committee, whose meetings the president or the minister of health chairs. A second organization represents the interests of gay men in Pointe-Noire. There was no known advocacy group to represent the interests of lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or intersex individuals in the country.

There were no known cases of violence against LGBTI individuals during the year. The gay men's group in Pointe-Noire, however, privately said police targeted openly gay young men for verbal, physical, or sexual abuse. Although at the official level authorities did not discriminate against LGBTI persons, gay men, particularly the young and the poor, reportedly were vulnerable.

Costa Rica

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion,

national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, language, and HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, and the government mostly enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution establishes that all persons are equal before the law and no discrimination contrary to human dignity shall be practiced. Discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited by a series of executive orders and workplace policies but not by national laws. Transgender persons were able to change their gender on their identity documents through an administrative law judge's decision and later registration in the Civil Registry Office.

There were cases of discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation, ranging from employment, police abuse, and education to access to health-care services (see section 7.d.). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) organizations operated freely and lobbied for legal reforms. In June a family court recognized the first "gay common-law marriage," basing the decision on a provision of the 2013 youth law that includes a provision legalizing domestic partnership benefits only for persons between 18 and 35 years of age. The Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court was studying a constitutional challenge against that provision of the youth law but as of October 30 did not issue a ruling. A 2010 Supreme Court ruling stated that the decision on same-sex civil unions is a legislative one; at year's end, however, the legislative assembly had not passed legislation addressing that issue.

On May 15, the government issued an executive order to discipline public employees for discriminating against persons based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and establishing that government institutions must recognize same-sex couples and their family members in matters related to leave of absence.

Cote d'Ivoire

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, disability, or HIV status, but the government did not effectively enforce the law.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No law criminalizes homosexuality. The law's only mention of same-sex sexual activity is as a form of public indecency that carries a penalty of up to two years' imprisonment, the same prescribed for heterosexual acts performed in public. Antidiscrimination laws exist, but they do not address discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity (see section 7.d.).

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of security forces beating, imprisoning, extorting, or humiliating members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community due to their sexual orientation. Law enforcement authorities were at times slow and ineffective in their response to societal violence targeting the

LGBTI community. The few LGBTI organizations in the country operated freely but with caution.

There was no official discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, or access to education or health care. Nevertheless, societal stigmatization of the LGBTI community was widespread, and many members reported discrimination at health clinics, particularly when seeking treatment for sexually transmitted infections. Persons believed to be gay also faced societal discrimination in finding employment and housing.

Croatia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, language, social status, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, and HIV positive status or other communicable diseases. The government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The Ministry of Interior reported no incidents of hate crimes on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. NGOs indicated police were responsive to reported violations against LGBTI individuals but noted ambiguity in the penal code regarding penalties for violent behavior towards such individuals. Authorities opened several investigations of public incitement to violence and hatred in response to the online bullying and harassment of LGBTI persons, while in other cases perpetrators faced misdemeanor charges of harassment on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. These cases were pending at year's end.

LGBTI NGOs noted uneven performance by the judiciary on LGBTI discrimination cases. For example, the Zagreb Municipal Court rejected five joint suits filed for employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, but the Supreme Court later overruled three of the decisions (see section 7.d.). LGBTI persons filed several civil suits for discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, seeking damages from convicted perpetrators of hate crimes. While the law gives priority status to such cases, a number have been pending since 2011. Several administrative proceedings were pending against the Ministry of Public Administration for its refusal to grant approval to a transgender person's requests for legal gender recognition.

LGBTI activists reported that members of the LGBTI community had limited access to justice, with many reluctant to report violations of their rights due to concerns about an inefficient judicial system and fear of further victimization during trial proceedings.

In July the Osijek County Court upheld the verdict of the Zagreb Municipal Court that Zagreb Pride, an LGBTI NGO, violated the personal honor and dignity of an employee of Croatian Radio Television by placing her on the annual list of candidates for the most homophobic person of the year designation in 2013. The judgment obligated Zagreb Pride to pay 40,200 kunas (\$6,030) compensation and publish the verdict on its website.

Cuba

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, national origin, or “any other type [of basis] offending human dignity.” Most forms of discrimination, however, occurred frequently in all levels of society, mostly directed at the Afro-Cuban population.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care. Nonetheless, societal discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity persisted. According to independent reports, three adolescent boys stoned transsexual Yosvani Munoz Robaina to death in a public park in Pinar del Rio on April 26. Police arrested two minors and one adult in connection with the incident.

Mariela Castro, President Castro’s daughter, headed the national Center for Sexual Education and continued to be outspoken in promoting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. Throughout the year the government promoted the rights of LGBTI persons, including nonviolence and nondiscrimination in regional and international fora. In May the government sponsored a march and an extensive program of events to commemorate the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia.

Several unrecognized NGOs promoted LGBTI issues and faced some government criticism, not for their promotion of such topics, but for their independence from official government institutions. In June several independent organizations attempted to organize an LGBTI march in Havana to celebrate LGBTI Pride Month. According to independent reports, authorities detained several activists to prevent their participation in the march and reportedly asked others not to leave their homes that day, limiting participation to less than 10 activists.

Cyprus

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, and language, and the government effectively enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Antidiscrimination laws exist and prohibit direct or indirect discrimination based on sexual orientation but not on gender identity. Antidiscrimination laws cover employment and the following activities in the public and private domain: social protection, social

insurance, social benefits, health care, education, participation in unions and professional organizations, and access to goods and services. NGOs dealing with LGBTI matters claimed that housing benefits favored “traditional” families. Hate crime legislation criminalizes incitement to hatred or violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Despite legal protections, LGBTI individuals faced significant societal discrimination. LGBTI persons were not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity, nor did they report homophobic violence or discrimination. There were reports of employment discrimination against LGBTI applicants (see section 7.d.).

On November 26, parliament passed a bill legalizing same-sex civil unions. LGBTI rights activists noted the bill did not ban “normalizing” surgeries on intersex infants, grant legal recognition to transgender individuals, or give same-sex couples the right to adopt children.

In November 2014 police raided a photographic exhibition organized by Accept LGBT Cyprus in the municipal market of Nicosia and confiscated all 34 photographs exhibited. Using a court warrant, police kept eight of the photographs depicting naked male bodies and returned the rest to the organizers. Police asserted citizens had submitted complaints that children were exposed to pornographic material. The Attorney General’s Office was examining the case to determine whether to bring charges. Accept LGBT and several other groups and organizations criticized the police intervention, asserting that police acted on an antiquated law that they applied selectively.

On June 6, Accept LGBT Cyprus organized a gay pride parade in Nicosia. In contrast with 2014, there was no counterdemonstration and little public opposition.

In May and June the Ministry of Education, the ombudsman, and the commissioner for the protection of children’s rights organized workshops on homophobia, sexual orientation, and socially constructed gender for teachers at all levels of education. The workshops were part of the ongoing public information campaign, “Shield against Homophobia in Education,” which was started in 2012.

Cyprus - Cyprus - the Area Administered by Turkish Cypriots

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The “law” prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political; opinion, national; origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, HIV-status, or presence of other communicable diseases. Authorities generally enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The “law” prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Homosexuality remained a social taboo and was rarely discussed. Few LGBTI persons were publicly open about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

While there were no cases recorded of official or societal discrimination based on

sexual orientation in employment, housing, or access to education or health care, members of the LGBTI community noted that an overwhelming majority of LGBTI persons hid their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid such problems.

Czech Republic

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on gender, age, disability, race, social and ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, or personal belief, age, language, HIV-positive status, or other communicable disease. The government mostly enforced these provisions. Significant social discrimination against some minorities, including Roma, persisted.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The country has antidiscrimination legislation that covers sexual orientation. In its October report, the European Commission against Racial Intolerance criticized the country for not having specific hate crime provisions covering sexual orientation and gender identity. Single LGBTI individuals may adopt children.

The government did not keep statistics on incidents of violence directed at individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, but NGO contacts reported the number of such incidents was very low. Local LGBTI activists stated that citizens were largely tolerant of LGBTI persons. Approximately 49 percent of respondents in a May opinion poll said they approved of domestic partnerships. The same poll found that 51 percent of the population believed that “coming out” created problems for LGBTI persons. This opinion was held mainly by individuals from small villages (less than 800 inhabitants), persons older than 60, and those having left-leaning political beliefs.

According to a survey conducted by the NGO Pro Fair Play, approximately 14 percent of LGBTI persons reported discrimination and harassment due to their sexual orientation in the first half of the year, a sharp decrease from previous years.

Denmark

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or social status, and the government effectively enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation. Any person who makes a statement or imparts other information that threatens, scorns, or degrades a group of persons because of their sexual orientation is liable to a fine or to

imprisonment for not more than two years. If a person is found guilty of a crime the motive of which was the sexual orientation of the victim, the judge must consider that motive to be an aggravating factor when determining the sentence.

According to the latest available data reported by the Security and Intelligence Service, 26 of the 245 cases of hate crimes recorded in the country in 2013 were related to sexual identity. Authorities actively investigated and punished those complicit in abuses.

The law allows transgender persons to obtain official documents reflecting their new gender identity without requiring a diagnosis for a mental disorder or undergoing surgery. Implementation guidelines published during the year, however, preclude regular doctors from prescribing hormones for gender-reassignment, and, as a result, all transsexual individuals must now visit a single clinic in Copenhagen instead of their regular doctor. Activists pointed to this policy among other medical treatment options as evidence of continuing discrimination against transgender individuals.

Djibouti

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, or language. Nevertheless, the government did not enforce the law effectively. The constitution does not directly address discrimination based on religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, age, disability, social status, sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV-positive status, or status of other communicable diseases.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not directly criminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct, but authorities prosecuted the public display of same-sex sexual conduct under laws prohibiting attacks on “good morals.” No antidiscrimination law exists to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals. There were no reported incidents of societal violence or discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation, although this was likely due to victims being unwilling to report such abuse. Societal norms do not allow for the public discussion of homosexuality, and LGBTI persons generally did not openly acknowledge their sexual orientation or gender identity. There were no known LGBTI organizations.

Dominica

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution specifically prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, place of origin, color, creed, and political opinion, and the government generally enforced it.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual activity for both sexes is illegal under indecency statutes. The law also prohibits anal intercourse between male partners. The government reported rare enforcement of both statutes, and there were no instances of the law being enforced through October. Indecency statutes carry a maximum penalty of five years in prison, and consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adult men carries a maximum penalty of 10 years. No laws prohibit discrimination against a person on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, education, or health care.

There were no official reports during the year of violence against LGBTI persons, but anecdotal evidence suggested societal and employment discrimination against persons due to their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity was common in the socially conservative society (see section 7.d.). Furthermore, civil society organizations reported that LGBTI victims of violence or harassment avoided notifying police of abuse because of social stigma. There were very few openly gay men or lesbians.

Dominican Republic

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Although the constitution or law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, and social status, such discrimination existed. The government seldom acknowledged that discrimination occurred or made efforts to address the problem.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals ranged from ambivalent tolerance to resolute homophobia. No specific law protects individuals against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The constitution states that the state shall promote matrimony as a union between a man and a woman; however, it does not define marriage to be exclusively between a man and woman. The law does not extend the same rights to cohabiting same-sex couples as to cohabiting heterosexual couples. The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity for youth development opportunities.

NGOs reported widespread discrimination against LGBTI persons, particularly transgender individuals and lesbians, in such areas as health care, education, justice, and employment (see section 7.d.). LGBTI individuals often faced intimidation and harassment. Although civil society conducted numerous workshops to raise awareness and alter negative public perceptions, Americas Barometer and Latinobarometro studies concluded that the societal views toward the LGBTI community remained very conservative. Religious groups held rallies against the LGBTI community. When asked whether legal measures should be taken to protect LGBTI persons from discrimination, 54 percent of the studies' respondents opposed such measures. A 2014 Gallup poll found 73 percent of those polled acknowledged societal discrimination against the LGBTI community. Roman Catholic and Evangelical religious leaders often publicly criticized LGBTI activists and international organizations that promoted LGBTI human rights, at times using derogatory terms and insults against prominent LGBTI individuals or activists.

Between December 2014 and August, the Human Rights Observatory for Vulnerable

Groups received 21 reports of police abuse, including arbitrary arrest, police violence, and extortion, against members of the LGBTI community . NGOs reported that LGBTI persons were reluctant to file official charges or complaints due to fear of reprisals or humiliation. In situations in which LGBTI persons filed complaints, many chose to drop the charges. The transgender community reported widespread discrimination and violence.

In August in the colonial zone of Santo Domingo, three members of the Tourism Police tasered and beat a gay man. According to the Human Rights Observatory, he and his partner were arrested for a kiss on the street as well as for walking and holding hands, actions not prohibited by law. While detained at a police barracks, the men were denied telephone calls and food.

According to credible reports, LGBTI individuals were arbitrarily arrested and denied access to jobs, health care, and owning or renting homes. LGBTI NGOs reported that discrimination and attacks were more prevalent outside of Santo Domingo. NGOs reported several cases of LGBTI students expelled from school for no legitimate reason. Members of the LGBTI community reported individuals were denied health-care services in both private and public hospitals.

In July the court in Monte Plata handed down a five-year prison sentence to a minor convicted of the September 2014 stabbing death of a transgender youth, Alexa, at a festival in Monte Plata.

On August 15, Oscar Perez, Luis Manuel Estevez Ponciano, and Jose Rafael Miliario Rodriguez were each sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment for the 2013 killing of Cuban-Dominican Claudio Nasco, the lead anchor for an evening television news program. Nasco was a member of the gay community in Santo Domingo.

In September assailants shot and killed a transsexual, Susi, near the Bavarian Friusa Sector. While authorities stated that the motive of and suspects in the killing were unknown, the Human Rights Observatory and other LGBTI NGOs considered it a hate crime.

Although authorities granted permits for LGBTI individuals to carry out activities in public spaces, the permits often included special conditions that prevented LGBTI organizations from holding events. LGBTI persons often gathered informally in public spaces, especially in Duarte Park of the colonial zone in Santo Domingo. Formal gatherings generally required the approval of the Community Board of Neighbors, an institution influenced by the Catholic Church and its conservative views on LGBTI issues.

On July 5, for the fifth year in a row, the LGBTI community successfully held a gay pride parade and solidarity concert. From November 26 to December 6, the LGBTI community celebrated Santo Domingo Out fest, the country's fourth annual LGBTI international film festival. The festival, which sought to promote human rights and social coexistence, was organized by a volunteer network with the support of various other local and international organizations.

Ecuador

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and the law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political

opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or health condition. The government did not fully enforce these prohibitions. Women, persons with disabilities, indigenous persons, Afro-Ecuadorians, LGBTI persons, and those with HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases continued to face discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution includes the principle of nondiscrimination and the right to decide one's sexual orientation as a right. The law also prohibits hate crimes. Although the law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, LGBTI persons continued to suffer discrimination from both public and private bodies, particularly in education, employment, and access to health care. LGBTI organizations reported that transgender persons suffered more discrimination because they were more visible. On December 10, the National Assembly approved a law on identity and civil data that enabled individuals above the age of 18 to choose if they want to include their sex or gender on their government-issued identity cards.

Generally, the government, led by the human rights ombudsman, was responsive to concerns raised by the LGBTI community. Nevertheless, LGBTI groups claimed police and prosecutors did not thoroughly investigate deaths of LGBTI individuals, including when there was suspicion that the killing was because of sexual orientation or gender identity. According to Silueta X, transgender women were particularly vulnerable to violence motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTI advocates estimated only 33 percent of cases involving violence due to sexual orientation or gender identity were reported to police and only a third of reported cases were processed through the legal system. During the year the Ministry of Interior and Silueta X announced they would implement for police officers a virtual training program on gender-based violence, including violence against LGBTI persons.

LGBTI persons continued to report that the government sometimes denied their right of equal access to formal education. LGBTI students, particularly in the transgender community, sometimes were discouraged from attending classes (particularly in higher education) or denied diplomas at the end of their studies. The LGBTI population involved in the commercial sex trade reported abusive situations, extortion, and mistreatment by security forces.

LGBTI organizations and the government continued to report that private treatment centers confined LGBTI persons against their will to "cure" or "dehomosexualize" them, although such treatment is illegal. The clinics reportedly used cruel treatments, including rape, in an attempt to change LGBTI persons' sexual orientation.

Egypt

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution states that all citizens "are equal in rights, freedoms, and general duties without discrimination based on religion, belief, gender, origin, race, color, language, disability, social class, political or geographic affiliation, or any other reason." Many aspects of the law discriminate against women and religious minorities, and the government did not effectively enforce prohibitions against such discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While the law does not explicitly criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity, it allows police to arrest LGBTI persons on charges such as “debauchery,” “prostitution,” and “violating the teachings of religion,” and provides for prison sentences of up to 10 years. Reports of such arrests remained numerous during the year. Authorities did not use antidiscrimination laws to protect LGBTI individuals. Gay men, lesbians, and transgender persons faced significant social stigma and discrimination, impeding their ability to organize or publicly advocate on behalf of LGBTI persons. Information was not available on official or private discrimination in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care based on sexual orientation and gender identity. There were no government efforts to address potential discrimination.

There were few reported incidents of violence against LGBTI individuals, although intimidation and the risk of arrest greatly restricted open reporting and contributed to self-censorship. Rights groups reported harassment by police, including being forced to pay bribes or to provide information about other LGBTI individuals to avoid arrest. On April 14, an appeals court affirmed the government’s authority to deport or bar entry to foreigners who were gay.

There were reports that authorities used social media, dating websites, and cell phone apps to entrap persons they suspected of being gay or transgender. For example, in February the media reported the arrest of seven transsexual individuals on debauchery charges after police using fake identities located them using fake identities through social media, arranged a meeting, and then arrested them. In March authorities charged the individuals in misdemeanor court with commercial sex trafficking and debauchery.

On January 12, a misdemeanor court acquitted all 26 men referred to trial in 2014 on charges of “practicing debauchery” and “indecent public acts” after police raided a traditional bathhouse known as a hammam in Cairo and arrested the men. Authorities reportedly subjected 21 of the individuals to forced anal examinations.

El Salvador

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Although the constitution and other laws provide that all persons are equal before the law and prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, disability, language, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, social origin, national origin, or religion, the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. There was discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons, and indigenous people.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Societal Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Although the law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, discrimination against LGBTI persons was widespread, including in employment and access to health care. On August 3, legislators of the Constitutional and Legislative Committee voted to approve reforms to articles 129 and 155 of the penal code to include sexual identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation as categories

protected against hate-based threats, hate crimes, and hate-based homicides. These reforms elevate prison sentences associated with each crime: three to six years' imprisonment for threats, 10-15 years' imprisonment for hate-based crimes, and 30-50 years' imprisonment for hate-based homicide. The law may not be applied retroactively.

NGOs reported that public officials, including police, engaged in violence and discrimination against LGBTI persons. The LGBTI community stated that PNC and FGR personnel ridiculed them when they applied for identification cards or reported cases of violence against LGBTI persons. The government responded to these abuses primarily through PDDH reports that publicized specific cases of violence and discrimination. The NGO Space for Lesbian Women for Diversity claimed that as of November, the FGR had prosecuted no cases of killings and other violent acts, nor of possible human rights violations committed by public officials, against LGBTI persons.

On June 27, following a San Salvador LGBTI Pride event, Alex Pena, a transgender activist man and San Salvador municipal police agent, was allegedly assaulted by five PNC officers in front of the Ciudad Delgado Police Station. PNC officers arrested and charged Pena with resisting arrest. Following the incident, Police Director Mauricio Ramirez Landaverde ordered an investigation by the police Disciplinary Unit. Upon completion of its investigation, the PNC passed the case to the FGR for further investigation and possible indictment.

In March the Ministry of Labor inaugurated an office to deal exclusively with LGBTI labor-related matters.

Equatorial Guinea

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on tribe, ethnicity, sex, religion, social group, and political opinion. The law prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, and sex. The government did not enforce the laws effectively.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There are no laws criminalizing same-sex sexual conduct, but societal stigmatization and discrimination against the LGBTI community were problems, and the government made no effort to combat it. There are no specific legal impediments to LGBTI organizations, but none existed at year's end, due mainly to societal stigma. The official government position was that no LGBTI persons were present in the country and that such sexual orientation or gender identity was abnormal. Observers believed such stigma prevented the reporting of incidents of abuse.

For example, in November 2014, when a military man saw a woman whom he liked holding hands with another woman, he shot and killed her on the street. Fearing government reluctance to punish the perpetrator, the victim's family decided against filing charges, and no action was taken.

Unlike in previous years, there were no publicized incidents of official discrimination against LGBTI persons. In 2014 government media forced LGBTI persons to stand in front of the camera and explain their "wrong actions."

Eritrea

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law and unimplemented constitution prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, political opinion, ethnic origin, social or economic status, disability, gender, age, and language, but the government did not enforce these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity, which is punishable by 10 days' to three years' incarceration. The government did not actively enforce this law. Antidiscrimination laws relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons do not exist.

There are no hate crime laws or other criminal justice mechanisms to investigate bias-motivated crimes against LGBTI persons. There was no official action to investigate and punish those complicit in abuses, including state or nonstate actors. There were no known LGBTI organizations in the country. In general society stigmatized discussion of LGBTI issues.

Estonia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, property or social status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, or other grounds.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics. While the law is not specific regarding the forms of sexual orientation and gender identity covered, the general understanding is that all are included. Advocacy groups reported that harassment and discrimination against LGBTI persons remained routine within society.

Ethiopia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides all persons equal protection without discrimination based on race, nation, nationality or other social origin, color, gender, language, religion, political

or other opinion, property, birth, or status, but the government did not fully promote and protect these rights. Discrimination based on age, HIV status, or having other communicable disease is not explicitly mentioned, although the constitution adds “or other status” to the list of prohibited bases for discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual activity is illegal and punishable with three to 15 years’ imprisonment. No law prohibits discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals. There were some reports of violence against LGBTI individuals; reporting was limited due to fear of retribution, discrimination, or stigmatization. There are no hate crime laws or other criminal justice mechanisms to aid in the investigation of abuses against LGBTI persons. Individuals did not identify themselves as LGBTI persons due to severe societal stigma and the illegality of consensual same-sex sexual activity. Activists in the LGBTI community stated they were followed and at times feared for their safety. There were reports as many as a dozen individuals were incarcerated for allegedly engaging in same-sex sexual activities.

The AIDS Resource Center in Addis Ababa reported the majority of self-identified gay and lesbian callers, most of whom were male, requested assistance in changing their behavior to avoid discrimination. Many gay men reported anxiety, confusion, identity crises, depression, self-ostracism, religious conflict, and suicide attempts.

Fiji

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, culture, ethnic or social origin, color, place of origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, birth, primary language, economic or social or health status, disability, age, religion, conscience, marital status, or pregnancy. The government generally enforced these provisions effectively, although there were problems in some areas.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity and expression; however, the right to equality and nondiscrimination may be limited for the purposes of adoption, marriage, devolution of property on death and for pension decisions by the Fiji National Provident Fund, and excluding individuals from holding public office. The crimes decree does not criminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct and recognizes male-on-male rape as a crime. The Employment Relations law prohibits discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation. There were no laws specifically prohibiting discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons in other areas, nor were there criminal justice mechanisms to aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community. In November a Fiji High Court rejected a transgender woman’s request to change her birth certificate after gender reassignment surgery.

There was some societal discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation and gender identity, although there was no systemic discrimination. There were reports of bullying of LGBTI students in schools. There were no official reports of discrimination against LGBTI persons in such areas as employment, housing, or access to health care.

While same-sex sexual conduct was objectionable to some with deeply held religious beliefs, in general attitudes toward LGBTI individuals continued to become more accepting, especially among the young, and articles promoting tolerance appeared regularly in the media. President Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, acting Prime Minister Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, and member of the Methodist Church of Fiji all made strong statements promoting the equal rights of LGBTI persons at the Pacific launch of the United Nations Free and Equal campaign for LGBTI equality in Suva in August.

Finland

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law with new amendments from January 1 prohibit discrimination based on religion and belief, political opinion, ethnic and national origin, age, race, gender, disability or health condition, nationality, language, sexual orientation, participation in political and/or labor union activities, social status, or other personal characteristics. The government effectively enforced these prohibitions. The new Nondiscrimination Act expands the scope of protections against discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. The government generally respected these rights, and law enforcement authorities investigated and punished violations. During the year the Equality Act was amended to include provisions prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity or the expression of gender identity.

According to Amnesty International, transgender persons cannot change the gender code in their government-issued identity documents unless they receive a psychiatric diagnosis, undergo a “real life test,” and submit to mandated and invasive surgical procedures that can leave them sterile. The process can last for years and excludes all transgender persons who do not receive, or choose not to receive, a specific diagnosis as well as those who do not want to, or cannot for health reasons, undergo all the required medical treatments. Transgender persons could rarely change their name to a differently gendered name unless they received a psychiatric diagnosis.

The Finnish Medicine Agency continued to prohibit blood donations from men who had sex with another man within 12 months.

On May 21, an LGBTI group was established in parliament with the aim of increasing awareness of LGBTI rights. The group included representatives of most political parties represented in parliament.

France

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in

Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation; age, language, or HIV or other communicable disease status, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The statute of limitations is 12 months for offenses related to sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability. Authorities pursued and punished perpetrators of violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The NGO SOS Homophobia reported 2,197 homophobic acts in 2014, a 38 percent decrease from 2013. It reported 162 instances of physical assault, a 14 percent decrease from the previous year.

Gabon

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Although the constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on national origin, race, gender, religion, disability, language, or social status, the government did not enforce these provisions consistently. The constitution and law do not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, or HIV positive status.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Although the law does not criminalize sexual orientation or limit freedom of speech or peaceful assembly for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, no LGBTI persons sought to organize public LGBTI events during the year. There were no reports LGBTI persons were targeted for abuse. There are no specific antidiscrimination or hate crime laws, or other criminal justice mechanisms specifically designed to aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community. Discrimination was a problem, however, and most LGBTI individuals chose to keep their status secret, except in trusted circles. Discrimination in employment and housing was a problem, particularly for LGBTI persons open about their sexual identity (see section 7.d.). Landlords often turned away such persons. Stigma was a likely factor in the low level of reporting of incidents.

Gambia, The

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Nevertheless, discrimination against women remained a problem. The constitution and law do not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In October 2014 the president signed into law an amendment to the criminal code making “aggravated homosexuality” a crime punishable by life imprisonment. The bill defines “aggravated homosexuality” to include serial offenders or persons with a previous conviction for homosexuality, persons having same-sex relations with someone under the age of 18 or with members of other vulnerable groups, or a person with HIV having same-sex relations.

Prior to this amendment, the law established prison terms ranging from five to 14 years for any man who commits in public or private “any act of gross indecency,” engages a male sex worker, or has actual sexual contact with another man. There was no similar law applicable to women. There are antidiscrimination laws, but they do not protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex (LGBTI) individuals.

In November 2014 the NIA arrested three persons on suspicion of homosexual activities, following a security operation targeting persons suspected of being involved in illegal activity. The men--Alieu Sarr, Momarr Sowe, and M. L. Bittaye--appeared before a magistrate in Banjul in December 2014. The group was the first that authorities tried under the “aggravated homosexuality” amendment. Authorities later transferred the case to the high court, and on July 30, authorities acquitted Sarr and Sowe. They thereafter left the country. The trial of the third accused, M. L. Bittaye, was in progress at year’s end.

Amnesty International reported in November 2014 that NIA officials arrested and detained eight persons, including a 17-year-old boy, at NIA headquarters for crimes of homosexuality. There they were subjected to torture and mistreatment, including beatings, sensory deprivation, and threat of rape, to force confessions for their “crimes” and reveal information concerning other persons perceived to be gay or lesbian. There were reports of LGBTI citizens fleeing to neighboring countries due to fear of arrest.

There was strong societal discrimination against LGBTI individuals. There were no LGBTI organizations in the country.

Georgia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

While the law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, social status, or other characteristics, the government did not always enforce these prohibitions effectively. The Public Defender’s Office and NGOs noted significant gaps in the implementation of the antidiscrimination law, in particular, due to the lack of enforcement mechanisms. NGOs complained that the responsibility for a company in the private sector to report information on alleged discrimination cases to the public defender was voluntary, which also limited the effectiveness of the public defender’s mandate.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution provides for fundamental equality before the law, and a variety of laws or regulations contain antidiscrimination provisions. The criminal code makes racial, religious, sexual orientation, and other bias motives of an offender an aggravating factor for all crimes. According to NGOs, the government rarely enforced the law, and law enforcement authorities lacked robust training on hate crimes.

Societal prejudices against LGBTI persons remained strong. The Georgian Orthodox Church condemned same-sex sexual activity. NGOs reported that most LGBTI persons concealed their sexual orientation for fear of harassment, and few organizations worked openly because of extensive societal stigma.

Victims of discrimination and violence were reluctant to report incidents to police due to fear of disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to family members and of homophobic reactions by police. Women's Initiatives Supportive Group (WISG) reported the LGBTI community lacked trust in police.

The Media Development Foundation noted numerous homophobic statements by politicians from various political parties and in media. On January 9, a group of NGOs expressed concern over threats made against the LGBTI rights advocacy NGO Identoba, including alleged private messages by a former political prisoner, and death threats on social media against one of its representatives after the representative criticized a speech by the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church. On January 8, NGOs reported that the deputy state minister on diaspora issues released a statement on social media labelling the Identoba representative an "extremist terrorist fighting against Christianity."

LGBTI organizations saw threats of violence as one of the most serious problems facing the community, although the community marked the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) on May 17 without incident in three separate events under heavy security. The LGBTI community saw the peaceful outcome as a significant step forward and noted professional police behavior.

In August the LGBTI community expressed disappointment after the Tbilisi City Court acquitted Levan Kochlashvili of the premeditated murder of transgender activist Sabi Beriani and applied a lesser sentence of four years in prison for the beating of a different individual. According to the court, Kochlashvili acted "lawfully in a necessary self-defense situation," and prosecutors failed to prove otherwise. According to WISG, Kochlashvili received a lesser sentence despite the court's determination that he stabbed Beriani in the chest, set fire to him, and ran from the scene. LGBTI activists expressed concern that acquittals and light sentences for crimes against LGBTI individuals would further discourage reporting of such crimes to police, NGOs, and the Public Defender's Office, due to a lack of accountability even in the "most blatant cases of homophobic and transphobic violence."

In December the Tbilisi City Court partially upheld a lawsuit of WISG and others against the Ministry of Internal Affairs, stating that the ministry had failed to fulfill its obligation to ensure the safety of LGBTI activists in the 2013 IDAHO rally.

On May 12, the European Court of Human Rights determined that police failure to protect persons participating in an IDAHOT march in Tbilisi in 2012 violated the European Convention on Human Rights. The court ordered the government to pay nonpecuniary damages to each of the 13 applicants of between 2,000 and 4,000 euros (\$2,200 and \$4,400) each and compensate NGO Identoba 1,500 euros (\$1,650) for nonmonetary

damages. According to the Ministry of Justice, the government compensated all the applicants before the November 12 deadline.

The LGBTI community reported the law does not address gender recognition for transgender persons. NGOs reported, however, that the Civil Registry Office and Service Development Agency applied a discriminatory standard that requires applicants to present a proof of gender reassignment surgery to change the gender marker in their documents. During the year LGBTI rights NGOs reported that the office denied the requests of two individuals to change their gender marker.

Germany

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and laws prohibit discrimination, including in employment, based on sex, parentage, race, language, country of origin, faith, religious and political opinion, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, and social status. Authorities compiled a strong enforcement record in most of these areas but acknowledged that they needed to do more in some areas, such as enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The antidiscrimination law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. When registering the birth of a child, parents may check a blank box for the gender of an intersex child.

There were no official statistics on mistreatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; the availability of NGO reports on the incidence of such mistreatment varied widely in different parts of the country, although some quantitative data was available for cities with large populations of LGBTI persons. In 2014 there were 259 assaults in Berlin motivated by bias against LGBTI persons, according to the NGO Maneo. They included one killing, 64 incidents involving physical assault or attempted assault, and 74 cases of theft. Transgender persons were targets of 21 assaults.

On July 11, unknown attackers physically assaulted a same-sex couple following Munich's gay pride celebration. The victims criticized police publicly for insisting on testing the victims' alcohol limit rather than pursuing the attackers. Police promised to provide clarifying information but did not do so, nor did they identify any suspects.

Hostility toward LGBTI orientation remained, particularly among immigrants from developing countries. On March 12, a father and two male accomplices were fined 1,350 euros (\$1,490) each for kidnapping his teenage son and attempting to take him to Turkey for a forced marriage in 2012. According to the son's statements, his family had harassed, tortured, and almost killed him when he told them he was gay.

In July 2014, in response to a parliamentary inquiry, the federal government stated that enforcement authorities as well as medical licensing agencies and associations would have to initiate a professional conduct review of any person who offered therapies intended to harm a person, such as attempting to change his or her sexual orientation.

Ghana

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, and language; however, government enforcement was generally inadequate. Limited financial resources and a generally permissive societal attitude toward such discrimination contributed to its perpetuation. Courts were empowered to order specific enforcement of these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes the act of “unnatural carnal knowledge,” which is defined as “sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner or with an animal.” It is a misdemeanor offense if the individuals involved are 16 years of age or older and a felony offense if one of the individuals is under the age of 16. The offense pertains to both persons engaged in same-sex male relationships and heterosexual relationships, but it does not apply to individuals in same-sex female relationships. The law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

LGBTI persons faced widespread discrimination in education and employment (see section 7.d.). They also faced police harassment and extortion attempts. There were reports police were reluctant to investigate claims of assault or violence against LGBTI persons. Gay men in prison were often subjected to sexual and other physical abuse. The government took no known action to investigate or punish those complicit in the abuses.

While there were no reported cases of police or government violence against LGBTI persons during the year, stigma, intimidation, and the attitude of the police toward LGBTI persons were factors in preventing victims from reporting incidents of abuse.

Greece

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political beliefs, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, and HIV-positive status. A law adopted on December 24 establishes a National Council against Racism and Xenophobia, an advisory body under the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights aimed at preventing, combatting, monitoring, and recording racism and intolerance, and protecting individuals and group of individuals targeted due to their race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The law stiffened penalties for individuals convicted of crimes motivated on those grounds. While the government generally enforced these provisions, some societal discrimination continued against women, persons with disabilities, migrants, Roma, HIV-positive persons, and LGBTI individuals.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Some antidiscrimination laws do not specify sexual orientation or gender identity. Violence against LGBTI individuals remained a problem, and societal discrimination and harassment were widespread. A law adopted December 24 provided same sex cohabitating couples the right to enter into civil union partnerships and repealed a provision in the penal code that established a higher age of consent for homosexual men. On December 24, the law was amended to establish 15 as the legal age of consent, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Prior to the amendment, the legal age of consent was 15 for heterosexual sex and 17 for sexual intercourse between men; the law did not specify an age of consent for sex between women.

In its 2014 report, the Racist Violence Recording Network documented 29 victims of attacks based on sexual orientation. The network also recorded 10 victims of violence due to gender identity, including two incidents allegedly involving law enforcement officials as perpetrators. Police ordered a preliminary investigation in at least one of these cases. The network highlighted as “encouraging” the assistance rendered by police to the transgender victims in the reported attacks.

While the law includes sexual orientation and gender identity as aggravating circumstances in hate crimes, crimes targeting sexual orientation or gender identity are not expressly included in the official mandate of offices combating racist violence. LGBTI activists alleged that authorities were not motivated to investigate incidents of violence against LGBTI individuals. In response to continuing complaints by the ombudsman and LGBTI rights associations citing a lack of hate crimes training for police, particularly relating to gender identity and sexual orientation, 19 police officers and four staff members of the ombudsman’s office participated in a two-day training session on October 26-27 on “racist crimes, hate crimes, and their handling by the police” conducted by the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Lesbian and Gay Community of Greece, and the Greek Transgender Support Association NGO.

The Greek Transgender Support Association criticized discrimination against transgender individuals in education and employment, which led to limited access to housing and medical care (see section 7.d.).

The only way a person may obtain a formal change of gender identity in their identification documents is to undergo a gender reassignment operation, followed by an additional administrative legal process with a court.

For the first time, the Athens Metro transit system provided advertising space for the 11th annual Athens pride parade in June. The National Radio and Television Council accepted the Athens pride request to have its television advertisement broadcast as a social message, making it free of charge. Government officials, including the speaker of parliament; the secretary general for transparency and human rights at the Ministry of Justice, Transparency, and Human Rights; and the mayor of Athens attended the event and addressed participants. For the fourth time, a gay pride parade under the auspices of the local mayor took place in Thessaloniki in June. The local Orthodox metropolitan issued a statement opposing the parade.

In May and June the Greek Transgender Support Association denounced verbal and physical attacks against three transgendered women in separate incidents in Athens, Thessaloniki, and Evia. Police opened an investigation into the incident in Athens, in which the alleged perpetrator shot and wounded the victim with a hunting rifle. In August the media reported that unknown persons physically and verbally attacked a gay couple Thessaloniki; the local police unit for combatting racist violence opened an

investigation into the case. The association criticized authorities for lack of proper investigation of the incident in Evia.

Grenada

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, place of origin, political opinion, color, creed, or gender, and the government generally upheld these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activities between men and provides penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment. The law makes no provision for same-sex sexual activities between women. No laws prohibit discrimination against a person on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, education, or health care.

Society generally was intolerant of same-sex sexual conduct, and many churches condemned it. Most LGBTI persons were not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. The Grenada Caribbean HIV/AIDS program (GrenCHAP) participated on the national AIDS council, served as an advocate for LGBTI persons and at-risk populations, and experienced no impediments to its operations. There were no gay pride events.

Guatemala

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, age, or language. The government frequently did not enforce these provisions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The country's antidiscrimination laws do not apply to LGBTI individuals. LGBTI rights groups alleged police officers regularly engaged in extortion and harassed male and transgender individuals they believed to be sex workers. There was general societal discrimination against LGBTI persons in access to education, health care, employment, and housing. The government undertook minimal efforts to address this discrimination.

According to LGBTI rights groups, gay and transgender individuals often experienced police abuse. A lack of trust in the judicial system and a fear of further harassment or social recrimination discouraged victims from filing complaints.

The Government Ministry, which oversees the PNC, worked with LGBTI organizations to adopt inclusive practices within Victims' Assistance Offices. The Electoral Tribunal and

the National Registry of Persons took measures to enfranchise LGBTI individuals through targeted outreach and new protocols. A targeted voter registration event succeeded in registering 207 new LGBTI voters; the Electoral Tribunal dedicated a portion of its website to sexual diversity and added a chapter on LGBTI voter rights to the 2015 Poll Workers Manual. The National Registry agreed to draft an internal memo on nondiscrimination against the LGBTI community, although officials still barred transgender individuals from obtaining identification documents that reflected a different gender.

Guinea

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law states that all persons are equal before the law regardless of race or gender, but the government did not enforce the law uniformly. A new labor code adopted in February prohibits discrimination in employment based on gender, disability, or ethnic identity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity, which is punishable by three years in prison; however, there were no known prosecutions. In 2012 the government restructured OPROGEM to include a unit for investigating morals violations, including same-sex sexual conduct. Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports that authorities arrested cross-dressing men in nightclubs on public nuisance charges. Antidiscrimination laws do not apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals.

Deep religious and cultural taboos against consensual same-sex sexual conduct existed. There were no official or NGO reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, although societal stigma likely prevented victims from reporting abuse or harassment. There were no active LGBTI organizations.

Guinea-Bissau

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination but does not designate the kinds of discrimination the prohibition covers. The government did not enforce the law.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There are no laws that criminalize sexual orientation. Antidiscrimination laws do not apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex individuals. There were no reported violent incidents or other human rights abuses targeting individuals based on their sexual orientation or identity. There was no official discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in employment or access to education and health care. According to government guidelines for civil servants' housing allowances, only

heterosexual married couples were entitled to family-size housing, while same-sex couples received the single person allotment. Social taboos against homosexuality sometimes restricted freedom to express sexual orientation, yet society was relatively tolerant of consensual same-sex conduct, according to a 2010 study by the Pew Research Center.

Guyana

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, political opinion, disability, language, social status, religion, or national origin or citizenship, and the government effectively enforced these provisions. The law does not prohibit discrimination based on HIV status or other communicable disease. There is no constitutional protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex activity between adult men is illegal under the law and is punishable by up to two years in prison. Anal intercourse is punishable with a maximum sentence of life in prison, regardless of whether the intercourse is between persons of the same sex. Activists reported that it was more common for police to use the law to intimidate men who were gay or perceived to be gay than to make arrests. There are no laws concerning same-sex sexual activity between women. The law also criminalizes cross-dressing. In October a male domestic worker was convicted for cross-dressing.

No antidiscrimination legislation exists to protect persons from discrimination based on real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

NGOs reported widespread discrimination of persons based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Reports noted discrimination in employment, access to education and medical care, and in other public settings (see section 7.d.). A 2012 report noted that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons were fearful of reporting crimes committed against them because they believed or were told charges would also be brought against them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Haiti

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law does not specifically prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases, but the preamble to the constitution specifically reiterates the importance of adhering to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which prohibits all forms of discrimination. Nonetheless, no effective governmental mechanism administered or enforced such provisions, including provisions called for in various regional and international agreements.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There were no laws criminalizing sexual orientation or consensual same-sex conduct between adults, nor were there any reports of police officers actively perpetrating or condoning violence against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community.

There were no laws criminalizing the changing of one's gender or sex; however, local attitudes remained hostile to outward LGBTI identification and expression, particularly in Port-au-Prince. Religious and other conservative organizations actively opposed the social integration of LGBTI persons and discussion of their human and civil rights. Leading presidential candidates publicly noted that they would not and should not consider any type of LGBTI rights legislation, particularly one calling for marriage equality.

There were no antidiscrimination laws that protected LGBTI persons and minority groups. Additionally, traditional mistrust of law enforcement and judiciary officials, along with a historically low rate of successful prosecution of SGBV and related crimes, hindered LGBTI advocates and community members from successfully cooperating to reduce violence and discrimination experienced by the group. Some civil society advocates claimed that in the greater Port-au-Prince area, HNP authorities were inconsistent in their willingness to document or investigate LGBTI persons' claims of abuse.

LGBTI advocacy groups in the capital reported a greater sense of insecurity and less trust of government authorities than did groups in rural areas. Several local NGOs and international organizations provided direct support to LGBTI persons who alleged discrimination due to their sexual orientation or gender identity or being victims of SGBV.

LGBTI advocacy and human rights groups, as well as international organizations, continued to assert that LGBTI persons consistently experienced great difficulty in formally registering complaints of abuse and discrimination with government authorities. Reporting of rape and sexual assault remained low across all demographics of the LGBTI community. Although advocates and international partner institutions insisted that the incidence of such abuse remained high, there was a lack of consensus among advocates on the extent of abuses. The women's victims organization KOFIVIV claimed that since the 2010 earthquake, cases of rape and other forms of SGBV perpetrated against women, children, and LGBTI persons rarely yielded arrests and convictions of the perpetrators. LGBTI advocacy groups also expressed fear of reprisal from perpetrators if they report crimes to police.

HNP academy instructors incorporated a community policing framework and philosophy, teaching police officers to respect the rights of all civilians without exception, into their adapted human rights training curriculum.

Honduras

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on sex, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender

identity, political activity or opinion, civil status, status as a member of Afro-descendent or indigenous communities, and physical appearance. Authorities did not effectively enforce these laws. The government proposed a new draft penal code in September. Civil society members expressed concern that it removed sexual orientation and gender identity as classes protected from discrimination, among other problems.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In 2013 the National Congress passed a law adding sexual orientation and gender identity to classes protected from discrimination and included these same classes in the hate crimes amendment to the penal code. Representatives of NGOs expressed concerns about an apparent rollback of these protections in the new draft penal code. Social discrimination against LGBTI persons was widespread. The special prosecutor for human rights reported nine formal complaints of discrimination against the LGBTI community as of October. Representatives of NGOs focusing on rights to sexual diversity asserted that military police and others harassed and abused their members. As of September NGOs reported 19 LGBTI persons died violent deaths, compared with 13 in all of 2014, and that two of the 19 cases were in some phase of the judicial process. In 2012 the national human rights commissioner reported that 92 percent of crimes committed against LGBTI persons were not investigated. NGOs also documented multiple cases of assault and discrimination against members of the LGBTI community.

LGBTI rights groups asserted that government agencies and private employers engaged in discriminatory hiring practices. LGBTI groups continued working with the Violent Crimes Task Force, the Secretariat of State of Security, and the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights to address problems of intimidation, fear of reprisal, and police corruption.

As of September the Violent Crimes Task Force made two arrests, obtained seven convictions and experienced one acquittal in cases of homicides of LGBTI individuals. On September 23, a judge found Frady Rolando Santos Amador guilty of the murder of Ivis Rolando Garcia, a transsexual individual killed in 2012. The Violent Crimes Task Force had 77 open homicide cases of LGBTI persons dating to 2009.

Hungary

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, language, and health condition; however, the government failed to fully enforce these rights.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. In addition the law prohibits certain forms of hate speech and prescribes increased punishment for violence against members of the LGBTI community, specifically referencing these groups as being targeted for their “gender identity” or “sexual orientation.”

On April 29, the Central District Court of Pest convicted a woman for committing violence against a member of a protected community in a case involving an assault on a participant in the 2013 Budapest Gay Pride Parade. The victim encountered a group of antigay protesters who shouted antigay slurs, and a woman from the group approached the victim, tore his clothes, and hit him.

LGBTI groups criticized the prime minister for commenting, in a May 18 response to a journalist's question, that the country is based on traditional values and is tolerant but that "this does not mean that the same rules apply to life-styles that are different than ours." He added, "although the constitution makes a clear distinction between marriage and other forms of cohabitation, persons who pursue a way of life differing from our perception of life are safe and receive the respect for human dignity that they are due." He noted that the country's LGBTI community did not engage in "the provocative behavior that one sees in Western countries and which elicits quite the opposite effect than what we would like."

On July 11, an estimated 15,000 persons joined the annual Budapest Gay Pride Parade. Police secured the parade and sealed off the route of the march. Anti-LGBTI demonstrators shouted homophobic slogans from behind the police cordon.

Iceland

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases. Various laws implement these prohibitions, and the government effectively enforced them.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While the constitution does not specifically prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, it does so implicitly. The law prohibits anyone from denying a person goods or services on an equal footing with others on grounds of that person's sexual orientation or gender identity. It also prohibits denying a person access on the same footing as others to a public meeting place or other places open to the public. The law further prohibits incitement to hatred against persons on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and the dissemination of hateful material.

India

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, place of birth, caste, or social status. The government worked with varying degrees of success to enforce these provisions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes homosexual sex. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons faced physical attacks, rape, and blackmail. Some police committed crimes against LGBTI persons and used the threat of arrest to coerce victims not to report the incidents. Several states, with the aid of NGOs, offered education and sensitivity training to police.

LGBTI groups reported that they faced widespread societal discrimination and violence, particularly in rural areas. Activists reported that transgender persons, who were HIV positive, continued to face difficulty obtaining medical treatment. Advocacy organizations, such as the Mission for Indian Gay and Lesbian Empowerment, documented workplace discrimination against LGBTI persons, including slurs and unjustified dismissals.

On January 28, a high court dismissed petitions challenging the 2013 Supreme Court judgment reinstating a colonial-era penal code provision criminalizing homosexual sex. The Supreme Court ruled that only parliament may change the law that bans consensual same-sex sexual activity. The media, activists, prominent individuals, and some government officials strongly criticized the ruling. On April 22, the Supreme Court agreed to hear an appeal of the December ruling. At year's end, the appeal hearing was pending.

In January, Goa's Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Ramesh Tawadkar announced state plans to establish new centers to administer treatment to LGBTI youth "to make them normal." Goa's Chief Minister later condemned the health minister's remarks.

According to the Telangana transgender NGO Hijra Samiti, the state witnessed on average 10 physical attacks every month against transgender persons. In February, Hyderabad police arrested three individuals for the murder of Kummari Suresh, alias Pravalika, a transgendered person, after the victim refused to give money to the assailants during an attempted extortion.

In March, Tamil Nadu Uniformed Services Recruitment Board rejected K. Prathika Yashini's application because her name did not match her birth name, "K. Pradeep Kumar." Yashini had previously officially changed her name with all government agencies after undergoing gender reassignment surgery. Yashini successfully sued in Madras High Court for permission to take a written examination for the police force on May 23 and partook in field trials on August 5. Yashini became the country's first transgender police officer in November.

On April 16, an acquaintance threw acid upon a transgender AIDS activist in Salem, Tamil Nadu.

In September the Supreme Court agreed to examine in detail the Gujarat government's plea that it could not grant an entertainment tax exemption to the Gujarati film *Meghdhanushya (Rainbow)*, which portrayed a young gay man's suffering. The Gujarat government appealed to the Supreme Court after the Gujarat High Court in February 2014 ruled in favor of the tax exemption. Gujarat's Commissioner of Entertainment earlier denied filmmaker Kiran Devmani the entertainment tax exemption, ruling the film storyline was unacceptable. The state's rationale was that, under the law, a homosexual act was a criminal offense; Gujarat state could not grant tax exemptions to Gujarati movies promoting a "social evil" or undermining national unity.

LGBTI activists in Hyderabad expressed satisfaction with public awareness efforts, including protests against the Supreme Court judgment to uphold the criminalization of

same-sex conduct. Hyderabad LGBTI students reportedly experienced homophobia among students and a systematic disregard for LGBTI rights on certain university campuses.

In January, Madhu Kinnar became the first transgender mayor when voters elected her in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh.

On June 23, the West Bengal government started a West Bengal Transgender Development Board. The transgender community comprises half of the board members. The West Bengal's Social Welfare Minister chairs the board that convenes every month.

On July 1, the Odisha state government created the Department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities with responsibility for evolving welfare programs for transgender persons. On September 24, the department formed a state level committee with representation from transgender activists to recommend social security policies and welfare measures.

In the August elections in Bangalore, 1,184 transgender persons registered to vote. According to civil society, there are presently 10,000 transgender persons in Bangalore.

Indonesia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution does not explicitly prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, language, or HIV positive status or other communicable diseases. It provides for equal rights for all citizens, both native and naturalized. The government at times failed to defend these rights for some minority communities adequately.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The Pornography Law criminalizes the production of media depicting consensual same-sex sexual activity and classifies such activity as deviant; fines range from IDR 250 million to seven billion (\$21,800 to \$612,500) and sentences from six months to 15 years with increased penalties of one-third for crimes involving minors. In addition local regulations across the country criminalize same-sex sexual activity. For example, the province of South Sumatra and the municipality of Palembang have local ordinances criminalizing same-sex sexual activity together with prostitution. Under a local ordinance in Jakarta, security officers regard any transgender person found in the streets at night as a sex worker. According to media and NGO reports, local authorities sometimes abused transgender individuals and forced them to pay bribes following detention. In some cases the government failed to protect LGBTI individuals from societal abuse. Police corruption, bias, and violence caused LGBTI individuals to avoid interaction with police. Officials usually ignored formal complaints by victims and affected persons. In criminal cases with LGBTI victims, police investigated the cases reasonably well, as long as the suspect was not affiliated with the police.

The MUI, the country's top Muslim clerical body, issued a fatwa on "Lesbians, Gays, Sodomy, and Molestation" in December 2014. The fatwa noted that the death penalty is permissible for sodomy and child molestation under Islamic law, and recommended that

the government immediately pass legislation “preventing the legalization of the existence of the homosexual community.” MUI fatwas have no legal authority in Indonesia and are often ignored, but have in some cases spurred government legislation or crackdowns.

In September a member of the DPR criticized CONQ, an LGBTI NGO, and requested that the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology block a YouTube video collection showing LGBTI life in Indonesia, curated by the group. Although the government took no steps to block the website, CONQ made the video collection private as a precaution to protect the filmmakers.

On October 1, Bali police named an Indonesian Four Seasons hotel employee as a blasphemy suspect for selling a vacation package to a gay couple who held a “marriage blessing” ceremony at the hotel. Police also opened an investigation into the expatriate general manager of the hotel. Local police in Boyolali, Central Java, said they were stepping up security to prevent violence after a local man and transgender women held a marriage ceremony on October 10. On October 16, the Islamic Organization Forum protested in front of the DPRD, and the couple relocated a food stall they owned, fearing it would be attacked.

Sharia Police in Aceh reportedly harassed transgender individuals. In Aceh the local government implemented a new sharia criminal code that imposes a penalty of 100 strokes of the cane for homosexual acts (see section 1.c.). On September 28, two young women were arrested for allegedly being lesbians. As the new criminal code had yet to take effect, they were released into a rehabilitation shelter. NGOs expressed concern, however, that sharia police in Aceh have increased surveillance of the local LGBTI community in anticipation of further arrests under the new criminal code.

NGOs reported that religious groups, family members, and the public sometimes ostracized LGBTI individuals. A 2013 NGO survey found that 89 percent of LGBTI respondents from Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Makassar reported experiencing some form of discrimination or violence. During 2014 the National Commission on Violence against Women recorded 37 cases of violence against LGBTI individuals.

The antidiscrimination law does not apply to LGBTI individuals, and the government took almost no action to prevent discrimination against LGBTI persons.

LGBTI organizations and NGOs operated openly and frequently held low-key events in public places, although often without proper licenses.

Families often put LGBTI minors into therapy, confined them to their homes, or pressured them to marry. Bullying of children perceived to be LGBTI was common.

In November 2014, unknown assailants attacked participants in a march commemorating International Transgender Day of Remembrance in Yogyakarta. According to the organizers of the march, a broadcast message went out on BlackBerry Messenger before the event encouraging the public to protest any actions commemorating “Transgender Day.” At the close of the march, three men attacked six participants, punching and kicking them and beating them with bamboo. The victims suffered bruising on their faces and heads, and one suffered a broken finger.

NGOs documented instances of government officials not issuing identity cards to transgender individuals. A 2013 revision to the Civil Administration Law allows transgender individuals officially to change their gender only after the completion of sexual reassignment surgery. Some observers claimed the process was cumbersome and degrading because it requires a court order declaring that the surgery is complete and is permitted only under certain undefined special circumstances. On May 13, the

Kebumen District Court in Central Java approved a request for an official gender change after the claimant provided evidence in court proving she had gone through several surgeries to transition from male to female. The court also granted a name change and gender change in the civil registry.

Transgender individuals faced discrimination in employment and in obtaining public services and health care.

Iran

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, and social status “in conformity with Islamic criteria,” but the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions, and many discriminatory provisions are built into the law.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity, which is punishable by death, flogging, or a lesser punishment. The law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Security forces harassed, arrested, and detained individuals they suspected of being gay or transgender. In some cases security forces raided houses and monitored internet sites for information on LGBTI persons. Those accused of sodomy often faced summary trials, and evidentiary standards were not always met. Punishment for same-sex sexual activity between men was more severe than for such conduct between women.

The government censored all materials related to LGBTI problems. There were active, unregistered LGBTI NGOs in the country, but most activities to support the LGBTI community occurred outside the country. Hate crime laws or other criminal justice mechanisms do not exist to aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community. International LGBTI NGOs reported that many young gay men faced harassment and abuse from family members, religious figures, school leaders, and community elders. Authorities reportedly expelled some persons from universities for alleged same-sex sexual activity. Those dismissed from mandatory military service due to their sexual orientation received special exemption cards indicating the reason for their dismissal, which became the basis for later discrimination.

On September 17, police arrested several dozen persons in Shiraz after a raid on a social gathering. LGBTI rights organizations reported that police forced several individuals to undergo rectal examinations while in custody and that prison authorities beat many of them while incarcerated.

The law defines transgender persons as mentally ill, and the government provided transgender persons financial assistance in the form of grants of up to 45 million rial (\$1,506) and loans up to 55 million rial (\$1,841) to undergo gender-confirmation surgery. Additionally, the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare requires health insurers to cover the cost of gender-confirmation surgery. Individuals who underwent gender-confirmation surgery may petition a court for new identity documents with corrected gender data, which the government reportedly provided efficiently and transparently. Human rights activists and NGOs reported that authorities pressured

some LGBTI persons to undergo gender-confirmation surgery to avoid legal and social consequences due to their sexual orientation or gender-identity ambiguity. The March report by the UN special rapporteur addressed concerns about the quality of the medical care in these surgeries.

Iraq

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides that all citizens are equal before the law without regard to gender, sect, opinion, belief, nationality, or origin. The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, language, religion, social origin, political opinion, age, or social status. The government was ineffective in enforcing these provisions. The law does not address sexual orientation or gender identity, disability, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Neither hate crime nor antidiscrimination laws exist, nor do other criminal justice mechanisms exist to aid in the prosecution of crimes motivated by bias against members of the LGBTI community. Despite repeated threats and violence targeting LGBTI individuals, the government failed to identify, arrest, or prosecute attackers or to protect targeted individuals.

No law specifically prohibits consensual same-sex sexual activity, although the law prohibits sodomy, irrespective of gender. There was no data on prosecutions for sodomy.

Authorities relied on public indecency charges or confessions of monetary exchange (that is for prostitution, which is illegal) to prosecute same-sex sexual activity. Authorities used the same charges to arrest heterosexual persons involved in sexual relations with persons other than their spouses.

The law does not address discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Societal discrimination in employment, occupation, and housing based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and unconventional appearance was common. Information was not available regarding discrimination in access to education or health care.

Due to stigma, intimidation, and potential harm, including violent attacks, LGBTI organizations did not operate openly, nor were there gay pride marches or gay rights advocacy events. LGBTI persons often faced abuse and violence from family and nongovernmental actors. In addition to targeted violence, members of the LGBTI community remained at risk for honor crimes, since their conduct did not conform to traditional gender norms. LGBTI rights groups attributed the lack of publicized cases of attacks to the low profile of members of the LGBTI community, who altered their public dress and lifestyle to conform to societal norms. NGOs established shelters for individuals who feared attacks and continued to accommodate victims. They periodically received threats and relocated shelters for security reasons. Community activists reported that violence and intimidation continued.

According to international media reports and human rights organizations, throughout the year Da'esh published videos depicting alleged executions of persons accused of

homosexuality. For example, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, an international human rights organization, cited widely published January 16 photographs of Da'esh members throwing LGBTI men from tall buildings in central Mosul in Ninewa Governorate. On March 8, Da'esh beheaded two individuals accused of homosexuality and a third for blasphemy in the Bab al-Toob area of Mosul. Between June and August, UNAMI cited several other cases of Da'esh executing civilians by throwing them off tall buildings, all accused of sodomy or homosexuality.

Following a series of 2012 attacks on LGBTI persons, the Council of Ministers established an interministerial committee to investigate the attacks and provide recommendations on LGBTI rights. According to human rights organizations, the committee was not operational and had not completed any reports at year's end.

Ireland

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination. The nine grounds under which the law prohibits discrimination are sex, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership in the Traveller community. The government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation with respect to employment, goods, services, and education. The law does not include gender identity as an explicit category, but the courts have interpreted it as prohibiting discrimination against transgender persons.

There were a numbers of moves to eliminate discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. In May voters approved a referendum amending the constitution to permit same-sex marriage. Parliament subsequently enacted, and the president signed, enabling legislation. On July 15, the parliament enacted the Gender Recognition Act, which provides a process enabling transgender people to achieve full legal recognition of their preferred gender and enables them to acquire a new birth certificate reflecting this change. Individuals older than 18 can self-declare, while 16- and 17-year olds can also apply for legal recognition as belonging to their preferred gender. In December parliament eliminated the exemption of religious-run state institutions from laws prohibiting employment discrimination against LGBTI individuals (see section 7.d.).

Israel and The Occupied Territories

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, or social status, and the government was generally effective in enforcing these prohibitions. Adalah maintained a database of more than 50 laws it claimed discriminated--either explicitly or in practice--against Arab citizens.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the government generally enforced these laws, although discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity persisted in some parts of society. Oded Frid, executive director of the Aguda, the Israeli national LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex) task force in Tel Aviv, and staff at the Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance, a leading LGBTI organization, said most of the LGBTI community's gains came through the courts, and not through legislation.

In June the National Labor Court issued a decision confirming that the Equal Employment Opportunities Law should prohibit discrimination based on gender identity.

An LGBTI violence-prevention center and hotline reported it received 250 reports of violence and discrimination between August 2013 and August 2014.

In November the Jerusalem District Court upheld a transgender woman's request, stated in her will, to have her remains cremated following her suicide. Cremation is forbidden according to Jewish law, and the woman's ultra-Orthodox family appealed the decision to the Supreme Court, claiming the woman was mentally unstable when she made the decision.

Transgender individuals who wanted sex-reassignment surgery encountered difficulty securing it. On May 5, *Haaretz* reported that a health maintenance organization refused to pay for two transgender individuals' sex-change surgeries. In March 2014 the Ministry of Health's director general issued a directive stating that sex-reassignment surgery was included in the list of government-subsidized health services provided to all citizens. In spite of this judgment, the patients in question received conflicting information from health-care providers, resulting in significant personal expenses.

On July 30, an ultra-Orthodox Haredi man stabbed six persons at the Jerusalem March for Pride and Tolerance (see section 1.a.). One victim subsequently died from her injuries.

UNHCR expressed continuing concerns for West Bank residents who claimed to be in a life-threatening situation due to their sexual orientation and who requested legal residency status in Israel. There is no mechanism for granting such persons legal status, leaving those who cannot return to the West Bank due to fear of persecution and vulnerability to human traffickers, violence, and exploitation. In 2013 the government established an interministerial team to examine the problem, and the Aguda and the Aid Organization for Refugees, an NGO serving asylum seekers, formed a partnership to work on this problem.

There were reports of discrimination in the workplace against LGBTI persons, despite laws prohibiting such discrimination (see section 7.d.). A study by the LGBTI task force found that employers discriminated against approximately 80 percent of transgender persons, 50 percent of lesbians, and 20 percent of gay men in the hiring process or terminated them once they discovered the employees' sexual orientation or gender identity.

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Territories

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

PA law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, language, or social status. PA authorities worked to enforce these laws but often failed to do so. Some laws are discriminatory. For example, it is illegal for a Palestinian to sell land to Israelis, an offense punishable by death.

Hamas, despite remaining under the authority of Palestinian laws prohibiting discrimination, continued to implement discriminatory policies based on race, political affiliation, gender, and sexual orientation.

Many NGOs alleged Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza amounted to racial and cultural discrimination, citing legal differences between the treatment of Palestinians and Jewish settlers in the West Bank.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Palestinian law, based on the 1960 Jordanian penal code, prohibits consensual same-sex sexual activity, although the PA did not prosecute individuals suspected of such activity. Societal discrimination based on cultural and religious traditions was commonplace, making the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza challenging environments for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. Some Palestinians claimed PA security officers and neighbors harassed, abused, and sometimes arrested LGBTI individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. NGOs reported Hamas also harassed and detained persons due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Italy

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, disability, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases. It provides some protection against discrimination based on disability, language, or social status. While the government generally enforced these prohibitions, some societal discrimination continued against women, persons with disabilities, immigrants, ethnic minorities such as Roma, and LGBTI persons.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Antidiscrimination laws exist and apply specifically to LGBTI victims of homophobic and transphobic offenses, but there is no provision for a victim's sexual orientation to be

considered an aggravating circumstance in hate crimes.

In 2014 Gay Help Line, an NGO that runs a hotline providing support to LGBTI persons, received 20,000 calls. Approximately 40 percent of callers under the age of 25 reported problems at school and with their families, while most adults (38 percent) reported discrimination at work (see section 7.d.). The press reported isolated cases of violence against gay and lesbian couples during the year.

On May 26, the Rome-based association Gay Center reported that five teenagers insulted and assaulted a transsexual in Latina. The five boys threatened the victim with a knife and spat on her.

Jamaica

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, place of origin, political opinion, color, or creed. The government generally enforced these prohibitions, although there continued to be discrimination based on political affiliation in the distribution of scarce governmental benefits, including employment, particularly in poor inner city communities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits “acts of gross indecency” (generally interpreted as any kind of physical intimacy) between persons of the same sex, in public or in private, and provides a penalty of two years in prison for the offense. There is also an “antibuggery” law that criminalizes consensual as well as nonconsensual anal intercourse, punishable by up to 10 years in prison. During the year, it was only enforced in cases of sexual assault and child molestation and was not used to prosecute consensual same-sex sexual conduct between men. Homophobia was widespread in the country.

The NGO J-FLAG reported that during the year approximately 100 LGBTI persons were subjected to discrimination, harassment, violence and other forms of abuse, including 19 cases of physical assault, 34 of verbal assault, 22 involving threat and intimidation, and four mob attacks. According to J-FLAG, an estimated 100 LGBTI persons reported being forced to flee their homes and rendered homeless over the past six years; another group of approximately 30 individuals remained homeless in Kingston. Through J-FLAG and other local NGOs, LGBTI persons were able to address these issues in the media and public forums and advocate for their human rights. Several high-ranking political leaders expressed support for safeguarding human rights of LGBTI persons.

The Ministry of Health and J-FLAG trained more than 200 healthcare workers in 2014 and 2015 to sensitize them to LGBTI patients. Although the country has universal health care, members of the LGBTI community relied mainly on the Jamaica AIDS Support for Life clinic, claiming that the staff in the government’s health system did not understand their needs and was unwelcoming. Training programs such as those conducted by J-FLAG, public advocacy by other NGOs and international donors, and increased focus by the government on the public health issue of HIV/AIDS increased the number of LGBTI persons accessing public-sector health care facilities.

Japan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, and social status but does not prohibit discrimination based on language, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Although the government enforced these prohibitions to some degree, discrimination against women, minority group members, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons, and foreigners remained problems. Moreover, enforcement was not uniform, with some provisions for persons with disabilities interpreted as applying to the public sector but not the private sector.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. There are no penalties associated with such discrimination, and no related statistics were available. Laws governing rape, sexual commerce, and other activity involving sexual intercourse do not apply to same-sex sexual activity, since the law defines sex as exclusively male-to-female vaginal intercourse. This definition leads to lower penalties for perpetrators of male rape and greater legal ambiguity surrounding same-sex prostitution.

NGOs that advocate on behalf of LGBTI persons reported no impediments to organization but some instances of bullying, harassment, and violence. Stigma surrounding LGBTI persons remained an impediment to self-reporting of discrimination or abuse, and studies on bullying and violence in schools generally did not take into account the sexual orientation or gender identity of the persons involved. Pervasive societal stigma surrounding LGBTI persons also prevented many from being open about their sexual orientation, and attorneys who frequently represent LGBTI persons related several cases during the year in which clients were threatened with disclosure of sexual orientation. Self-censorship in the press remained an impediment to bringing LGBTI issues into mainstream discourse.

The law allows transgender individuals to change their legal gender, but only after receiving a diagnosis of sexual identity disorder.

Jordan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution states that all citizens are equal under the law and prohibits discrimination based on race, language, and religion; the constitution and other laws prohibit discrimination based on political opinion. The government did not effectively enforce these provisions, however. Furthermore, the penal code does not address discrimination, thereby severely limiting judicial remedies. Discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, national origin or citizenship, social origin, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, or HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases is not specifically prohibited and remained a problem. Women faced significant and widespread discrimination across society.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While consensual same-sex sexual conduct is not illegal, societal discrimination against LGBTI persons was prevalent, and LGBTI persons were targets of abuse. Activists reported discrimination in housing, employment, education, and access to public services. Some LGBTI individuals reported reluctance to engage the legal system due to fear their sexual orientation or gender identity would either provoke hostile reactions from police or disadvantage them in court. Activists reported that most LGBTI individuals were closeted and fearful of their sexual identity being disclosed.

Over a few days in August, tourist police arrested nine gay men and transgender women in Amman based on their appearance; none was charged, and most were released within a day or two. One individual was released after a week of detention. During the year there were reports of individuals who left the country due to fear that their families would punish them because of their sexual orientation.

Kazakhstan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

While the law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, the government did not effectively enforce the law. There were reports of violence against women, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

According to the constitution, no one shall be subject to any discrimination for reasons of origin; occupational, social, or property status; sex; race; nationality; language; religion or belief; place of residence; or any other circumstances. The country does not criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity. During the year a law on “protecting the child” that included a provision that would have prohibited “propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations” was discussed in the parliament. The Senate chairman sent the law to the Constitutional Council, which declared it unconstitutional.

Although gender-reassignment documentation exists, the law requires a transgender person to fulfill three steps before being able to receive identity documents that align with the person’s outward gender: 1) a month of inpatient psychiatric evaluation, 2) a course of hormone replacement therapy, and 3) approval and completion of gender-reassignment surgery. Those who receive gender-reassignment surgery outside of the country fall outside this process. Many individuals lived with nonconforming documents for years and reported problems with securing employment, housing, and health care.

According to a survey conducted during the year, half of transgender persons indicated that they experienced physical abuse due to prejudice against transgender individuals or did not experience such abuse because their gender identity was unknown. The KIBHR noted in a 2015 report, “To this date we have no knowledge of any court cases regarding discrimination [against] sexual minorities.”

Although there were no government statistics on discrimination or violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity, there were reports of such actions. According to representatives of international and local organizations, negative social attitudes towards members of marginalized groups, including LGBTI persons, impeded the willingness of the latter to come forward, organize, or seek access to HIV/AIDS programs. Hate crime legislation or other legal mechanisms do not exist to aid prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community. There were no prosecutions of anti-LGBTI violence.

NGOs reported members of the LGBTI community seldom turned to law enforcement agencies to report violence against them because they feared hostility, ridicule, and occasionally violence. They were reluctant to use mechanisms such as the national commissioner for human rights to seek remedies for harms inflicted, because they did not trust these mechanisms to safeguard their identities, especially with regard to employment.

Kenya

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, religion, ethnic or social origin, disability, and marital or health status. Government authorities did not effectively enforce many of these provisions, and discrimination against women; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; individuals with HIV/AIDS; persons with disabilities; persons suspected of witchcraft; and certain ethnic groups was a problem. There was also evidence that some national and local government officials tolerated, and in some instances instigated, ethnic violence. The law criminalizes homosexual activity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution does not explicitly protect LGBTI persons from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The penal code criminalizes “carnal knowledge against the order of nature,” which is interpreted to prohibit consensual same-sex sexual activity, and specifies a maximum penalty of 14 years’ imprisonment if convicted. A separate statute specifically criminalizes sex between men and specifies a maximum penalty of 21 years’ imprisonment if convicted. Police detained persons under these laws, particularly persons suspected of prostitution, but released them shortly afterward. Statistics presented in the National Assembly in March 2014 indicated that police opened files on 595 “unnatural offenses” cases since 2010, including 49 in 2014. Human rights organizations contended that these statistics conflated cases of consensual same-sex sexual activity with nonconsensual sexual activity as well as with cases of bestiality. According to a 2014 report issued by the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya and the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, in 2012-14 there were eight prosecutions of gay men on indecency charges.

LGBTI organizations reported police more frequently used public order laws (for example, disturbing the peace) than same-sex legislation to arrest LGBTI individuals. Police frequently harassed, intimidated, or physically abused LGBTI individuals in custody.

Authorities permitted LGBTI advocacy organizations to register and conduct activities. There were reports, however, that some organizations registered under modified platforms to avoid denial of registration by the government.

Violence and discrimination against LGBTI individuals was widespread. According to a 2014 report by journalist Denis Nzioka, LGBTI individuals were especially vulnerable to blackmail and rape by police officers and individuals who used LGBTI websites to locate victims. Human rights and LGBTI rights organizations noted victims were extremely reluctant to report abuse or seek redress.

According to the joint report of Human Rights Watch and the NGO Persons Marginalized and Aggrieved of Kenya, *The Issue is Violence: Attacks on LGBT People on Kenya's Coast*, police arrested two men in Kwale County on February 18 and charged them with “unnatural offenses” and trafficking in “obscene material.” Police searched their homes without a warrant and took them to Kwale District Court, where the prosecutor received a court order for the men to undergo anal “medical examinations.” Authorities released one man on bond after two months at Kwale Medium Prison, while authorities released the other after four months. The case against both continued at year’s end.

In April the High Court ruled in favor of the NGLHRC in a case challenging the government’s refusal to register LGBTI advocacy and welfare organizations. The NGLHRC sought court intervention after unsuccessfully trying since 2012 to register under the Nongovernmental Organizations Coordination Act. The court ruled that refusing to register the organization was an infringement on constitutionally protected freedom of association. The government filed an appeal against the ruling; the court had not taken action on the appeal as of year’s end.

In conjunction with the July visit of a high-level foreign official, there was increased public discourse on the issue of LGBTI rights in the country. Religious and political organizations, including the antigay parliamentary caucus formed in 2014, held several demonstrations in early July protesting against any attempt to legalize same sex marriage.

Kiribati

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, or color, and the government observed these prohibitions; however, only native I-Kiribati may own land. The law prohibits gender discrimination only in employment, but due mainly to limited resources the government did not effectively enforce this provision during the year.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual sexual conduct between men is illegal, with a maximum penalty of five to 14 years’ imprisonment depending on the nature of the offense. There were no reports of prosecutions directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons under these provisions.

No law specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. There were no reports of societal discrimination or violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Korea, Democratic People's Republic of

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

While the constitution grants equal rights to all citizens, the government reportedly did not actually grant its citizens most fundamental human rights, and it continued pervasive discrimination based on social status.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There are no laws against consensual same-sex activity, but no information was available on discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. In April 2014 the Korean Central News Agency, the state news agency, denied the existence of consensual same-sex activity in the country and reported, "The practice can never be found in the DPRK boasting of sound mentality and good morals."

Korea, Republic of

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law forbids discrimination based on race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and social status. There is no enforcement mechanism in the law, and it does not protect migrant workers against racial discrimination, foreign workers from HIV discrimination, or pregnant school-age girls from being denied an education.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The Ministry of Justice reported the constitution's equality principles apply to LGBTI persons. The law that established the NHRC prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and authorizes the NHRC to review cases of such discrimination, but the law does not specify discrimination based on gender identity.

No laws either specify punishment for persons found to discriminate against LGBTI persons or provide for remedies to victims of discrimination or violence. During the first half of the year, the NHRC reported four cases of such alleged discrimination. In April the Ministry of Justice and the Seoul Metropolitan City Government denied an LGBTI human rights organization's application to register as an NGO. The Ministry of Justice found that the scope of the NGO's advocacy work affected only a social minority and thus did not qualify for approval as a registered NGO.

A Seoul court overturned the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency's initial decision to ban a parade at the June 2015 Korea Queer Culture Festival, and the event was held under heavy security without any incident. Anti-LGBTI protestors staged a counter protest on the perimeter of the parade.

While there were no known cases of violence against LGBTI persons during the year,

LGBTI individuals and organizations continued to face societal discrimination. The Military Criminal Act criminalizes consensual sodomy between men in the military with up to two years' imprisonment.

LGBTI groups kept a very low profile because same-sex relationships were not widely accepted. For example, few entertainers were openly gay, and one who was "outed" claimed various entertainment organizations fired him as a result.

Kosovo

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law specifically prohibits discrimination based on sex, gender, age, marital status, language, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation or conviction, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, race, social origin, property, birth, or any other characteristic. The government did not always effectively enforce these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

The constitution and law prohibit direct or indirect discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, health care, and education following the passage on May 28 of amendments to the Law on Anti-Discrimination.

When the motivation for a crime is based on gender, sexual orientation, or perceived affinity of the victim with persons who are targets of such hostility, the law considers that motivation to be an aggravating circumstance.

An Advisory and Coordinating Group consisting of representatives of eight ministries, the Office of Good Governance, and three LGBTI NGOs cooperated to protect and promote the rights of the LGBTI community. This group met twice during the year and agreed to the country's first National Action Plan for LGBT rights in May. The group, however, lacked authority to implement its decisions.

The government took steps to signal its support for LGBTI rights by sponsoring and attending numerous public events, such as the second annual Pride walk on the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, which was the largest in the country's history. The government also illuminated the main government building with rainbow colors.

A member of the Center for Social Group Development, an NGO that works with the LGBTI community, submitted a discrimination complaint to the Human Rights Unit in Pristina against a municipal official he alleged discriminated against him on the basis of his sexual orientation. There were no reports of action by the municipality in this case as of December.

According to human rights NGOs, the LGBTI community faced overt discrimination in employment, housing, determination of statelessness, and access to education and health care. The NGOs said societal pressure persuaded most LGBTI persons to conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity. NGOs reported that discrimination against LGBTI individuals often went unreported, alleging that police were not sensitive to the needs of their community. According to NGOs, as of December LGBTI persons had

reported 13 hate crimes since the country's independence in 2008, but none of these reports had resulted in an indictment.

Kuwait

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, origin, disability, or language. The government did not consistently enforce laws against discrimination, and a number of laws and regulations discriminated against women, bidoon, noncitizens, and foreign workers.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct between men and cross-dressing are illegal. The law punishes consensual same-sex sexual activity between men older than 21 with imprisonment of up to seven years; those engaging in consensual same-sex sexual activity with men younger than 21 may be imprisoned for as long as 10 years. No laws criminalize sexual behavior between women. The law imposes a fine of 1,059 dinars (\$3,530) and imprisonment for one to three years for persons imitating the appearance of the opposite sex in public. Transgender persons reported harassment, detainment, and abuse by security forces. A human rights organization reported that authorities incarcerated two transgender persons due to their transgender identity.

Police arrested seven cross-dressers and gay men in September after allegedly breaking up a party at a private residence. Police reportedly obtained a warrant, raided the residence, and charged those arrested with engaging in immoral activities.

Societal discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity occurred; to a lesser extent, officials also practiced such discrimination, usually upon discovering that a person stopped for a traffic violation did not appear to be the gender indicated on the identification card. Transgender men and women often faced rejection by their families and, in some cases, disputes over inheritances.

No registered NGOs focused on LGBTI matters, although unregistered ones existed. Due to social convention and potential repression, LGBTI organizations neither operated openly nor held gay pride marches or gay rights advocacy events.

Kyrgyz Republic

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, ethnic origin, creed, age, political or other beliefs, education, background, property, or other status. The government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. Although women were active in government, education, civil society, the media, and small business, they encountered gender-based discrimination. Rights activists claimed authorities failed to investigate or punish perpetrators of crimes of discrimination during the year. Members of the LGBTI community reported systematic-police led harassment and beatings. NGOs reported ethnic Uzbeks were attacked by ethnic Kyrgyz because of their ethnicity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

LGBTI persons whose sexual orientation or gender identity was publicly known risked physical and verbal abuse, possible loss of jobs, and unwanted attention from police and other authorities. Inmates and officials often openly victimized incarcerated gay men. Doctors sometimes refused to treat LGBTI individuals. Members of the LGBTI community said their families ostracized them when they learned of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Forced marriages of lesbians and bisexual women to men also occurred. The Labrys Public Foundation noted the practice of “corrective rape” of lesbians to “cure” their homosexuality. The practice was underreported, and its extent was difficult to estimate.

Labrys, Kyrgyz Indigo, and Grace--three established LGBTI support NGOs--reported numerous acts of violence against members of the LGBTI community. For example, on April 3, unknown assailants threw three Molotov cocktails into the offices of the LGBTI rights organization Labrys. Two of the explosives ignited in the courtyard, while another that landed on the roof did not ignite. No one was injured in the attack.

On May 17, 25 anti-gay protesters forcibly entered an event in honor of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, and assaulted and photographed attendees. Police arrested 20 of the attendees and five of the protesters. Police held the LGBTI attendees in the same cell as the protesters, who made offensive, anti-gay comments towards the LGBTI men and women in detention. All were released the same day. In the week following the attack, the newspaper *Delo Nomer* published an article with photographs of the event attendees.

Members of the LGBTI community reported an increase in attempts to forcibly “out” gays and lesbians on social media. In one widespread incident, police forced a transgender woman to undress on camera. The video was posted on the social media site Odnaklassniki.ru with the title “woman with a surprise.”

In 2014, HRW released *They Told Us We Deserved This: Police Violence against Gay and Bisexual Men in Kyrgyzstan*, a 65-page report based on interviews with 40 LGBTI persons chronicling instances of extortion, beatings, and sexual assault on them. The report described in detail how police patrolling parks and bars frequented by gay men would threaten them with violence and arrest or threaten to reveal their homosexuality to their families if they did not pay bribes. These practices, according to representatives of the LGBTI community, continued. NGO leaders in the southern part of the country reported an even greater threat.

High-level members of the government made public statements that dehumanized and degraded the LGBTI community.

Laos

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides for equal treatment under the law for all citizens without regard to ethnicity, gender, social status, education, or religious affiliation. The government at times took action when well-documented, obvious cases of discrimination came to the attention of high-level officials, although the legal mechanism whereby citizens may bring

charges of discrimination against individuals or organizations was neither well developed nor widely understood.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and there was no such official discrimination reported during the year. Nonetheless, observers believed societal stigma and concern about repercussions led individuals to withhold reporting incidents of abuse.

There were no legal impediments to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) organizational activities, but the government discouraged those activities.

Within lowland society, despite wide and growing tolerance of LGBTI persons, societal discrimination in employment and housing persisted, and there were no governmental efforts to address it. Local activists explained that most LGBTI individuals did not attempt to apply for government or high-level private-sector jobs because there was a tacit understanding that employers were unwilling to hire them. Reports indicated lesbians faced greater societal stigma and discrimination than gay men.

Latvia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, and social status. The government enforced most of these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The country's antidiscrimination laws do not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. NGOs expressed concerns about the lack of explicit protection in criminal law against incitement to hatred and violence on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

In October the Riga City Council ordered the removal of public posters promoting tolerance of LGBTI lifestyles, citing the need to protect the public from "undesirable language and thoughts."

The ombudsman reported receiving no reports of alleged discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, but LGBTI representatives reported that cooperation between the ombudsman and the LGBTI community was limited. NGOs complained that intolerance of LGBTI persons was widespread and that attacks and discrimination against them were underreported.

The NGO Mozaika received 16 reports of violence against LGBTI individuals in the first 10 months of the year. Eight of the incidents were physical attacks; others ranged from verbal attacks to discrimination at work and bullying in schools.

Riga hosted EuroPride 2015, with more than 5,000 persons participating in a parade

through the city. The event took place without incident, a marked improvement over past, smaller-scale events, which were met with harassment and violence. Mozaika reported that authorities were cooperative and professional.

Lebanon

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law provides for equality among all citizens and prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. Although the government generally respected these provisions, they were not enforced, especially with regard to economic matters, and aspects of the law and traditional beliefs discriminated against women. The law does not protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Official and societal discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTI) persons persisted. There is no all-encompassing antidiscrimination law to protect LGBTI persons. The law prohibits “unnatural sexual intercourse,” an offense punishable by up to one year in prison but rarely applied; however, it often resulted in a fine. The Ministry of Justice did not keep records on these infractions. There were no reports authorities imprisoned anyone for violation of this law during the year.

Various NGOs, including Helem, AFE, and Marsa, hosted regular meetings in a safe house, provided counseling services, and carried out advocacy projects for the LGBTI community.

Information was not available on official or private discrimination in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or lack of access to education or health care based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The government did not collect such information, and individuals who faced problems were reluctant to report incidents due to fear of additional discrimination. There were no government efforts to address potential discrimination. During the year Marsa reported that a worker lost his job after informing the company’s human resources department that he was HIV positive. During the year Oui Pour La Vie, an NGO working on the issue of stigma and discrimination against LGBTI persons, reported employers expelled two transgender women and one gay person from their work because of their gender identity and sexual orientation (see also section 7.d.).

NGOs claimed LGBTI persons underreported incidents of violence and abuse due to negative social stereotypes. Observers received reports from LGBTI refugees of physical abuse by local gangs, which the victims did not report to the ISF; observers referred victims to UNHCR-sponsored protective services.

Lesotho

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, color, gender, disability,

language, religion, political or other opinion, HIV positive status, or social status. The law does not reference sexual orientation or gender identity, but other laws prohibit same-sex sexual activity between men, although there is no law concerning same-sex sexual activity between women. Authorities did not regularly enforce antidiscrimination laws, in part because public awareness of these protections was low, so victims rarely brought claims. Under customary law, constitutionally recognized as a parallel legal system, women were disadvantaged with regard to property rights, inheritance, and succession rights.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits consensual sexual relations between men, but authorities did not enforce it. The law is silent on consensual sex between women. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons faced societal discrimination and official insensitivity to this discrimination. LGBTI rights groups complained of discrimination in access to health care and participation in religious activities. Matrix, an LGBTI advocacy and support group, had no reports of employment discrimination from its members. Same-sex sexual relationships were taboo in society and not openly discussed. While there were no assaults reported, LGBTI persons often did not report incidents of violence due to fear of stigma.

Matrix operated freely and had members in all 10 districts. Matrix reported having a good working relationship with the LMPS.

Matrix engaged in public outreach through film screenings, radio programs, and social media. On May 16, Matrix organized the third International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia march. Approximately 150 persons, mainly family and friends of LGBTI persons, marched peacefully and without incident from the national stadium through downtown Maseru. Matrix representatives noted police officers escorting the march were generally supportive, which they attributed to Matrix's previous outreach efforts to the LMPS.

Liberia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, creed, place of origin, disability, or political opinion; however, the government did not enforce these provisions effectively. The constitution allows only persons who are "Negroes" or of "Negro descent" to become citizens and own land. Lebanese born in the country over several generations, for example, remained noncitizens in accordance with this provision.

Tribal tensions exploited during the country's civil war that formally ended in 2003 continued on a diminished level to contribute to social and political friction among ethnic groups.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits consensual same-sex sexual activity, and the culture is strongly opposed to homosexuality. "Voluntary sodomy" is a misdemeanor with a penalty of up to one year's imprisonment. As of year's end, two persons were in MCP custody for

sodomy, one of whom had been in pretrial detention for more than three years. The law prohibits same-sex couples, regardless of citizenship, from adopting children. LGBTI persons were cautious about revealing their sexual orientation or gender identities. A few civil society groups promoted the rights of LGBTI individuals, but most maintained a very low profile due to fear of mistreatment.

There were press and civil society reports of harassment of persons perceived to be LGBTI. Societal stigma and fear of official reprisal may have prevented victims from reporting violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Libya

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The Constitutional Declaration contains clear references to equal rights and states that all citizens are equal before the law in enjoying civil and political rights, equal opportunities, and the duties of citizenship without discrimination based on religion; sect; language; wealth; sex; descent; political views; social status; or regional, family, or tribal affiliations. The law mandates punishment of not less than one year's imprisonment for anyone guilty of discrimination based on class, group, region of origin, gender, or color. The government enforced neither the prohibitions nor the punishments effectively.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) orientations remained illegal, and official and societal discrimination against LGBTI persons persisted. The penal code punishes consensual same-sex sexual activity by three to five years in prison. The law provides for punishment of both parties.

There was scant information on and no reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, access to education, or health care. Observers noted that threat of possible violence or abuse could intimidate persons who reported such discrimination. There was no information on whether there were hate crime laws or other judicial mechanisms to aid in prosecuting bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community.

Citizens tended to hold negative views of LGBTI persons and stigmatize homosexuality. There were reports of physical violence, harassment, and blackmail based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Militias often policed communities to enforce compliance with militia commanders' understanding of "Islamic" behavior, and harassed and threatened with impunity individuals believed to have LGBTI orientations and their families.

Liechtenstein

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, national origin or citizenship, and disability. The government effectively enforced these prohibitions. The

constitution provides for the equal treatment of all citizens.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

An antidiscrimination law that exists as part of a broader equality law only applies to equality between men and women. The law does not explicitly mention lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals.

While the country's LGBTI community issued no formal complaints of abuse or discrimination, homosexual men publicly complained that regulations do not allow them to donate blood. According to the country's only LGBTI organization, Flay, societal stigma or intimidation generally were not considered factors in preventing incidents of abuse from being reported. Many LGBTI individuals known to the organization, however, were often reluctant to acknowledge publicly their sexual orientation and gender identity due to fear of experiencing social backlash and isolation.

Lithuania

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Among the forms of discrimination prohibited by the law are race, sex, gender, social status, age, ethnic background, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and disability.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The antidiscrimination laws apply to LGBTI persons. Society's attitude toward LGBTI persons remained largely negative, and LGBTI groups claimed that official bodies that govern publishing and broadcast media took prejudicial action against certain works with LGBT themes. The few NGOs focusing on LGBTI problems did not face legal impediments. The Lithuanian Gay League and Tolerant Youth Association continued to promote an inclusive social environment for LGBTI persons.

The media reported acts of violence against LGBTI persons. The Lithuanian Gay League reported that in the first eight months of the year, 18 persons claimed they experienced physical attacks because of their sexual orientation.

An antipropaganda law enacted in 2009 served as a rationale for limiting LGBTI awareness-raising efforts (see section 2.a.). In July the European Commission's Directorate General for Communication Networks, Content, and Technology began a formal investigation of a 2014 ruling by the Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics that blocked television broadcast during regular broadcast hours of an LGBTI awareness video produced by the Lithuanian Gay League. The office cited the law on protection of minors to block the broadcast.

In June, when a prominent disk jockey posted homophobic messages on social media, President Dalia Grybauskaitė stated, "the sooner Lithuania becomes more open and tolerant, the better it will be for the country."

Luxembourg

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases. The government effectively enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. This law applies to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons.

Macedonia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on age, gender, race, disability, language, and ethnic, social, or political affiliation. The law provides for fines ranging from 400 to 1,000 euros (\$440 to \$1,100) on individuals or legal entities found guilty of discrimination. The government generally enforced these prohibitions. The ombudsman's report stated that discrimination existed in all spheres in society, especially with regard to employment rights and on the bases of ethnicity and political affiliation.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution and law do not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; the antidiscrimination law does not list sexual orientation as a protected ground. On January 20, parliament approved a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, defining marriage as a union solely between a woman and a man. LGBTI advocates decried the amendment as redundant, as current law already prohibits the registration of same-sex partnerships. Advocates expressed concern that the amendment would reinforce discrimination against an already deeply marginalized community.

Activists supporting LGBTI rights reported multiple incidents of societal prejudice. In June, the LGBTI Center organized a public pride week event, during which police were visibly present. In response, people posted numerous hate speech messages and calls for violence against the LGBTI community on the center's website; the profiles of individuals who made these posts were reported to the Department for Electronic Crime at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Anti-LGBTI activists also showed up at the pride week lesbian picnic in order to intimidate the attendees.

Madagascar

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, and social status. No government institutions had designated authority to enforce these provisions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law provides for a prison sentence of two to five years and a fine of two to 10 million ariary (\$608 to \$3,040) for acts that are “indecent or against nature with an individual of the same sex under the age of 21.” Members of the LGBTI community reportedly were unaware of the risk of arrest for “corruption of a minor,” and arrests occurred, although there were no official statistics. In past years underage individuals who were aware of the law but were seeking to extort money sometimes lured LGBTI persons into sexual encounters.

There are no specific antidiscrimination provisions that apply to LGBTI persons. No laws prevent transgender persons from identifying with their chosen gender.

There were reports of official discrimination and that local officials, particularly law enforcement personnel, either abused LGBTI persons or failed to protect them from societal violence. Health officials also reportedly denied services to LGBTI persons or failed to respect confidentiality agreements.

Sexual orientation and gender identity were not widely discussed, with public attitudes ranging from tacit acceptance to violent rejection, particularly of transgender sex workers. Members of this community faced considerable social stigma and discrimination, often within their own families and particularly in rural areas. Relatives ostracized many and refused them burial in the family tomb. LGBTI individuals often faced discrimination in hiring.

LGBTI individuals were vulnerable to violence and discrimination, and attackers killed at least three gay men during the year. For example, on October 24, unknown persons in Manerinerina reportedly burned alive a gay man.

Malawi

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law forbids discrimination based on race; color; sex; language; religion; political or other opinion; national, ethnic, or social origin; disability; property; birth; or other status. The law does not specifically mention sexual orientation. The capacity of government institutions to enforce the law was limited.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

LGBTI persons are denied by law and practice basic civil, political, social, and economic rights. Consensual same-sex sexual activity is illegal and punishable by up to

14 years in prison, including hard labor. The penal code outlaws “unnatural offenses” and “indecent practices between males.” In July 2014, however, Solicitor General Janet Banda told the UN Human Rights Commission that the government would not enforce these laws. On December 19, Minister of Justice Samuel Tembenu reaffirmed the moratorium on the enforcement of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual activity.

In 2013 the High Court invited friend-of-the-court submissions on the constitutionality of laws against “unnatural offenses” and “indecent practices between males.” It received arguments both for and against the laws’ constitutionality, with most of the arguments being in opposition. The attorney general filed a motion with the Supreme Court objecting to the process on the basis that the chief justice must certify constitutional questions and obtained an order in February 2014 suspending the proceedings. As of October the motion had yet to be decided.

Same-sex sexual activity may also be prosecuted as “conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace.” A 2011 amendment to the penal code established penalties for consensual same-sex sexual activity between women, setting a maximum prison term for conviction of five years. On December 7, police arrested and charged two men under the anti-sodomy laws, compelled them to undergo nonconsensual medical examinations, and released them on bail the following day. The Minister of Justice took over the investigation and dropped all charges citing the moratorium on the enforcement of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual activity. Two men charged pursuant to the antisodomy laws in May 2014, after one of them disclosed the relationship to police, remained free on bail at year’s end.

The Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Act enacted in April explicitly defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman. It also for the first time in Malawian law defined sex (gender) as sex at birth.

In July during Malawi’s Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council, the government accepted two recommendations regarding the rights of LGBTI persons. One dealt with the effective protection of LGBTI individuals and the prosecution of perpetrators of violence against them. The second one aimed at providing for effective access to health care including HIV/AIDS treatment.

From January to September, the Center for Human Rights and Rehabilitation and the Center for Development of People documented 40 instances of abuse based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The nature of the abuses fell into three broad categories: stigma, harassment, and violence. *The Weekend Nation* newspaper published a weekly column entitled “Sexual Minority Forum” written by the leaders of human rights NGOs to shed light on conditions affecting LGBTI persons and their rights.

Malaysia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides for equal protection under the law and prohibits discrimination against citizens based on race, gender, religion, descent, or place of birth. The constitution caveats this provision, however, by establishing a “special position” for ethnic Malays and the indigenous groups of the eastern states of Sabah and Sarawak (collectively, “bumiputra”), and discrimination based on this special position persisted. The law is silent on discrimination based on disabilities and sexual orientation.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The penal code states that sodomy and oral sex acts are “carnal intercourse against the order of nature,” but authorities rarely enforced it. It was, however, the basis for the controversial case against parliamentary opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim (see section 1.e.), currently serving a five-year sentence. Religious and cultural taboos against same-sex sexual conduct were widespread (see section 2.a.).

Authorities often charged transgender individuals under the Minor Offenses Act for “indecent behavior” and “importuning for immoral purposes” in public. Those convicted of a first offense faced a maximum fine of RM 25 (\$5.86) and a maximum sentence of 14 days in jail. The sentences for subsequent convictions may be maximum fines of RM 100 (\$23.46) and a maximum of three months in jail. Local advocates contended that those imprisoned served their time in the male prison population where police and inmates often abused them verbally and sexually.

In October the country’s highest court declined to uphold a lower court decision that found laws forbidding cross-dressing unconstitutional, instead requiring the applicants to exhaust remedies in the sharia court where the case originated.

Maldives

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides for the equality of all citizens, but the law requires citizens to be Sunni Muslims. Women have been historically disadvantaged, particularly in the application of Islamic law in matters such as divorce, education, inheritance, and providing legal testimony, including on rape. In 2012 the administration re-established the Ministry of Gender, Family, and Human Rights, which in November 2014 was renamed the Ministry of Law and Gender. Foreign-born workers face employment discrimination and lack adequate protection under the law.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits same-sex sexual conduct. The punishment for men includes banishment for nine months to one year or 10 to 30 lashes. For women the punishment is house arrest for nine months to one year. No organizations focused on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) problems in the country. There were no reports of officials complicit in abuses against LGBTI persons, although societal stigma likely discouraged individuals from reporting such problems. Due to societal intolerance of same-sex sexual relationships, there were few openly LGBTI individuals in the country and no information available on official or societal discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, access to education, or health care. NGOs reported several members of the LGBTI community sought refuge in Sri Lanka after societal shaming related to their sexual orientation.

Mali

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, social origin, language, or color. Citizens were generally reluctant to file complaints or press charges of discrimination due to cultural factors. Absent complaints or lawsuits, the government did not aggressively pursue violations of these laws.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits association “for an immoral purpose.” There were no laws specifically prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. There were no known LGBTI organizations in the country, although some NGOs had medical and support programs focusing specifically on gay men. The law prohibits lesbians and gay men from adopting children.

Credible NGOs reported LGBTI individuals experienced physical, psychological, and sexual violence, which society viewed as corrective punishment. Family members, neighbors, and groups of strangers in public places committed the majority of violent acts, and police frequently refused to intervene. Most LGBTI individuals isolated themselves and kept their sexual identity hidden. An NGO reported that LGBTI individuals frequently dropped out of school, left their places of employment, and did not seek medical treatment to hide their sexual identity and avoid social stigmatization.

Malta

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on age, race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin or social status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, or language, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics.

On April 1, parliament enacted the Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics Act, which provides for legal recognition and registration of a person’s gender according to the person’s gender identity.

Marshall Islands

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, language, national or social origin, political opinion, place of birth, and family status or descent, and the government generally observed these provisions. The constitution does not specifically prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, HIV or other communicable disease status. Land ownership and the right to run for office are reserved to indigenous citizens, although a naturalized Marshallese citizen has successfully challenged the latter in court (see Section 3).

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No law criminalizes consensual same-sex activity, and there were no reports of societal violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity. There were no reports of official or societal discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care. Existing antidiscrimination laws do not specifically protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. There were no formal impediments to LGBTI organizations, but no such organizations were reported.

Mauritania

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law provide for equality for all citizens regardless of race, national origin, sex, or social status, but the government often favored individuals based on racial and tribal affiliation and social status.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No laws protect LGBTI persons from discrimination. Under sharia as applied in the country, consensual same-sex sexual activity between men is punishable by death if witnessed by four individuals, and such activity between women is punishable by three months to two years in prison and a fine of 5,000 to 60,000 ouguiyas (\$15 to \$182). The LGBTI community was rarely identified or discussed, which observers attributed to the severity of the stigma and legal penalties attached to such labels.

Mauritius

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law specifically prohibit discrimination based race, caste, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social and civil status, disability, sexual orientation, HIV-positive status, or having other communicable diseases. Despite laws in place, discrimination occurred, particularly against women; persons with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals, but victims filed few cases for cultural or societal reasons. Non-Hindus claimed they faced discrimination in hiring and promotion for government jobs. The government imposes a

maximum age limit of 40 years for the recruitment of new civil servants. The law prohibits all forms of trafficking of adults and children and prescribes penalties of up to 15 years' imprisonment for offenders. There have been no prosecutions under the human trafficking law.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not specifically criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity. It criminalizes sodomy, however, among both same-sex and heterosexual couples. Sodomy cases that reached the courts almost exclusively involved heterosexual persons, especially as an aggravating factor in divorce cases. Authorities rarely used the sodomy statute rarely against same-sex couples, unless one of the partners cited sodomy in the context of sexual assault.

LGBTI victims of verbal abuse or violence within the family reported such incidents to local NGOs Collectif Arc-en-Ciel or Young Queer Alliance. Victims generally refused to file complaints with police, however, for fear of ostracism or, in some cases, fear of reprisal from family members. On September 18, police officers of Sodnac police station, accompanied by police officers of the Criminal Investigation Division of Quatre Bornes, arrested a young transvestite allegedly for no reason. Police took the victim to the Sodnac police station where police strip-searched him and forced him to parade naked in front of police officers who mocked him. The victim filed a complaint with the NHRC, and at year's end the investigation was ongoing.

Following a complaint about the questionnaire used by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to prohibit blood donation from LGBTI persons, the ministry amended its policy and website in 2013 to indicate individuals who have had same-sex sexual activity could donate blood. There were anecdotal reports, however, that health officials still prevented LGBTI persons from donating blood.

Mexico

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. While the government made some progress enforcing these provisions, significant problems, particularly violence against women, persisted.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination against LGBTI individuals, but there were reports that the government did not always investigate and punish those complicit in abuses, especially outside the Federal District. Transgender persons may change their gender marker on identity documents only in Mexico City. The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, but only in Mexico City does the law also prohibit discrimination based on gender identity. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity was prevalent, despite a gradual public acceptance of LGBTI individuals.

In Mexico City the law criminalizes hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Civil society groups claimed police routinely subjected LGBTI persons to mistreatment while in custody. Civil society groups reported the full extent of hate crimes, including killings of LGBTI persons, was difficult to ascertain because these crimes were often mischaracterized as “crimes of passion,” which resulted in the authorities’ failure to adequately investigate, prosecute, or punish these incidents. In a public event on November 23, attended by 17 city mayors from other countries, Mexico City Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera declared the Federal District an LGBTI-friendly city and announced a series of events and festivities during the week to familiarize the population with issues affecting LGBTI individuals.

The National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED) in Mexico City is the city government agency with the authority to resolve complaints of discrimination that occur within the Federal District. The national level CONAPRED received complaints of discriminatory acts in areas of employment, access to commercial establishments, and access to education and healthcare. Civil society groups reported difficulty in determining whether individual complaints were ever resolved.

Micronesia, Federated States of

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law provide explicit protection against discrimination based on race, gender, religion, or language, but societal discrimination against women remained a problem. Kosrae State passed a Family Protection Act in 2014, but the other three states have no laws against family violence. There are limited protections for persons with disabilities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not criminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults. No laws prohibit discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons in employment, housing, or access to education and health care. There were no reports of violence, official or societal discrimination, or workplace discrimination against LGBTI persons. The culture stigmatized public acknowledgement or discussion of certain sexual matters, including sexual orientation and gender identity. It was rare for individuals to identify themselves publicly as LGBTI persons.

Moldova

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship, language, religion, belief, age, opinion, political affiliation, or social status, but the government did not always enforce these prohibitions effectively.

The law prohibits discrimination on 11 characteristics, including gender, race, and disability, as well as employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. Societal discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity continued during the year.

As of October the NGO Genderdoc-M reported nine cases of violations of the rights of the LGBTI persons examined in court, including three hate crimes, three cases of discrimination, two cases of instigation to hatred, and one case regarding the change of identity documents for transsexual persons. Three other cases were under investigation.

Most crimes were perpetrated against gay men, but verbal and physical abuse against lesbians was also reported. In most cases police officers were reluctant to open cases against the perpetrators. In one instance Genderdoc-M reported that it required intervention by its lawyer before police acted.

In June a lesbian, who a neighbor had continually harassed, was beaten and insulted. The perpetrator allegedly stated that persons like her did not deserve to live and claimed that, even if he beat her up, authorities would not hold him accountable. The victim filed a complaint with police, who refused to accept it. According to Genderdoc-M, the intervention of their lawyer compelled police to accept the complaint. When the victim returned home, she was assaulted again. Police were alerted and detained the perpetrator. The case continued at year's end.

Civil society organizations reported that transgender individuals were unable to change identity documents during or following gender reassignment, and they experienced employment discrimination (see section 7.d.).

On May 17, more than 150 individuals attended the third officially sanctioned march for the rights of LGBTI persons in central Chisinau. There were no reports of significant incidents, but Orthodox Christian groups and Occupy Pedophilia members held a counterdemonstration close to the march's perimeter. Heavy police presence prevented altercations. Counterdemonstrators, among them young men covering their faces, threw eggs at the marchers and set off firecrackers. Police detained at least six persons. Following the march a group from Occupy Pedophilia walked towards the Genderdoc-M premises, but police stopped them before they reached the building.

While authorities allowed individuals to change their names (for example, from a male to a female name), the government did not allow persons to change the gender listed on their identity cards or passports. In 2012 the Supreme Court of Justice issued a nonbinding recommendation to lower courts that transgender individuals be permitted to change the gender on their civil documents. In 2012 the Ministry of Health established a commission to determine gender identity and issue certificates that can be used to apply for new documents.

In Transnistria consensual same-sex activity is illegal, and authorities subjected LGBTI persons to governmental and societal discrimination.

Monaco

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and the law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, and HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, and the government effectively enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The law provides for punishment of up to five years in prison and/or a fine for persons who provoke hatred or violence against a person or group due to their sexual orientation, real or supposed.

Mongolia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law states that no person shall be discriminated against on the basis of ethnic origin, language, race, age, sex, social origin, or status and that men and women shall be equal politically, economically, socially, culturally, and within the family. The government generally enforced these provisions. The law also protects persons with disabilities from discrimination in all social relations and in employment. These rights were not always enforced. The law does not address sexual orientation or gender identity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct is not specifically proscribed by law, but AI and the International Lesbian and Gay Association criticized a section of the penal code that refers to “immoral gratification of sexual desires,” arguing that it could be used against persons engaging in same-sex sexual conduct. There is no law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The law permits individuals who have had gender reassignment surgery to have their birth certificate and national identity card reissued to reflect the change, and the LGBT Center reported that transgender persons successfully applied for new identity cards under this provision.

NGOs continued to report that LGBTI individuals faced violence and discrimination both in public and at home based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. The LGBT Center received a number of reports of domestic violence against LGBTI individuals, most involving young LGBTI persons who either came out to their families or were discovered by their families to be LGBTI. Members of the LGBTI community also continued to express fear of ultra-nationalists, who in the past have targeted LGBTI persons.

Some media outlets described gay men, lesbians, and transgender persons in derogatory terms and associated them with HIV/AIDS, pedophilia, and corruption of youth. Additionally, NGOs stated that online media frequently ridiculed LGBTI persons, sometimes revealing their names and addresses in internet comments.

Although the provision in the criminal code criminalizing rape contains no language

specifying who may be considered a victim, courts commonly interpreted the law as applying only to women; rape of men is usually prosecuted under the article that refers to immoral sexual gratification. This prevailing interpretation made it difficult to prosecute rapes of men and treated such rapes as less severe crimes. Whereas the former article provides for a sentence of up to death, the latter article provides for a sentence of two to 10 years in prison depending on the circumstances.

LGBTI persons reported harassment and surveillance by police, and a 2014 report from the NHRC indicated that police sometimes verbally abused LGBTI individuals who reported bias-motivated crimes. Despite training in recent years for police and investigators on how to handle cases involving LGBTI rights, victims reported harassment by officers responding to initial complaints of alleged crimes. The NHRC issued a directive requiring the Ulaanbaatar Metropolitan Police to receive training on LGBTI rights; the LGBT Center asserted that police complied with the directive reluctantly. NGOs reported difficulties estimating the extent of crimes committed against LGBTI persons due to a combination of limited law enforcement data and a lack of reporting due to social stigma and fear of reprisal. No hate crime law or other criminal justice mechanisms exist to aid in the investigation, prosecution, or sentencing of bias-motivated crimes against the LGBTI community. There were also reports of abuse of persons held in police detention centers based on their sexual orientation.

Authorities frequently dismissed charges against those accused of having committed crimes against LGBTI persons. LGBTI persons reported fear of perpetrators acting with impunity against them in cases in which they filed charges against their attackers, and observers cited lack of confidence in law enforcement officials as a reason for underreporting.

Discrimination in employment was also reported to be a problem (see section 7.d.).

NGOs working for the rights of LGBTI individuals organized the country's third year of pride activities. According to the LGBT Center, the Ulaanbaatar metropolitan and Sukhbaatar district governor's offices and police restricted their freedom of assembly and association during the activities. The center notified both offices weeks in advance of the intended use of public venues, but both governments waited until the day before the events to deny use of the venues. On the day of the pride parade, police officers physically blocked participants from accessing Chinggis Square. The LGBT Center filed a case against the two governments and the police in administrative court in October. The court dismissed the case on December 10. The LGBT Center stated that it would appeal the decision.

Montenegro

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, gender, disability, language, and social status. The government did not fully enforce these prohibitions. Discrimination continued, especially against persons with disabilities; ethnic minorities, particularly Roma; LGBTI persons; women; and the elderly. Persons could bring complaints of discrimination to the Office of the Ombudsman, but the institution lacked the human, technical, and financial resources to address them adequately. Government continued to conduct antidiscrimination campaigns and provide training for public servants, but efforts to combat discrimination and enforce the antidiscrimination law remained modest.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and applies to LGBTI individuals.

LGBTI persons and their supporters experienced continued societal discrimination, ostracism, public hostility, and violent abuse. Negative public perception of LGBTI persons led many to conceal their sexual orientation, although there was a trend toward greater visibility as LGBTI persons came out to their families and colleagues. There were reports of intolerance by medical practitioners toward gay persons. Serbian Orthodox Church representatives often spoke in a prejudicial manner against LGBTI persons.

LGBTI representatives claimed that young persons perpetrated 80 percent of violent crimes against members of the LGBTI community. Hostile individuals used social media and LGBTI dating sites to attack and bully known and suspected LGBTI persons anonymously. NGOs reported the number of attacks rose during the year. During 2014 and the first nine months of 2015, prosecutors brought charges in 17 cases involving violence against LGBTI persons. LGBTI activists stated that members of the community did not report some violent attacks against them to police because the victims were afraid of further victimization generated by their complaints. Police provided 24-hour protection to the LGBTI Social Center because hooligans broke its windows several times during the year.

On May 29, the basic court in Podgorica sentenced Stefan Mitrovic (23), Bojan Vujasevic (21), and Nikola Racic (22) to three months in prison each for threatening the security of Stevan Milivojevic, director of the LGBTI advocacy NGO, Forum Progress. The prosecutor charged the three individuals with insulting Milivojevic on April 10 as he met in a cafe in Podgorica with Terry Reintke, a German member of the European Parliament.

On August 31, the NGOs which advocate for LGBTI rights, Forum Progress, Social Center, and Tourism Institute, protested the poor implementation of the government's national LGBTI strategy and urged the government to address the causes of its failure. The NGOs demanded better cooperation with the government and inclusive LGBTI textbooks.

On September 18, invoking security concerns, local police authorities "temporarily" banned a gay pride parade in Niksic for the third time. Earlier, university and police officials canceled events at the philosophy faculty in Niksic on two occasions because police believed the events could spark violent opposition. Forum Progress and the LGBTI NGO Hiperion in Niksic lodged an appeal with the Administrative Court and criticized the decision as a violation of their right to peaceful assembly.

Approximately 200 persons, accompanied by a strong police presence, marched peacefully in the Third Podgorica Pride Parade on December 13. Minister of Human and Minority Rights Suad Numanovic, Podgorica mayor Slavoljub Stijepovic, representatives of political parties, civil society activists, and members of the diplomatic corps joined the organizers from LGBTI rights NGOs.

NGOs reported that police cooperation with the LGBTI community improved, but some prosecutors and judges demonstrated prejudice against LGBTI persons. Every police station had an officer whose duties included monitoring observance of the rights of LGBTI persons.

Morocco

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, social status, faith, culture, regional origin, or any other personal circumstance. Discrimination occurred nonetheless based on each of these factors. The constitution mandates the creation of a body to promote gender equality and resolve parity issues--the Authority for Equality and the Fight against All Forms of Discrimination--but authorities did not fashion implementing legislation for the body by year's end.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The penal code criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity with a maximum sentence of three years in prison. Media and the public addressed questions of sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity more openly than in previous years.

The government deems LGBTI orientation or identity illegal. Antidiscrimination laws do not apply to LGBTI persons, and the penal code does not criminalize hate crimes. There was a stigma against LGBTI persons, but there were no reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, access to education, or health care. Authorities prosecuted individuals engaged in same-sex sexual activity at least once during the year.

In one widely publicized case, authorities sentenced two men to three months in prison and a fine of 500 dirhams (\$50) for the crime of "breach of public modesty" and "homosexuality." Authorities arrested them for publicly kissing in the proximity of Hassan Tower in Rabat, allegedly in connection with a protest in the same location by French LGBTI group "Femen" the previous day. The men's attorneys contested the charges, stating that the men were not connected to the protests, and authorities could not show that they engaged in "indecent behavior."

Sexual orientation and gender identity constituted a basis for societal violence, harassment, blackmail, or other actions, generally at a local level, although with reduced frequency. There were reports of societal discrimination, physical violence, or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

For example, in June observers filmed a mob of men in Fes attacking a man presumed to be gay. Authorities arrested several of the men involved in the beating; however, a July 2 statement by the Ministries of Interior and Justice implied that the victim had violated the law, while urging individuals not to "take matters into their own hands." In a separate incident in September, police arrested two men in Casablanca for assaulting another man whom they presumed to be gay. Reportedly, they forced him to undress before attempting to blackmail him with threats of showing a video of the assault to his family.

Mozambique

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and laws prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, language, HIV-positive status or having other communicable diseases, or social status, but societal discrimination remained an issue for some of these groups. Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is only prohibited in labor law, which specifically prohibits discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation. The government failed to enforce some prohibitions against discriminatory acts.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The local LGBTI advocacy organization praised the removal of a 19th century legal provision viewed as criminalizing consensual sexual conduct between same-sex adults. Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is only prohibited in employment. There were reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Antidiscrimination laws existed; however, LGBTI persons were only legally protected against employment discrimination (see section 7.d.). No hate crime laws or other criminal justice mechanisms exist to aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community. The government has taken no action on the local LGBTI association's request to register legally since 2008 (see section 2.b.).

The government does not track and report discrimination or crimes against individuals based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The media and LGBTI organizations did not report any bias-based attacks; however, discrimination in public medical facilities occurred. LGBTI individuals were sometimes chastised by medical staff for their sexual orientation upon seeking treatment. Intimidation was not a factor in preventing incidents of abuse from being reported.

Namibia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on disability, sex, race, color, ethnic origin, religion, creed, or social or economic status. It also specifically prohibits "the practice and ideology of apartheid." The government did not effectively enforce all prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Although laws inherited at independence criminalize sodomy, the ban was not enforced. The law defines sodomy as intentional anal sexual relations between men. This definition excludes anal sexual relations between heterosexual couples and sexual relations between lesbians. Many citizens considered all same-sex sexual activity taboo, however. The prohibition against sexual discrimination in the constitution did not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Some politicians opposed any legislation that would specifically protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons.

Nauru

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, place of origin, political opinions, color, creed, or gender, and the government generally enforced these provisions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual male same-sex sexual conduct is illegal, but there were no reports of prosecutions directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. The law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill, enacted in May, does not specifically cite sexual orientation, but it could be used to aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community. There were isolated reports of violence against persons based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Nepal

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Both the 2007 interim constitution and the new constitution prohibit discrimination based on race, caste, gender, religion, ideological conviction, language, and social origin, and there is also a legal prohibition against discrimination based on disability, but the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. The new constitution added disability to the list of categories for which there are nondiscrimination guarantees, as well as health condition, pregnancy, marital status, and economic condition. Additionally, the new constitution includes gender and sexual minorities among disadvantaged groups eligible for protection, empowerment, or advancement through special legal provisions. Despite passage of the Caste Discrimination and Untouchability Act in 2011, a rigid caste system continued to operate throughout the country in many areas of religious, professional, and daily life. Members of the Dalit caste faced severely restricted access to post-earthquake relief and reconstruction resources due to caste discrimination. Societal discrimination against lower castes, women, and persons with disabilities remained common, especially in rural areas. Human trafficking persisted.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No laws criminalize same-sex sexual activity, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons actively advocated for their rights. The new constitution contains provisions outlining protections for LGBTI persons, but LGBTI activists continued to press for further legislation increasing protections for gender and sexual minorities.

In 2007 the Supreme Court directed the government to enact laws to protect LGBTI persons' fundamental rights, enable third-gender citizenship, and amend laws that were sexually discriminatory. Implementation of the 2007 decision was initially slow, but in

2013 the Home Ministry started issuing citizenship certificates with an “other” gender category for those applying for citizenship. During the year the Home Ministry starting issuing passports with the “other” designation. The new constitution enshrines the right of citizens to choose their gender identity on citizenship documents, according to human rights lawyers. For the first time, the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare allocated a budget, 300,000 rupees (\$3,000), for LGBTI-focused programs, in particular for raising awareness. According to local LGBTI advocacy groups, the government did not provide equal opportunity to LGBTI persons in education, health care, or employment (see section 7.d.).

According to local LGBTI rights NGOs, harassment and abuse of LGBTI persons by private citizens and government officials declined during the year, especially in urban areas, although incidents still occurred. Transgender individuals reportedly faced stigma in displaced persons camps following the April 25 earthquake.

LGBTI rights groups had divergent assessments of whether police harassment of gender and sexual minorities increased during the year. According to the local NGO Blue Diamond Society, police targeted transgender sex workers more than in 2014, subjecting them to as much as 25 days’ detention without charge under the Public Offense Act. The Nepal Police HRC documented one allegation of harassment of LGBTI persons by police, a decline from 2014. The HRC confirmed that some low-level harassment occurred because many citizens held negative views of LGBTI persons, and the Nepal Police were not immune to such social prejudices. The HRC continued to conduct LGBTI rights training and worked with LGBTI NGOs to minimize and prevent harassment.

Netherlands

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and laws prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity; age, language, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, and the governments in the kingdom generally enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Laws have been revised to eliminate discrimination in such areas as taxes and allowances, pensions, inheritance, and access to health care. In May the parliament amended the General Act on Equal Treatment to prohibit educational institutions operating on a religious or ideological basis from engaging in discrimination on the basis of homosexuality.

The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights observed that transgender individuals experienced discrimination relatively often. During the year the institute ruled on several complaints of transgender discrimination and for the first time in a discrimination case involving a person with an intersex condition. Although the institute’s rulings are not binding, authorities usually implemented them.

The government gave high priority to combating anti-LGBTI violence. Police had “pink in

blue” units dedicated to protecting the rights of LGBTI persons. In May the city of Amsterdam opened a safety information call center for LGBTI persons as part of its “pink agenda” aimed at increasing safety and acceptance of homosexuality. When courts find acts of violence against LGBTI persons to be motivated by bias, they can provide higher penalties to perpetrators.

The law obliges elementary and secondary schools to address diversity and LGBTI problems. The Expreszo youth website set up a hotline for complaints involving schools that did not comply. The government supported Christian LGBTI groups and Muslim community activists as well as “gay-straight” alliances to counter bullying. The government also continued programs to counter prejudice in immigrant and orthodox religious communities where social acceptance of homosexuality was low. Authorities worked with five gay-straight alliances, consisting of NGOs, unions, sports associations and other experts, to work with organizations involved with senior citizens, education, sports, employment, and the environment with the aim of helping LGBTI persons feel at ease and accepted. While the government initiated the establishment of these alliances, it did not fund them.

Laws in the Caribbean semi-autonomous states prohibit discrimination against LGBTI persons. The Caribbean parts of the kingdom extended equal rights to, and fostered tolerance and acceptance of, LGBTI persons.

New Zealand

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, or HIV or other communicable disease status, and the government actively enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No information in this sub-section. Please see the full country report for more.

Nicaragua

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender identity, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, language, or HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases; however, the government did not regularly enforce these legal prohibitions. Persons thus discriminated against filed few suits or formal complaints due to a belief that their complaints would not be addressed and could lead to negative outcomes for those filing.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Although sexual orientation is not mentioned specifically, the law states all persons are equal before the law and provides for the right to equal protection. LGBTI persons, however, continued to face widespread societal discrimination and abuse, particularly in housing, education, and employment (see section 7.d.). While the special prosecutor for sexual diversity was active throughout the year in education, information collection, and collaboration with NGO efforts, the LGBTI community generally believed the office had insufficient resources. No specific laws exist to punish hate crimes against LGBTI groups. The family code, a set of laws pertaining to family-related matters that came into effect in April, establishes that a family comprises a man and a woman joined in marriage or common-law marriage. LGBTI organizations believed the definition of a family was discriminatory, especially on topics of adoption and access to social security benefits.

Niger

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, age, language, HIV-positive status or other communicable disease, or social status. The government generally did not enforce these provisions, however, because victims in large part did not report discrimination or were pressured into handling complaints through traditional dispute mechanisms. There are no laws against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There was strong societal stigma against same-sex sexual activity but no laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual activity in general. The law states an “unnatural act” with a person of the same sex who is under 21 is punishable by six months to three years in prison and a fine of 10,000 to 100,000 CFA francs (\$17-\$173).

Gay men and lesbians experienced societal discrimination and social resentment. Reportedly, two gay rights associations conducted their activities secretly, in part because they were not officially registered. The social pressure to conform is great, and many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals marry and have families, often while pursuing LGBTI relationships in secret. There were no reports of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. International organizations and NGOs continued their awareness-raising efforts in this regard, focusing on social stigma in general.

There were no documented cases of discrimination in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care based on sexual orientation. Stigma or intimidation was a likely cause in preventing incidents of abuse from being reported.

Nigeria

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on community, place of origin, ethnic group, sex, religion, or political opinion, but the government did not enforce the law effectively. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on the circumstances of a person's birth.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In January 2014 then president Jonathan enacted the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA), which effectively renders illegal all forms of activity supporting or promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) rights. Under the SSMPA, anyone found to have entered into a same-sex marriage or civil union may be punished by up to 14 years' imprisonment. In addition anyone found guilty of aiding "the solemnization of a same-sex marriage or civil union, or supports the registration, operation, and sustenance of gay clubs, societies, organizations, processions, or meetings," or "registers, operates, or participates in gay clubs, societies, organizations, or directly or indirectly makes public show of same-sex amorous relationship" commits an offense punishable by 10 years' imprisonment. There were no reports the government enforced these provisions during the year.

Following passage of the SSMPA, LGBTI persons reported increased harassment and threats against them based on their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. News reports and LGBTI advocates reported numerous arrests, but detainees were in all cases released without formal charges after paying a bond.

According to a study published in June, since passage of the SSMPA, gay and bisexual men were increasingly reluctant to access HIV health-care services due to fear of being "outed." The 707 gay and bisexual men surveyed were receiving HIV prevention and treatment services from a community-based clinic in 2013 and 2014. They made 756 visits to the clinic before the law passed but only 420 after its enactment.

Consensual same-sex sexual activity is illegal under federal law and is punishable by prison sentences of up to 14 years. In the 12 northern states that adopted sharia, adults convicted of engaging in same-sex sexual activity may be subject to execution by stoning. Although sharia courts did not impose such sentences during the year, individuals convicted of same-sex sexual activity were sentenced to lashing.

In January sharia police in Kano arrested 12 men, accusing them of attempting to celebrate a gay marriage. Authorities released 10 of them to their parents after the parents signed statements indicating they would keep their children away from such activities. As of December there was no information on the remaining two men.

Because of widespread societal taboos against same-sex sexual activity, very few LGBTI persons were open about their sexual orientation. Several NGOs provided LGBTI groups with legal advice and training in advocacy, media responsibility, and HIV/AIDS awareness, as well as providing safe havens for LGBTI individuals. The government and its agents did not impede the work of these groups during the year.

Norway

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity, sex, disability, language, sexual orientation, or social status. The government generally enforced this prohibition, although there were reports of violence against women and children, anti-Semitism, and stigmatizing statements against immigrants and Muslims.

A review by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination released on August 28 stated that authorities did not fully address problems such as racism and hate speech. The committee specifically identified as problems the law's omission of race as a prohibited basis of discrimination, the government's lack of statistical information about the ethnic composition and well-being of the population, and "the increase in hate speech and xenophobic discourse by politicians and in media and other public platforms, including via internet." NGOs alleged that the government handled these criticisms haphazardly and not seriously. They asserted that no one at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security focused on hate crimes. They also took exception to the lack of a national definition of hate crimes and the absence of a national plan to combat such crimes. They claimed initiatives to combat such crimes were mainly local, when they existed.

On November 27, the government signed a political declaration against intolerance and hateful statements spread via social media, particularly against immigrants and Muslims. The declaration aimed to create broad awareness of the importance of tolerance and was widely publicized.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The National Criminal Investigation Service maintained an online tip service for hate crimes, including those motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity. In 2014 the tip service received 38 reports of hate crimes motivated by the victims' sexual orientation or gender identity. The NGO Norwegian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Organization (LLH) estimated, however, that as many as 90 percent of crimes against LGBTI individuals were not reported to police. In June the LLH relaunched its government-funded online reporting mechanism, which received 10 reports of alleged hate crimes between June and October.

On May 31, a gay person in Oslo was attacked in his home and subjected to homophobic slurs by the attacker. Police investigated the attack as a crime of violence but not as a hate crime. The LLH reported that police reluctance to apply the hate crime law in such investigations was a continuing problem when a hate crime was connected to another crime. The government funded a training program for police on engaging with the LGBTI community.

Transgender persons may administratively change their name easily, but long-standing governmental practice requires that, to change one's gender officially, a multidisciplinary specialized unit on transsexualism of the Oslo University Hospital must first diagnose the person as having "transsexual gender identity disorder." For a "real sex conversion" to take place, the person must undergo a sex-change operation. The entire process could last as long as 10 years.

Oman

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination against citizens based on gender, ethnic origin, race, language, religion, place of residence, and social class. The government selectively enforced prohibitions on some bases of discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons faced legal, institutional, and social discrimination. The penal code criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual conduct with a jail term of six months to three years. There were no reports of prosecutions during the year, although there were three arrests for sodomy in 2014. Social and cultural norms reinforced discrimination against openly LGBTI persons.

Public discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity remained a social taboo, and authorities took steps to block LGBTI-related internet content. Observers believed that social stigma and intimidation prevented LGBTI persons from reporting incidents of violence or abuse. In October media reported that France's regional Arabic-language radio station, Monte Carlo Doualiya, suspended broadcasting in Oman following strong online criticism after it aired an interview with a gay Omani activist.

Transgender persons were not recognized as a gender class by the government and were not afforded protection from discrimination.

There are no known LGBTI organizations active in the country; however, there are regional human rights organizations that focused on the human rights of LGBTI Omanis. There were no pride marches or LGBTI rights advocacy events.

Information was not available on official or private discrimination in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care based on sexual orientation and gender identity. There were no government efforts to address potential discrimination.

Pakistan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides for equality for all citizens and broadly prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, caste, residence, or place of birth, but significant governmental and societal discrimination occurred based on each of these factors.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct is a criminal offense; however, the government rarely prosecuted cases. The penalty for same-sex relations is a fine, two years' to life imprisonment, or both. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons rarely revealed their sexual orientation or gender identity. No laws protect against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Discrimination against LGBTI persons was widely acknowledged privately, but insufficient data existed for accurate reporting, due in part to severe societal stigma and fear of recrimination on the part of any who came forward. In September 2013 the PTA

blocked the country's first online platform for the LGBTI community to share views and network.

Violence and discrimination continued against LGBTI persons. In April, two members of the transgender community were killed and a third abducted and raped. In June authorities arrested two men in Balochistan for allegedly getting married and charged them with violating the penal code after a medical examination indicated they had intercourse with each other.

Society generally shunned transgender persons, eunuchs, and intersex persons, collectively referred to as "hires," who often lived together in slum communities and survived by begging and dancing at carnivals and weddings. Some also were prostitutes. Local authorities often denied hijras places in schools or admission to hospitals, and landlords often refused to rent or sell property to them. Authorities often denied hijras their share of inherited property. A 2012 Supreme Court ruling recognizes hijras as a "third gender" and allows them to obtain accurate national identification cards. Because of the ruling, hijras fully participated in the 2013 elections for the first time as candidates and voters.

Palau

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, and social status, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There were no laws addressing sexual orientation and gender identity. One law criminalizing sodomy, regardless of the gender of the partners, remains in effect, although the only prosecution under this statute involved an adult male sexually abusing a young girl during the year. There were no reports of violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Panama

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, and disability, but the government did not always enforce these prohibitions effectively.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, and there was societal discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which often led to denial of employment opportunities (see section 7.d).

The PNP's internal regulations describe homosexual conduct by its employees as an offense. Harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons by security forces was a major complaint of the New Men and Women of Panama (AHMNP), the main LGBTI organization, but formal complaints were rare due to the perception that the reports were not taken seriously or that complaints could be used against claimants in the absence of nondiscrimination legislation. On June 27, gay rights advocates organized and participated in the 11th annual gay pride parade without impediment, marking the first time an elected authority participated, when Panama City Mayor Jose Blandon and his family led the march with approximately 1,500 supporters in attendance. During the evening of June 26, unidentified individuals destroyed the platform parade organizers had built for their program. The parade proceeded as scheduled. There were no reports authorities opened an investigation on the incident.

Throughout the year the AHMNP, with the support of the Ombudsman's Office, led awareness training sessions at the governor's offices in the provinces of Bocas del Toro, Chiriqui, Veraguas, and Panama. Public servants from several agencies attended the training. The Panamanian Association of Transgender Persons reported regular incidents in which security forces refused to accept complaints of harassment of transgender individuals.

The country does not recognize any relationship between LGBTI partners in terms of health care, parental rights, property rights, or any publicly provided services.

An examination of nursing homes by the Central American NGO Center for the Investigation and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPAC) on March 13 revealed that the nursing homes barred gay couples from residing in them together. In addition to mentioning the need for awareness about the LGTBI community among their staff, the respondents, which included nursing homes' staff members and caretakers, noted that residents faced expulsion from the nursing homes upon discovery of being in a same-sex relationship. CIPAC also interviewed members of the LGTBI community, who confirmed the lack of access to nursing home for members of their community.

Papua New Guinea

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law provide for equal protection irrespective of race, tribe, place of origin, color, or sex; however, enforcement of the provisions was not effective.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual relations and acts of "gross indecency" between males are illegal. The maximum penalty for same-sex sexual relations is 14 years' imprisonment; for acts of gross indecency between male persons (a misdemeanor), three years. There were no reports of prosecutions directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons under these provisions during the year. There were no specific reports of societal violence or discrimination against such persons, but they were vulnerable to societal stigmatization, which may have led to underreporting.

Paraguay

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, disability, language, or social status, but the government did not effectively enforce these provisions.

There is no comprehensive law against discrimination, which undermined enforcement of the constitutional clause against discrimination and the protection and restitution for victims of discrimination and societal abuses. Women, LGBTI persons, indigenous persons, and persons of African descent faced discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No laws explicitly prohibit discrimination against LGBTI persons in employment, housing, access to education, or health care; all types of such discrimination, including societal discrimination, occurred frequently. Penalties for sex with a minor between ages 14 and 16 are more severe if the victim and perpetrator are of the same sex. Same-sex perpetrators are subject to up to two years in prison; the maximum penalty for opposite-sex perpetrators is a fine. CODEHUPY reported widespread police harassment and discrimination against LGBTI persons (see section 7 d.).

The Attorney General's Office is responsible for investigating discrimination cases; however, government agents often condoned such discrimination, including discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Panambi, an NGO advocating for the rights of transgender individuals, released an investigation in 2014 documenting 54 killings of transgender individuals from 1989 to 2013, with the most recent occurring in 2013.

Panambi filed a criminal complaint against police officers for harassing and demanding bribes from transgender individuals working as prostitutes. According to reports police officers beat, robbed, and implicated transgender individuals as suspects in serious crimes, including drug trafficking and armed robbery.

On May 3, Marian Sepulveda, vice president of Panambi, filed a complaint against Alfredo Rivaldi, coordinator of a drug rehabilitation center, for attacking her. Sepulveda escaped with injuries to her neck. Police officers detained Rivaldi and took Sepulveda to the hospital. The Prosecutor's Office opened an investigation, and the case was pending at year's end.

Peru

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on "origin, race, gender, language, religion, opinion, socioeconomic status, or any other reason," but enforcement lagged, and discrimination persisted. The constitutional procedure code recognizes the right of individuals to assert claims of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not specifically prohibit discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and the government did not keep any national-level statistics on such discrimination. The Ministry of Interior's *Handbook of Human Rights Applied to the Civil Police* stipulates that police must respect human rights, especially of the most vulnerable groups, and refers explicitly to the rights of LGBTI individuals. During the year there were instances of official and societal discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and access to education and health care. According to NGO and Ombudsman Office reports, government authorities, including police, harassed and abused LGBTI persons. A local NGO reported that between April 2014 and March 2015, the ombudsman received 14 cases alleging discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The law does not provide transgender persons the right to identify with their gender or change their name and gender on government-issued identification. Transgender persons reported encountering obstacles when attempting to do so.

Local NGOs stated that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity was widespread, culturally sanctioned, and largely underreported due to fear of violence or additional discrimination. NGOs reported that LGBTI youth were frequently targets of severe bullying that contributed to higher rates of suicide than for straight youth. The government did not keep statistics on these crimes.

Philippines

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, disability, language, or minority status, but not discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Vague regulations and budgetary constraints continued to hinder implementation of specified protections.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

National laws neither criminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct nor prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Ten cities or municipalities have some version of an antidiscrimination ordinance that protects lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)--but not intersex--rights.

Officials prohibit transgender individuals from self-reporting their gender on passport applications. Authorities print the sex assigned at birth, as reported on the certificate of birth, in the individual's passport. NGOs reported that the discrepancy between a transgender person's outward appearance and their identification documents has led to difficulties for transgender persons, particularly at airports. Transgender travelers have been harassed and even offloaded for not appearing to match their official gender identity.

The NGO Gender and Development Advocates Filipinas noted that the transgender community in the Philippines was largely ignored until the high-profile killing of

Jennifer Laude, a transgender woman, in October 2014 by a U.S. military service member who was in the country temporarily for military exercises and who has appealed his conviction. It asserted that the Laude case exposed entrenched transphobia in society, exemplified by online hate speech directed at Laude.

NGOs seeking to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals from discrimination and abuse criticized the government for the absence of applicable law and policy. NGOs reported incidents of discrimination and abuse, including in employment (see section 7.d.), education, health care, housing, and social services. The Rainbow Rights Project, Inc., a group of lawyers advocating for LGBT rights, claimed that LGBT human rights defenders, particularly in Muslim areas, experienced pressure from community authorities to conduct their activities less openly because of increasing religious radicalization.

Poland

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination in “political, social, and economic life for any reason whatsoever.” The law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, gender, disability, race, nationality, ethnic origin, and sexual orientation.

By law violence or the threat of violence motivated by race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, or political affiliation is a crime punishable by three months’ to five years’ imprisonment. The law stipulates that judges should generally take into account the motivation behind a crime when establishing the penalty. The law requires the human rights defender to monitor implementation of the principle of equal treatment and to support victims of discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While the constitution does not prohibit discrimination on the specific grounds of sexual orientation, it prohibits discrimination “for any reason whatsoever.” The laws on discrimination in employment cover sexual orientation and gender identity, but hate crime and incitement laws do not. The prime minister’s plenipotentiary for equal treatment monitors LGBTI problems.

NGOs and politicians reported increasing acceptance of LGBTI persons by society and the government but also stated that discrimination was still common in schools, workplaces, hospitals, and clinics. There were some reports of skinhead violence and societal discrimination against LGBTI persons, but NGOs maintained that most cases went unreported.

Persons who want to have their gender changed must sue their parents.

On September 17, the Polish branch of Amnesty International reported that authorities did not properly protect LGBTI persons (as well as persons with disabilities and homeless persons) from hate crimes.

On June 11, the Szczecin Appellate Court sentenced one person to 15 years’ imprisonment for beating and killing a 21-year-old LGBTI student in January 2014, and another person to five years’ imprisonment (suspended) for assisting in the beating. The

court ruled that the fatal beating was not a hate-motivated crime, but the Campaign against Homophobia maintained it was.

In its June 9 report, the ECRI noted that homophobic statements were a recurrent feature of political discourse in the country, and that the criminal code does not explicitly prohibit incitement to violence, hatred, discrimination, public insult, and defamation on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The government took several steps during the year to respond to societal discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. On September 16, the National School for Prosecutors and Judges signed a cooperation agreement with the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for a series of trainings for prosecutors on the identification and effective prosecution of hate crimes. The law requires the human rights defender to monitor and promote equal treatment and to support victims of discrimination on all grounds. The human rights defender received funding to implement these obligations.

On February 1, the Lambda Association, a Warsaw-based NGO, opened the first shelter for homeless LGBTI persons. The shelter, funded by a grant from Norway, provided safe haven to 15 persons; it also offered psychological counseling, and job advice.

The police advisor for equal treatment and the human rights defender cooperated to publish a special handbook for police that promoted officers' tolerance and understanding of diversity and counseled police officers on how to work with victims of various minorities, including LGBTI individuals.

Portugal

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, and HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, and the government effectively enforced these prohibitions. The procedure to file a complaint of racial discrimination continued to be lengthy and complicated. The complaints system against police officers concerning racist or racially discriminatory acts was not functional, and there was serious underreporting.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution and the law prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The law bars lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex couples and single women from receiving medically assisted reproductive health care from government-funded health-care providers.

Qatar

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, language, and religion, but it did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. The law does not prohibit discrimination based upon political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status or other disease status. Local custom outweighed government enforcement of nondiscrimination laws. Legal, cultural, and institutional discrimination existed against women, noncitizens, and foreign workers. The UN special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants reported salaries were sometimes calculated on the basis of nationality rather than experience or qualification levels.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons faced discrimination under the law and in practice. The law prohibits same-sex sexual conduct between men but does not explicitly prohibit same-sex relations between women. Under the law a man convicted of having sexual relations with a boy younger than 16 years is subjected to a sentence of life in prison. A man convicted of having same-sex sexual relations with a man 16 years of age or older may receive a sentence of seven years in prison. The number of such cases before the courts during the year was unknown.

There were no public reports of violence against LGBTI persons. LGBTI individuals largely hid their sexual preferences in public due to an underlying pattern of discrimination toward LGBTI persons based on cultural and religious values prevalent in the society. There were no government efforts to address potential discrimination nor are there antidiscrimination laws.

Due to social and religious conventions, there were no LGBTI organizations, nor were there gay pride marches or gay rights advocacy events. Information was not available on official or private discrimination in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Victims of such discrimination, however, were unlikely to come forth and complain because of the potential for further harassment or discrimination.

Romania

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law forbids discrimination based on race, sex, disability, ethnicity, national origin, language, social status, beliefs, religion, sexual orientation, age, noncontagious chronic disease, HIV-positive status, membership in an underprivileged category, or on any criteria aimed at restricting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The government did not enforce these prohibitions effectively and women, as well as Roma and other minorities, often experienced discrimination and violence.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. There are no laws, however, that address the problems and needs of transgender and intersex persons. NGOs reported that police abuse and societal discrimination against LGBTI persons

were common and that open hostility prevented the reporting of some harassment and discrimination.

ACCEPT, an NGO that promoted LGBTI rights, received several reports during the year of aggression and abuse against LGBTI persons, including the case of a 17-year-old in April/May in Bistrita-Nasaud County who suffered repeated physical abuse by family members due to his sexual orientation. By mid-September ACCEPT received three reports of police failing to intervene or to receive complaints lodged by LGBTI individuals facing violence and abuse, two in Bucharest and one in Iasi. In all the cases, the perpetrators were family members or partners.

On March 2, a low-level court upheld a decision that ended the investigation of Bucharest police for abuse of office and failure to protect LGBTI individuals during an event for the 2013 LGBT history month, when a group of protesters interrupted to chant homophobic slogans.

Bullying remains a recurring problem in high schools in the absence of discussions on diversity, equality, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Comprehensive sexual education programs were absent from the curriculum.

During the year members of the LGBTI community continued to voice concerns about discrimination in the public education and health care systems. Victims did not report specific cases of harassment and discrimination because of open hostility in society. The number of complaints of discrimination based on sexual orientation received by the CNCD is usually low due to underreporting. Discrimination in employment occurred against LGBTI persons (see section 7.d.).

On April 20, a priest and teacher of the Orthodox religion in Brasov distributed to local high school classes anti-LGBTI pamphlets published in the mid-1990s by the Orthodox Church. The pamphlets encouraged discrimination against LGBTI persons. In response, church authorities cut the priest's salary for a few months.

Prior to the May 23 gay pride parade in Bucharest, which transpired without incident, approximately 50 persons took part in a "normalcy march" sponsored by an extreme-right NGO, the New Right, to protest against homosexuality.

The law governing the ability of transgender persons to change their identity was vague and incomplete, resulting in inconsistency in judicial practice concerning legal recognition of gender identity. In some cases authorities denied recognition of a change in identity unless a sex-reassignment intervention had occurred. Because of the difficult legal procedure for gender recognition, it was often impossible for transgender persons to get documents reflecting their gender identity, which led to difficulties in all services requiring identity documents (health care, transportation passes, banking services). There were reports that transgender persons faced particular difficulties in accessing health care because doctors had very limited knowledge about transgender issues and, consequently, did not know how to treat transgender patients. There were almost no doctors who had the knowledge or willingness to undertake sex-reassignment surgery. Access to adequate psychological services was also limited because there were few specialists with the knowledge and expertise to deal with transgender issues, while others refused to accept transgender patients.

During the year the NGO ACCEPT provided counseling on the legal aspects of gender recognition to five persons.

There was a lack of training for medical staff working with the LGBTI community regarding communication skills, heteronormativity, confidentiality concerns, and discriminatory attitudes. Education in medical schools and in faculties of psychology on

homosexuality and especially transgenderism was limited, with homosexuality presented as a deviant behavior and illness.

Russia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, nationality, language, origin, property and official status, place of residence, religion, beliefs, membership of public associations, or other circumstances. The law also protects various rights of persons with disabilities. Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, age, and HIV-status or other communicable diseases is not explicitly protected, although these categories could be construed as falling under “other circumstances.” The government did not universally enforce prohibitions on discrimination.

During the year hostile rhetoric and propaganda against some groups disseminated through state-run media outlets contributed to discrimination and xenophobia.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

A 2013 law criminalizes the “propaganda” of nontraditional sexual relations to minors. The law effectively limits the rights of free expression and assembly for citizens who wish to advocate publicly for rights or express the opinion that homosexuality is normal. Examples of what the government considered LGBTI propaganda included materials that “directly or indirectly approve of persons who are in nontraditional sexual relationships.” Antidiscrimination laws exist but do not explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

During the year there were reports of killings motivated by the sexual orientation of the victim. In one case two men confessed to killing a gay man in the Vsevolozhskiy district outside St. Petersburg on February 23. The two attackers reportedly stabbed the man repeatedly after he allegedly sexually harassed them. No information was available regarding any official action taken against the attackers.

Human rights groups reported continuing violence against LGBTI individuals. Openly gay men were particular targets of attacks, and police often failed to respond. In July several young men conducted a social experiment in which they secretly videotaped themselves walking around Moscow while holding hands. The publicly available video of the experiment showed the men being verbally and physically assaulted multiple times by passersby.

LGBTI activists experienced threats and attacks in public. Police were often unwilling to assist, and victims sometimes chose not to report crimes for this reason as well as due to concerns about retaliation. On August 18, unknown assailants attacked LGBTI activist Irina Fedotova-Fet near her home in Moscow. The attackers shouted epithets referring to her sexuality during the attack, which left her cut and bruised.

On April 13, assailants sprayed an odorous gas into the Maximum Center for Social, Psychological, and Legal Assistance to Victims of Homophobia and Discrimination in Murmansk, causing choking and vomiting among those in the office. Police refused to open a criminal investigation. In July a lawyer for one of the victims filed a legal complaint of police inaction.

There were reports that authorities targeted NGOs and activists representing the LGBTI community for retaliation. LGBTI rights activist Aleksandr Ermoshkin suffered a head injury during an assault in May at a LGBTI rights demonstration in Khabarovsk. According to HRW, Ermoshkin was also forced to resign from his position as a schoolteacher shortly after the country enacted the 2013 law banning propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations to minors. In June a nationally televised story on the state-owned Russia-1 channel accused him of collaborating with foreign intelligence services during a meeting arranged by the television station with reporters posing as representatives of a foreign embassy in Moscow.

LGBTI persons reported heightened societal stigma and discrimination, which some attributed to increasing official promotion of intolerance and homophobia. Activists asserted that the majority of LGBTI persons hid their sexual orientation or gender identity due to fear of losing their jobs or homes as well as the threat of violence. Medical practitioners reportedly continued to limit or deny LGBTI persons health services due to intolerance and prejudice. There were reports that employment discrimination against LGBTI persons increased (see section 7.d.) and that LGBTI persons were increasingly seeking asylum abroad due to the domestic environment.

There were reports that authorities harassed venues frequented by LGBTI persons. On February 26, police raided the lesbian nightclub Infinity in St. Petersburg, purportedly due to reports of drug use and minors being present. Earlier in the month, Kseniya Infinity, one of the owners of the club, had intentionally taken a picture of herself kissing her partner with antigay St. Petersburg assemblyman Vitaliy Milonov in the background. After the picture was posted online, Milonov threatened to close the club.

In Moscow authorities refused to allow a gay pride parade for the 10th consecutive year, despite a 2010 ECHR ruling that the denial violated the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom from discrimination, and otherwise violated free expression, association, and assembly rights of LGBTI persons.

On October 2, the LGBT Sports Federation, a nationwide network of organizations promoting athletic engagement for LGBTI individuals, held the opening of the fifth annual athletic event, Together in Sport, outside Moscow. In September, St. Petersburg's seventh annual Queer Festival of Russia drew more than 2,500 live and online spectators. Despite last-minute venue cancellations prior to both of these events, they were allowed to proceed with far less outside interference than in 2014. Activists noted the government's strategy involved limiting such events' exposure to the broader public rather than banning or severely interfering with them.

Although the law allows transgender individuals to change their names and gender classifications on government documents, they faced difficulties because the government had not established standard procedures and many civil registry offices denied their requests. When their documents failed to reflect their gender accurately, transgender persons often faced discrimination in accessing health care, education, housing, and employment.

A homophobic campaign continued in the state-controlled media, in which officials, journalists, and others called LGBTI persons "perverts," "sodomites," and "abnormal," and conflated homosexuality with pedophilia.

Rwanda

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in

Persons

The constitution provides that all citizens are equal before the law, without discrimination based on ethnic origin, tribe, clan, color, sex, region, social origin, religion or faith, political opinion, economic status, culture, language, social status, or physical or mental disability. The constitution and law are silent on discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status or having other communicable diseases. The government generally enforced the law's provisions, although problems remained.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There are no laws that criminalize sexual orientation or consensual same-sex sexual conduct, and cabinet-level government officials expressed support for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. LGBTI persons reported societal discrimination and abuse, and LGBTI rights groups reported occasional harassment by neighbors and police.

There were no known reports of physical attacks against LGBTI persons, nor were there any reports of LGBTI persons fleeing the country due to harassment or attack.

Saint Kitts and Nevis

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, place of origin, political opinion, color, or sex, and the government generally respected these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity between men, which carries a penalty up to 10 years in prison, but there were no reports of the law being enforced. The law does not prohibit sexual activity between women. No laws prohibit discrimination against a person on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Negative societal attitudes towards the LGBTI community impeded the operation of LGBTI organizations and the free association of LGBTI persons. The government asserted it received no reports of violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation; however, unofficial reports indicated that violence and discrimination was a problem. Anecdotal evidence suggested that LGBTI persons were reluctant to report incidents of violence or abuse for fear of retribution or reprisal due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Saint Lucia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, race, national origin, political opinions, or color.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual activity is illegal under indecency statutes, and some same-sex sexual activity between men is also illegal under anal intercourse laws. Indecency statutes carry a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment, and anal intercourse carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. No legislation protects persons from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

While the indecency statutes and anal intercourse laws were rarely enforced, there was widespread social discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons in the deeply conservative society. There were few openly LGBTI persons in the country. Openly LGBTI persons faced daily verbal harassment. Civil society received reports of LGBTI persons denied access to rental homes or forced to leave rental homes as well as being denied jobs or leaving jobs due to a hostile work environment.

There were few reported incidents of violence or abuse during the year. Civil society representatives noted that LGBTI persons were reluctant to report incidents of violence or abuse out of fear of retribution or reprisal. Media sources and the LGBTI community linked the killing during the year of 18-year-old Marvin Anthony Augustin of Grand Riviere, Gros-Islet, to the victim's sexual orientation, contending that the circumstances of Augustin's death suggested a hate crime against a gay male and that the police investigation has been very slow.

The country's sole LGBTI organization, United and Strong, conducted human rights training for selected police, customs, and correctional officers on both general and LGBTI-specific content.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law provides for equal treatment regardless of race, sex, national origin, political opinion, and religion. The government generally enforced this provision. Persons who are not citizens may not receive full protections under the constitution.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex conduct is illegal under indecency statutes, and some sexual activity between men is also illegal under anal intercourse laws. Indecency statutes carry a maximum penalty of five years, and anal intercourse acts carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison, although these laws were rarely enforced. No laws prohibit discrimination against a person on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Anecdotal evidence suggested there was social discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons, although local observers believed such

attitudes of intolerance were slowly improving. Members of professional and business classes were more inclined to conceal their sexual orientation.

Samoa

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the government generally respected these provisions. Politics and culture generally reflected a heritage of matai privilege and power, and members of certain families of high traditional status possessed some advantages.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

“Sodomy” and “indecent between males” are illegal, with maximum penalties of seven and five years’ imprisonment, respectively, but authorities did not enforce these provisions with regard to consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults.

Although there were no reports of societal violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity, there were isolated cases of discrimination. While society publicly recognized the transgender Fa’afafine community, members of the community reported instances of social discrimination.

San Marino

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or presence of other communicable diseases. The government effectively enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law forbids discrimination based on sex or personal, economic, social, political, or religious status. Such laws apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender individuals. The law makes no reference to intersex persons.

The law provides that when a person commits an offense motivated by hostility toward the victim’s race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or sexual orientation, courts should consider such motivation as an aggravating circumstance when imposing sentence. The country’s laws prohibit persons from disseminating, by any means, ideas based on racial or ethnic hatred, or from committing or encouraging others to commit discriminatory acts on the grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or sexual orientation. Offenders are subject to prosecution.

Sao Tome and Principe

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution guarantees equality before the law for all citizens, and explicitly prohibits discrimination based on social origin, race, sex, political affiliation, religious belief, or philosophical conviction. The government did not effectively guarantee these rights. Noncitizens are guaranteed the same rights as citizens, except for political participation and holding office.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity, but there were occasional reports of societal discrimination, primarily rejection by family and friends, based on sexual orientation. Antidiscrimination laws do not explicitly reference lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. While there were no official impediments, LGBTI organizations did not exist. There were no reports that social stigma or intimidation were factors in preventing the reporting of incidents of abuse.

Saudi Arabia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race but not gender, sex, disability, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, or social status. The law and tradition discriminate based on gender. The law and the guardianship system restrict women to the status of legal dependents vis-a-vis their male guardians. This status is unchanged, even after women reach adulthood. Women and some men faced widespread and state-enforced segregation based on societal, cultural, and religious traditions.

The government generally reinforced sharia-based traditional prohibitions on discrimination based on disability, language, social status, or race. Nevertheless, discrimination based on race, lineage, or social status were common.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Under sharia as interpreted in the country, consensual same-sex sexual conduct is punishable by death or flogging, depending on the perceived seriousness of the case. It is illegal for men “to behave like women” or to wear women’s clothes and vice versa. Due to social conventions and potential persecution, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) organizations did not operate openly, nor were there gay rights advocacy events of any kind. There were reports of official societal discrimination, physical violence, and harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, statelessness, access to education, or health care. Stigma or intimidation acted to limit reports of incidents of abuse. Sexual orientation and gender identity could constitute the basis for harassment, blackmail, or other actions.

There were no government efforts to address potential discrimination. On June 23, the Ministry of Interior tweeted statements regarding a resolution on LGBTI rights at the UN Human Rights Council, noting that the government did not support the resolution and rejecting international interference in its internal affairs.

In June authorities arrested several persons in Jeddah following raids on two parties involving LGBTI individuals. In July a Twitter account associated with the CPVPV announced a \$25,000 fine for an international school that had painted rainbows on its building, calling them “emblems of homosexuality.”

Senegal

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and laws provide that men and women are equal under the law and prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, citizenship, political opinion, gender, disability, language, HIV-positive status, or social status. Discrimination was widespread, and antidiscrimination laws, in particular laws against violence against women and children, generally were not enforced.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual activity, referred to in the law as an “unnatural act,” is a criminal offense, and penalties range from one to five years’ imprisonment and fines of between 100,000 and 1.5 million CFA francs (\$173 and \$2,600).

For example, on July 21, police in Guediawaye arrested without warrant seven men and charged them with the “commission of unnatural acts” after the mother of one of the men reported her son to the police. On August 21, a judge in Dakar sentenced the seven to two-year sentences with a minimum of six months’ imprisonment. According to sources who spoke to NGO Human Rights Watch, no police officers or other witnesses testified against the men at the trial, and the police document provided none of the basic elements for proving a crime, such as details about the alleged sexual acts. The prosecutor alleged the men’s telephones contained incriminating messages and images but did not present them in court. An appeal was filed in the case.

LGBTI persons faced widespread discrimination, social intolerance, and acts of violence. Local NGOs worked actively on LGBTI rights issues, but because of social stigma and laws against homosexuality, they maintained an exceedingly low profile. There are no laws to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, nor are there hate crime laws that could be used to prosecute crimes motivated by bias against LGBTI persons.

The media rarely reported acts of hatred or violence against LGBTI persons. Local human rights groups, however, reported LGBTI persons faced frequent harassment by police, including arbitrary arrest and poor treatment in detention due to their sexual orientation.

Serbia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, or for being HIV positive or having other communicable diseases. The government did not enforce these prohibitions effectively.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Although the law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, violence and discrimination against members of the LGBTI community were serious problems. While attacks happened often, few were reported to authorities because victims were afraid of further harassment. Members of the community were also exposed to constant threats and hate speech. In one example, on September 27, two suspected members of a violent soccer fan club attacked several LGBTI women, including activist Dragoslava Barzut, in a Belgrade cafe. The men beat the women while screaming and cursing them as “lesbians.” They injured three of the women before the police arrived. The police continued to investigate the incident, but did not identify suspects before year’s end.

On May 11, the head of the parliamentary Committee on Human and Minority Rights stated that there was a need for stronger and more efficient cooperation between state institutions and NGOs working to protect the LGBTI community.

LGBTI activists maintained that members of the LGBTI community did not report many violent attacks against them to police because the victims did not believe their cases would be addressed properly and wanted to avoid further victimization from police or publicity generated by their complaints. LGBTI activists also noted that the inadequate government response to violent acts against the LGBTI community encouraged perpetrators to target members of the community with death threats, assaults, and verbal abuse.

On June 27, LGBTI and other human rights groups marked International LGBTI Pride Day. The commissioner for protection of equality and a number of government officials participated in the event. The event was announced in the media and there were no incidents. Participants marched among other members of the public along the central pedestrian street in downtown Belgrade. On September 20, the Belgrade Pride parade was permitted for a second year in a row.

Seychelles

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution states, “Every person has a right to equal protection of the law...without discrimination on any ground except as is necessary in a democratic society.” There was no overt discrimination in housing, employment, education, or other social services based on race, gender, ethnicity, or nationality, but there were reports of discrimination based on political affiliation.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex activity between men is punishable by 14 years' imprisonment, but the law was not enforced. There were no reports of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, although LGBTI activists reported that social stigma prevented incidents from being pursued. A local NGO formed to advocate for the rights of LGBTI persons submitted its registration documents on September 1 and was told that it would take 10 to 14 days, but the application remained pending at year's end.

The wedding of a British same-sex couple at the residence of the British High Commissioner sparked national debate about whether same-sex activities should be decriminalized.

Sierra Leone

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Although the constitution states that it prohibits discrimination based on race, tribe, gender, place of origin, political opinion, color, and religion, the constitution denies citizenship at birth to persons who are not of "Negro-African descent." Neither the constitution nor law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, national extraction, citizenship, social origin, age, language, disability, HIV-positive status, or having other communicable diseases.

The government did not effectively enforce the prohibition of discrimination based on gender as it affected women and girls, and a number of legal acts and customary laws contravened the constitutional provision. The other prohibitions on discrimination were generally enforced.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

A law from 1861 prohibits male-to-male sexual acts ("buggery" and "crimes against nature"), but there is no legal prohibition against female-to-female sex. The 1861 law, which carries a penalty of life imprisonment for "indecent assault" upon a man or 10 years for attempting such an assault, was not enforced. The constitution does not offer protection from discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation. Sexual orientation and gender identity civil society groups alleged that because the law prohibits male-to-male sexual activity, the law limits lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons from exercising the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly. The law, however, does not restrict the rights of persons to speak out on LGBTI issues. The constitution prohibits various forms of discrimination but does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. No hate crime laws cover LGBTI persons. The law does not address transgender persons.

A few organizations, including Dignity Association and the local chapter of Pride Equality, supported LGBTI persons, but they maintained low profiles. LGBTI groups claimed police were biased against them.

As of November there were no reports police or other government agents perpetrated violence or other abuse against LGBTI persons. LGBTI advocates alleged, however, that

authorities did not take stringent action against perpetrators of crimes against LGBTI persons.

Social discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity occurred in nearly every facet of life for known LGBTI persons, and many chose to have heterosexual relationships and family units to shield them. In the areas of employment and education, sexual orientation or gender identity was a basis for abusive treatment, which led individuals to leave their jobs or courses of study. It was difficult for gays and lesbians to receive health services due to fear their confidentiality rights would be ignored if they were honest about their ailments; many chose not to be tested or treated for sexually transmitted infections. Obtaining secure housing was also a problem for LGBTI persons. A 2013 study released by the NGO Global Rights reported that more than half of medical practitioners surveyed were unwilling to provide medical services to LGBTI patients. Families frequently shunned their LGBTI children, leading some to turn to prostitution to survive. Adults could lose their leases if their sexual orientation became public. Lesbian girls and women were also victims of “planned rapes” initiated by family members in an effort to change their sexual orientation. Religious groups reportedly promoted discrimination against the LGBTI community.

As of September there was no information regarding any official action by government authorities to investigate or punish public entities or private persons complicit in abuses against LGBTI persons. The HRCSL, however, undertook outreach sessions in July and September in Freetown, Makeni, and other urban areas to inform LGBTI persons of the HRCSL and other mechanisms that could assist them in submitting complaints and request investigation of and follow-up on bias-motivated crimes and other incidents of discrimination against members of the LGBTI community.

Singapore

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution states that all persons are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection of the law, and the government generally respected these provisions; there is no explicit provision granting equal rights to women. Articles 12(2) and 16(1) explicitly prohibit discrimination against citizens solely on the ground of religion, race, descent, or place of birth. Article 152 stresses the protection of the rights of racial and religious minorities. Mindful of the country’s history of intercommunal tension, the government took numerous measures to provide for racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural nondiscrimination. Social, economic, and cultural benefits and facilities were available to all citizens regardless of race, religion, or gender.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Section 377a of the penal code criminalizes and punishes male-to-male sexual relations as follows: “Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or abets the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years.” The law does not criminalize female-to-female sexual relations.

After the failure of a 2007 attempt to repeal this provision, Prime Minister Lee stated

that authorities would not actively enforce the statute.

In 2014 the Court of Appeals rejected a constitutional challenge, finding that 377a did not contravene the equal protection clause.

No laws explicitly provide for the protection of the LGBTI community from discrimination based on sexual orientation. Moreover, as single persons are prevented from purchasing government housing reserved for married couples until age 35, LGBTI persons were more susceptible to these restrictions.

In two surveys of LGBTI citizens conducted in the last three years--the Homophobia and Transphobia Survey 2012 and the National LGBTI Census 2013--the majority of LGBTI persons reported having experienced abuse or bullying on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity at some point while growing up.

Recruitment procedures do not bar members of the LGBTI community from military service but classify LGBTI military personnel by sexual orientation and evaluate them on a scale of "effeminacy." LGBTI citizens may become government workers but must declare their sexual orientation on job applications (see section 7.d.). Changing of gender on official documents is allowed only through sex reassignments. Media censorship perpetuated negative stereotypes of LGBTI individuals by restricting portrayals of LGBTI life. The MDA continued to censor films and television shows with LGBTI themes. According to the MDA website, authorities allow the broadcast of LGBTI themes on television, "as long as the presentation does not justify, promote, or glamorize such a lifestyle" (see section 2.a.).

Slovakia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and the law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation or gender identity, or social status; the government made efforts to enforce these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and identifies sexual orientation as a hate crime motivation. According to LGBTI rights advocates, prejudice and official and societal discrimination persisted, although no official cases were reported. Persons intending to change their legal gender status need to obtain medical approval, which usually requires undergoing gender-reassignment surgery.

On February 7, the government held a national referendum on marriage, same-sex adoptions, and sexual education in schools. Turnout in the referendum was slightly more than 21 percent, well below the 50 percent threshold needed to validate the referendum. More than 90 percent of those who participated voted in favor of limiting marriage to heterosexual couples and banning adoptions by same-sex couples.

During the year the organizers of the Bratislava gay pride parade decided not to hold the parade, claiming that society had been "poisoned" by the February referendum. Instead of the march, they held other events and campaigns. The annual gay pride parade in

Kosice took place in September without incident, due in part to improved security provisions undertaken by municipal authorities.

In August the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs provided 20,000 euros (\$22,000) in funding to the “Q-Center” in Bratislava, which provides social support and counseling services to the local LGBTI community, and for the establishment of a new Q-center in Kosice.

Slovenia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on national origin, race, sex, language, religion, political or other conviction, material standing, birth, education, social status, disability, or any other personal circumstance. All are equal before the law. The government usually enforced these prohibitions effectively.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While the law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, societal discrimination was widespread. Because one team of doctors performed gender reassignment surgery, transgender persons often chose to seek treatment at private clinics abroad due to lengthy wait times. Some reported difficulties in accessing hormone therapies and scheduling second opinion medical appointments. The procedure legally to change gender is lengthy and complex. According to a recent survey, almost 50 percent of gay and lesbian respondents reported experiencing homophobic violence at least once. The law considers crimes against LGBTI persons to be hate crimes and prohibits incitement to hatred based on sexual orientation.

The Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities; NGOs; and law enforcement authorities record but do not track the exact number of cases of violence against LGBTI persons. According to LGBTI sources, 90 percent of victims did not report these cases. The ECRI found that hate speech on the internet increased between the dates of its reports, with LGBTI persons being one of the main targets. According to an NGO specializing in LGBTI rights, 49 percent of LGBTI persons have at least once experienced violence or discrimination based on their sexual orientation. Of that 49 percent, 44 percent experienced violence or bullying in schools.

Solomon Islands

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides that no person--regardless of race, place of origin, color, or disability--shall be treated in a discriminatory manner with respect to access to public places. The constitution further prohibits any laws that would have discriminatory effects and provides that no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by anyone acting in an official capacity. Despite constitutional and legal protections, women remained the victims of discrimination in the male-dominated society. Unemployment remained high, and there were limited job opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

“Sodomy” is illegal, as are “indecent practices between persons of the same sex.” The maximum penalty for the former is 14 years’ imprisonment and for the latter five years. There were no reports of arrests or prosecutions directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex persons under these provisions during the year, and it appeared that these laws generally were not enforced. There were no reports of violence or discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation or gender identity, although stigma may hinder some from reporting.

Somalia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The provisional federal constitution states that all citizens, regardless of sex, religion, social or economic status, political opinion, clan, disability, occupation, birth, dialect, age, race, color, tribe, ethnicity, culture, or wealth, shall have equal rights and duties before the law. The constitution and law do not prohibit discrimination based on national origin or citizenship, social origin, HIV status, or having other communicable diseases. The provisional constitution does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Authorities did not enforce antidiscrimination provisions effectively in any of the regions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Same-sex sexual contact is punishable by imprisonment for two months to three years. The law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Society considered sexual orientation and gender identity taboo topics, and there was no known public discussion of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in any region. There were no known LGBTI organizations and no reports of events. There were few reports of societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity due to severe societal stigma that prevented LGBTI individuals from making their sexual orientation or gender identity known publicly. There were no known actions to investigate or punish those complicit in abuses. Hate crime laws or other criminal justice mechanisms did not exist to aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the LGBTI community.

South Africa

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or infection by other communicable disease. The government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions, and

entrenched attitudes and practices often resulted in gender-based violence and employment inequities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The post-apartheid constitution outlaws discrimination based on sexual orientation, but according to a 2013 Pew Research Center study, 61 percent of respondents said society should not accept homosexuality. This prevailing cultural attitude influenced service delivery by individual government employees at the local level. NGOs reported the prevailing culture also negatively influenced hiring practices by local firms, particularly for transgender and intersex individuals.

There were reports of official mistreatment or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity despite clear government policies prohibiting discrimination. A 2011 Human Rights Watch report highlighted violence and discrimination, particularly faced by lesbians and transgender persons. The report documented cases of “secondary victimization” of lesbians, including cases in which police harassed, ridiculed, and assaulted victims of sexual- and gender-based violence who reported abuse. According to the Khayelitsha Commission of Inquiry Report released in 2014, LGBTI individuals were particularly vulnerable to violent crime due to anti-LGBTI attitudes within the community and among police. Anti-LGBTI attitudes among junior members of SAPS affected how SAPS handled complaints by LGBTI individuals, and management did not always address the problem.

In 2014 the government launched a National Intervention Strategy that included rapid-response teams from civil society and various government departments to provide that law enforcement officers dealt with crimes against the LGBTI community promptly and professionally. In August the government reported these rapid-response teams analyzed more than 200 hate crimes cases labeled as “stalled” by civil society. The NPA closed approximately 80 of the cases due to lack of evidence or unavailability of witnesses, but it advanced and finalized 23 cases with convictions, some resulting in life sentences. The NPA and SAPS continued to investigate the remaining cases. The task team has also made progress in educating local government officials and the public about equal rights for the LGBTI community.

On March 21, three men raped an openly bisexual woman and mother of three at gunpoint as she walked home in the rural town of Jane Furse, three hours north of Pretoria, Limpopo Province. The men allegedly called her a lesbian and said they would show her that her lifestyle was wrong. She reported the attack to police and submitted the case to the Justice Department’s rapid-response team for the LGBTI sector. The investigation continued at year’s end.

A judge convicted David Oncke in the 2014 rape and killing of David Olyn, in Ceres, Western Cape Province. Oncke awaited sentencing at year’s end.

The court convicted Stoffel Pule Bothokwe of the 2014 rape and murder of lesbian Disebo “Gift” Owen in Ventersdorp, Northwest Province. On May 27, a judge sentenced Bothokwe to two life terms.

South Sudan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in

Persons

The transitional constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, and social status. The government did not effectively enforce the prohibitions. In October the Council of Ministers recommended that the NLA ratify a pan-African youth convention but with specific reservations one government official described as “encouraging” lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals or activities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not prohibit same-sex sexual acts, but it prohibits “unnatural offenses,” defined as “carnal intercourse against the order of nature,” which are punishable by up to 10 years’ imprisonment if committed with consent and up to 14 years if without consent. There were no reports authorities enforced the law during the year.

During a meeting of the Council of Ministers in October, the government voted to accede to the African Youth Convention, with a single reservation concerning convention language regarding reproductive needs. A government spokesperson explained the reservation was necessary because gay men and lesbians were “unacceptable in South Sudanese culture.” There were no known LGBTI organizations. While there were no reports of specific incidents of discrimination or abuse during the year, stigma was a likely factor in preventing incidents from being reported.

Spain

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or having other communicable diseases, and the government generally enforced the law effectively.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community was widely accepted throughout the country. The law bans discrimination in employment. The law can consider an anti-LGBTI hate element an aggravating circumstance in crimes.

In Catalonia the law provides members of the LGBTI community greater protections than those provided by national law and prohibits discrimination based on sexuality in competencies of the regional government, such as the provision of education and health care. It reverses the burden of proof involved in cases of discrimination in the realms of civil and social law.

The country’s consulates enroll in the civil registry of children born through surrogacy.

According to the Ministry of the Interior, of the 57 reported hate crimes during the first eight months of the year, two (4 percent) were linked to the victim’s sexual orientation. Of the 1,285 hate crimes recorded in 2014, 513 (40 percent of cases) targeted LGBTI

persons. The LGBTI association Arcopoli also asserted that most of the attackers were under the age of 30.

LGBTI associations claimed that homophobia among persons between the ages of 16 to 20 was rising. According to the Observatory against Homophobia in Catalonia, five minors attacked homosexual individuals in the first half of the year.

The government fought LGBTI hate crimes by sensitizing police and social workers on sexual diversity, increasing awareness of LGBTI hate crimes, making reporting easier, and providing better assistance to victims of these crimes. Employing a whole-of-government approach, the government channeled its effort in this area through the Spanish Observatory against LGBT-phobia, an initiative created by the Spanish Federation of LGBTI and with the support of the Ministries of Health, Social Services, and Equality; and the Interior.

Sri Lanka

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. The constitution also has provisions that prohibit discrimination regarding religion, caste, political opinion, and place of birth. There were instances, however, in which gender, religious, disability and ethnic-based discrimination occurred.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Three legal statutes constitute the architecture for discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons in the country: Section 365(A) of the penal code that criminalizes acts “against the order of nature”; Section 399 of this code regarding “Cheating by Personation”; and the Vagrancy Ordinance. Section 365(A), although lacking clear legal definition, puts those convicted of engaging in same-sex sexual activity in private or in public at risk of 10 years’ imprisonment.

There were reports that police harassed, assaulted, and extorted money or sexual favors from LGBTI individuals.

UN human rights officials noted police used the Vagrancy Ordinance to target and harass transgender individuals on suspicion they were prostitutes. Police used Section 399 to harass persons who express themselves in gender nonconforming ways on grounds of “impersonation.” Actual criminal prosecutions under these statutes were rare, however. Human rights organizations reported that, while not actively arresting and prosecuting members of the LGBTI community, police harassed and extorted money or sexual favors from LGBTI individuals with impunity and assaulted gay men and lesbians in Colombo and other areas.

Discrimination against LGBTI persons remained a problem. There were reports that persons undergoing gender-reassignment procedures had difficulty amending government-issued identity documents to reflect those changes, hindering their ability to procure employment, and obtain housing. One transgender individual noted persons from her community could apply for new government-issued identity documents only after having undergone a full course of sexual reassignment surgery. Furthermore, the

process of obtaining identity documents was not just procedural but required a court order and judge's ruling. The Centre for Sex Workers' Rights claimed that public schools sometimes refused to enroll the children of commercial sex workers but did not provide estimates of the number of schools involved or children affected. A civil society group that worked to advance LGBTI rights reported close monitoring by security and intelligence forces.

Sudan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The Interim National Constitution states, "All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without discrimination as to race, color, sex, language, religious creed, political opinion, or ethnic origin to the equal protection under the law." Other articles of the constitution encourage tolerance between different tribes and provides for protection of women and persons with disabilities. The law provides for safeguards for children. The government worked to promote the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities. It did not always provide protections to persons of different religious groups.

In its October 9 report, UNESCO expressed concern about discriminatory provisions in several pieces of legislation affecting women, religious minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. It also noted the lack of legislation to implement and enforce constitutional principles of nondiscrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

LGBTI persons are not considered a protected class under antidiscrimination laws. The law does not specifically prohibit homosexuality but criminalizes sodomy, which is punishable by death. Antigay sentiment was pervasive in society. LGBTI individuals expressed concern for their safety and did not identify themselves publicly. There was at least one confirmed case of an individual detained, beaten, and harassed by authorities because of his suspected affiliation with LGBTI-friendly groups. LGBTI organizations increasingly felt pressured to suspend or alter their activities due to threat of harm. Several LGBTI persons felt compelled to leave the country due to fear of persecution, intimidation, or harassment.

There were no reports of official action to investigate or punish those complicit in LGBTI-related discrimination or abuses.

Suriname

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on place of birth, gender, race, language, religion, ethnic background, education, political opinion, economic position or social circumstance, or any other status. Various sectors of the population, such as women, Maroons, Amerindians, persons with HIV/AIDS, and LGBTI persons, suffered forms of discrimination.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution prohibits many forms of discrimination, but does not address sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV-positive status. LGBTI groups could associate freely, were very active, and advocated within society under the same laws that pertain to the assembly and association of other groups. In March the Penal Code was amended to include specific legislation regarding discrimination and hate speech based on sexual orientation, specifically protecting the LGBTI community. Violation of this law can result in a prison sentence of up to one year or a fine. The legislation, however, did not set any standards for recognition of such discrimination or hate speech and had not been implemented at year's end.

Despite the protective legislation, the LGBTI community faced discrimination from the government and society. The law specifies marriage as a union between a man and woman, making same-sex marriages illegal. The National Assembly and government openly discriminated against same-sex couples, as they were not recognized and were explicitly excluded from social security legislation passed in 2014. Members of parliament and the then-vice president spoke out openly against LGBTI persons, comparing homosexuality to a disease and inciting hatred and violence toward this community. LGBTI persons, particularly transgender commercial sex workers, reported arbitrary arrests, harassment, and beatings by security forces.

There were few official reports of societal violence against LGBTI persons, primarily due to the victims' fear of retribution and because authorities are reported not to take complaints filed by members of the LGBTI community seriously. One published report in 2014 led to the suspension of police officials. There were reports of societal discrimination against the LGBTI community in areas of employment and housing (see section 7.d.).

Swaziland

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, age, ethnicity, religion, political opinion, or social status, but the government did not consistently enforce the law.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While colonial-era legislation against sodomy remains on the books, no penalties are specified, and there were no arrests. On several occasions throughout the year, the government issued statements that same-sex relationships and acts were illegal but did not prosecute any cases. Societal discrimination against LGBTI persons was prevalent, and LGBTI persons generally concealed their sexual orientation and gender identity. For example, the director of the LGBTI NGO Rock of Hope confirmed a March 15 newspaper report that Kaylo Glover, a young lesbian, was axed to death in Nhlanguano by a man who objected to her lesbianism. LGBTI persons who were open about their sexual orientation and relationships faced censure and exclusion from the chieftdom-based patronage system, which could result in eviction from one's home. Chiefs, pastors, and government officials criticized same-sex sexual conduct as neither morally Swazi nor Christian.

LGBTI advocacy organizations had trouble registering with the government. One such organization, House of Pride, was under the umbrella of another organization dealing with HIV/AIDS. It was difficult to determine the extent of employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity because victims were not likely to come forward, and most LGBTI persons were not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sweden

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases. The government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Antidiscrimination laws exist, are enforced, and apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals. There were isolated incidents of societal violence and discrimination against persons perceived to be LGBTI.

Switzerland

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin, social origin, disability, gender, age, and language. Although there were no explicit protections in the constitution or law for sexual orientation or HIV-positive status, the constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of one's way of life and physical and mental disability. The government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The country's antidiscrimination law does not specifically apply to sexual orientation or specifically address lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) problems.

There were occasional reports of societal violence or discrimination based on opposition to LGBTI orientation. According to the organization Pink Cop (gay and lesbian police officers), the extent of physical violence was difficult to gauge, in view of the absence of official statistics on LGBTI-oriented violence or discrimination. Pink Cop noted authorities did not specifically prosecute hate crime. While the LGBTI umbrella organization Pink Cross did not record any physical assaults in 2013, it documented two to three workplace discrimination cases a week, and approximately 100 instances during the year of individuals citing problems with the legal system. In October six disguised individuals attacked the clientele and staff of a gay bar in Zurich, punching

them and assaulting them with pepper spray. Pink Cross filed charges shortly after; the case was pending as of year's end.

During the year NGOs continued to criticize the government's restrictive asylum policy, which requires LGBTI refugees to provide substantiated evidence of oppression in their countries of origin in order to receive asylum.

The NGO Transgender Network Switzerland criticized the requirement that sex and name changes for transgender individuals needed prior diagnosis of a psychological disorder and medical procedures, such as sterilization. The NGO also noted authorities often denied name changes on documents and transgender asylum seekers were frequently accommodated in co-ed facilities instead of single-sex wings. Workplace discrimination was a further problem.

In November a gay couple appealed to the European Court of Human Rights after the Federal Court overturned a 2014 verdict in May by the St. Gallen Administrative Court that recognized the couple as the rightful fathers of a child born to a foreign surrogate, despite surrogacy being prohibited in the country. The Federal Court ruled that the paternity of the father with no biological link to the child was unlawful, but that the name of the biological father would remain in the civil registry.

In July the city of Geneva financially supported the opening of a shelter for young LGBTI persons rejected by their families because of their sexual orientation. The shelter offered affected individuals refuge for up to three months.

In August Pink Cross and the Lesbian Organization of Switzerland filed charges against the bishop of Chur for inciting violence against LGBTI persons following a presentation, given in Germany, during which he recited a passage of the Bible that read, "And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them." According to Pink Cross, the organizations received many hateful telephone calls and letters from supporters of the bishop following the filing of charges. Charges were pending at the Graubunden state prosecutor's office as of year's end.

In 2014 the Federal Office for Gender Equality funded its first project on problems affecting transgender persons, which was still ongoing at year's end. The project focused on the situation of transgender persons in the workplace and was led by the NGO Transgender Network Switzerland. Also in 2014 the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich became the second university (after the University of Lucerne) to adopt internal guidelines to allow transgender individuals to change their name and gender marker, regardless of legal gender recognition.

During the year LGBTI activists sought to establish a central office tasked with collecting data and publishing statistics on verbal or physical attacks on LGBTI individuals.

Syria

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides for equal rights and equal opportunity for all citizens and prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. The government did not enforce the law effectively or make any serious attempt to do so. Women faced widespread violence, discrimination, and significant restrictions on their

rights. Da'esh imposed severe restrictions on women's personal conduct, attire, and freedom of movement in the territory it controlled (see section 1.g.).

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The penal code prohibits homosexual relations, defined as "carnal relations against the order of nature," and provides for at least three years' imprisonment for violations. The law specifically criminalizes any sexual act that is "contrary to nature." In previous years police used this charge to prosecute lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals. There were no reports of prosecutions under the law during the year, although reports indicated the government arrested dozens of gay men and lesbians over the past several years on charges, such as abusing social values; selling, buying, or consuming illegal drugs; and organizing and promoting "obscene" parties.

Although there were no known domestic NGOs focused on LGBTI matters, there were several online networking communities, including an online LGBTI-oriented magazine. Human rights activists reported there was overt societal discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in all aspects of society. There were also reports of extremist groups threatening LGBTI activists.

Local media reported numerous instances in which security forces used accusations of homosexuality as a pretext to detain, arrest, and torture civilians. The frequency of such instances was difficult to determine, since police rarely reported their rationale for arrests. Furthermore, social stigma prevented many victims of such abuse from coming forward, even when accusations were false.

In February photos and videos began appearing on social media that showed Da'esh pushing men suspected of "being gay" from rooftops in Raqqa. In April Da'esh released images on social media showings members stoning men to death for being gay. In June the UN Secretary-General reported that Da'esh blindfolded and threw a man off a building on May 17 for being gay.

Taiwan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, language, or HIV or other communicable disease status, and the authorities effectively enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law stipulates that employers cannot discriminate against job seekers on the basis of sexual orientation and also prohibits schools from discriminating against students on the basis of their gender temperament, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Activists for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) rights said discrimination against LGBTI individuals was more widespread than suggested by the number of court

cases, due to victims' reluctance to lodge formal complaints. Reported instances of violence against LGBTI individuals were rare, and the police response was adequate. Advocacy groups were unable to collect reliable statistics on violence targeting LGBTI individuals because the law does not define hate crime, so police do not use that category to disaggregate cases. LGBTI rights activists said the inability of unmarried persons to obtain fertility treatments and adopt children resulted in discrimination against LGBTI persons. The Center for Disease Control operates LGBTI awareness and assistance centers in Taipei, New Taipei City, Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Miaoli, Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung that offer services including counseling and free HIV testing.

Tajikistan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law provides for the rights and freedoms of every person regardless of race, gender, disability, language, or social status, but there was discrimination against women and persons with disabilities. Trafficking in persons for sexual and labor exploitation remained a problem.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While same-sex sexual conduct is legal in the country, and the age of consent is the same as for heterosexual relationships, the law does not provide legal protection against discrimination. Homophobic attitudes and little societal tolerance toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons made it rare for individuals to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. Throughout the country there were reports that LGBTI individuals faced physical and psychological abuse, including from police.

There is no law against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and LGBTI persons were victims of police harassment and faced threats of public beatings by community members. Public activism on behalf of LGBTI persons was limited. LGBTI representatives claimed law enforcement officials extorted money from LGBTI persons by threatening to tell their employers or families of their activities and in some cases subjected LGBTI persons to sex trafficking. Hate crimes against members of the LGBTI community reportedly went unaddressed. LGBTI representatives claimed health-care providers discriminated against and harassed LGBTI persons. LGBTI advocacy and health groups reported harassment from government officials and clergy, to include violent threats.

In May the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria released a report stating that there were 30,000 LGBTI individuals in the country. The Ministry of Health refuted the data, saying that in reality the number was much lower but provided no statistic.

On April 30, a 55-year-old LGBTI resident of Dushanbe was killed in Shohmansur District. The Ministry of Interior reported that authorities detained two suspects in connection with the killing. The ministry did not make any other official statement about the investigation.

It was difficult for transgender persons to obtain new official documents from the government. The law allows for changing gender in identity papers if a medical

organization provides an authorized document. Because a document of this form does not exist, it was difficult for transgender persons to change their legal identity to match their gender. This created internal problems involving any activity requiring government identification, including the acquisition of a passport for international travel.

Tanzania

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on nationality, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, color, religion, sex, or station in life. The government did not effectively enforce the prohibitions. No provisions prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or language. The law prohibits certain forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct is illegal in the country. The law on both the mainland and Zanzibar punishes “gross indecency” by up to five years in prison or a fine. The law punishes any person who has “carnal knowledge of another against the order of nature or permits a man to have carnal knowledge of him against the order of nature” with a prison sentence of 30 years to life on the mainland and imprisonment up to 14 years in Zanzibar. In Zanzibar the law also provides for imprisonment up to five years or a fine for “acts of lesbianism.” The burden of proof in such cases is significant, and according to a 2013 HRW report, arrests of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons rarely led to prosecutions. They usually were a pretext for police to collect bribes or coerce sex from vulnerable individuals. Nonetheless, the Commission on Human Rights and Good Governance’s prison visits in 2014 revealed that “unnatural offenses” were among the most common reasons for pretrial detention of minors. In the past courts charged individuals suspected of same-sex sexual conduct with loitering or prostitution. The law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBTI persons were targets of the government sanctioned “sungusungu” citizen patrols. They were often afraid to report violence and other crimes, including those committed by state agents due to fear of arrest. LGBTI persons faced societal discrimination that restricted their access to health care, including access to information about HIV, housing, and employment. There were no known government efforts to combat such discrimination.

Thailand

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The interim constitution promulgated by the NCPO in July 2014 purports to protect “all human dignity, rights, liberties, and equality of the people.”

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No laws criminalize sexual orientation or consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) groups could register with the government, although there were some restrictions on terminology used in registering their group names. The LGBTI community reported that police treated LGBTI victims of crime the same as other persons except in the case of sexual crimes, where there was a tendency to downplay sexual abuse or not to take harassment seriously.

The law does not permit transgender individuals to change their gender on identification documents, which, coupled with societal discrimination, limited employment opportunities for transgender individuals.

A local NGO reported that police targeted transgender individuals for harassment and discrimination in the tourist city of Pattaya.

University authorities allowed transgender students to participate in commencement ceremonies and sit for examinations while wearing gender-specific uniforms of their choice on a case-by-case basis. At the same time, university authorities usually required students to obtain official permission before they could wear their chosen uniform. Such permissions remained voluntary at each school.

On March 8, the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) passed the Gender Equality Act that prohibits discrimination “due to the fact that the person is male or female or of a different appearance from his/her own sex by birth.” The law went into effect in September, and it remained unclear what effect this new law would have on gender identity discrimination. There was some commercial discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. For example, some life insurance companies refused to issue policies to gay men, although some companies also expressed willingness to sell policies to LGBTI workers with provisions for full transfer of benefits to same-sex partners. NGOs reported more insurance companies began to accept same-sex partner beneficiaries, but it remained at the company’s discretion. NGOs alleged some nightclubs, bars, hotels, and factories denied entry or employment to LGBTI individuals, particularly transgender persons.

Timor-Leste

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and relevant legislation prohibit discrimination based on grounds of color, race, marital status, gender, heritage, language, social or economic status, political or ideological convictions, religion, education, and physical or mental condition. Nonetheless, violence against women was a major problem, and discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, some minorities and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community occurred. Violence against children--both at home and in schools--and child labor were common.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution and law are silent on same-sex relations and other matters of sexual orientation and gender identity. The PDHJ worked with civil society organization

CODIVA (Coalition on Diversity and Action) to increase awareness in the LGBTI community regarding processes available for human rights complaints. While physical abuse in public or by public authorities was uncommon, LGBTI persons were often verbally abused and discriminated against in some public services, including medical centers. There were several instances of police refusing to process abuse cases when reported by LGBTI individuals. In one case security forces verbally abused a transgender person when she presented an identification card that showed a different gender. Those working with LGBTI individuals noted that abuse most commonly occurred within the family home. CODIVA identified at least one case in which a stranger assaulted a transgender person in the street.

Access to education was limited for some LGBTI individuals who are removed from the family home or who fear abuse at school. Several openly gay and lesbian individuals held positions in government, but other LGBTI individuals believed their orientation might be a barrier to entry into government service.

Togo

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, although the government did not enforce these provisions effectively. The constitution and law do not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Article 392 of the Penal Code forbids “acts against nature committed with an individual of one’s sex,” widely understood as a reference to same-sex sexual activity. The law provides that a person convicted of engaging in consensual same-sex sexual activity may be sentenced to one to three years’ imprisonment and fined one million to three million CFA (\$1,733 to \$5,199), but the law was not enforced directly. On those occasions when police do arrest someone for engaging in consensual same-sex sexual activity, the charge is usually for some other violation as justification for the arrest, such as disturbing the peace or public urination. The media code forbids promotion of immorality. LGBTI persons faced societal discrimination in employment, housing, and access to education and health care. Existing antidiscrimination laws do not apply to LGBTI persons (see section 7.d.). No laws allow transgendered persons to change gender markers on government-issued identity documents.

A revised draft of the penal code, debated by a National Assembly drafting committee in August and September, did not alter Article 392. The draft included new language in a separate article that would punish anyone who offends the “public morality” through speeches, writings, images, and other means. This came despite international pressure on the legislature to use the broad update of the penal code to drop discriminatory language. Several LGBTI groups were vocal in their opposition to the revision of the penal code, issuing press releases calling on lawmakers to eliminate Article 392. There were no overt reprisals against these groups by authorities.

The government allowed LGBTI groups to register with the Ministry of Territorial Affairs as health-related groups, particularly those focused on HIV/AIDS prevention. Activists

reported violence against LGBTI persons was common, but police ignored complaints. Most human rights organizations, including the CNDH, refused to address LGBTI concerns.

Tonga

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits general discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases. The government did not effectively enforce this provision, however, and the law confirms the special status of members of the royal family and the nobility. While social, cultural, and economic facilities were available to all citizens regardless of race and religion, members of the hereditary nobility had substantial advantages, including control over most land and a generally privileged status.

The law provides for the unequal treatment of women.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

By law “sodomy with another person” is a crime with a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison, but there were no reports of prosecutions under this provision for consensual sexual conduct between adults, regardless of the gender of the parties. No laws specifically prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity or address hate crimes. No criminal justice mechanisms exist to aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community. Society accepted a subculture of transgender dress and behavior, and a prominent NGO’s annual festival highlighted transgender identities. There were no reports of violence against persons based on sexual orientation or gender identity, but social stigma or intimidation may have prevented incidents of discrimination or violence from being reported. In May at the Pacific Sexual Diversity Network hosted conference for members of the LGBTI community in Tonga, a small religious group held a protest outside the conference venue.

Trinidad and Tobago

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The government generally respected the constitutional provisions for fundamental human rights and freedoms without discrimination based on race, sex, national and social origin, political views, or religion, and it effectively enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Although the law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity, providing penalties of up to 25 years’ imprisonment, the government generally did not enforce such

legislation, except in conjunction with more serious offenses such as rape. Immigration laws also bar the entry of “homosexuals” into the country, but the legislation was not enforced during the year.

The law identifies classes of persons protected from discrimination but does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. The 2012 Children Act decriminalizes sexual exploration between minors close in age but specifically retains language criminalizing the same activity among same-sex minors. Other laws exclude same-sex partners from their protections. LGBTI rights groups reported that a stigma related to sexual orientation or gender identity in the country remained and likely inhibited reporting incidents. LGBTI rights groups also reported individual cases of violence against LGBTI persons, as well as a reluctance to report crimes to police due to fear of harassment by police and court officials. For example, during the year an LGBTI individual went to report a crime to police but was made to wait hours in the police station for processing while police officers “made fun” of him.

In general victims of gay-related hate crimes avoided media attention.

In August incoming prime minister Rowley stated the country was not ready to address the social issue of decriminalizing homosexuality, remarking, “We need to talk about these things before we jump to a conclusion...they are very sensitive issues and the population has to be prepared to take part in these discussions.” Rowley subsequently expressed his view that all citizens should be protected by the laws that govern the country.

In October during a budget debate in parliament, the minister of sport and youth affairs twice indirectly referred to an opposition member of parliament as a “princess,” and subsequently the minister of finance made the same minister the butt of an antigay joke on his Facebook page. The opposition member of parliament, who is not openly gay, demanded an apology and received strong popular support in social media.

Tunisia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law and constitution explicitly prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions, although discrimination against women occurred due to customary law and social norms. The law is silent regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes sodomy. Convictions carry up to a three-year prison sentence. According to NGOs, authorities occasionally use the law against sodomy to detain and question persons about their sexual activities and orientation, reportedly at times based on appearance alone. LGBTI NGOs reported 56 known cases of arrests under the sodomy law during the year.

As an example of such arrests, on December 10, six men from Rakkada were sentenced to three years each for sodomy, after being forced to undergo a rectal examination. One of the men was sentenced to an additional six months for an “attack on public morals” after police found a video clip on his computer. The court also banished the men from

their town for five years after they are released from prison.

Associations advocating for LGBTI rights organized a campaign against these arrests, which quickly gained popularity on social media and garnered international media attention. These associations, along with international NGOs, demanded release of the men and that parliament rescind the law against sodomy.

Then minister of justice Mohamed Salah Ben Aissa, in a radio interview, said the law runs counter to the right to privacy, and citizens should work together to repeal it. The president, however, stated that the government would not repeal the law.

Anecdotal evidence suggested LGBTI individuals faced discrimination and violence, although societal stigma and fear of prosecution under sodomy laws likely discouraged individuals from reporting problems. Due to societal intolerance of same-sex sexual relationships, LGBTI individuals were discreet, and there was no information on official discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, access to education, or health care. Despite the hostile environment, numerous LGBTI-oriented websites and Facebook pages were not censored. LGBTI advocacy work was done by several small organizations formed after 2011.

In March several LGBTI associations organized a small gay pride festival in Tunis--the first of its kind in the country. Associations also organized events for the International Day against Homophobia in May.

During a November 28 plenary session of parliament, Member of Parliament Abdellatif Mekki called for the dissolution of LGBTI NGO Shams, arguing that the organization constituted a threat to Tunisian society, and that it advocated for "criminal practices." Organizations objected to the statement, noting they had complied with all legal requirements to be registered as associations. In December the vice president of Shams left the country, citing threats against his life from extremists.

Turkey

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, but the government did not enforce these prohibitions effectively. Government officials used discriminatory language toward opposition groups such as protesters, women, Kurds, Alevis, LGBTI individuals, and other vulnerable populations. The constitution allows measures to advance gender equality as well as measures to benefit children, seniors, persons with disabilities, widows, and veterans, without violating the constitutional prohibition against discrimination. Civil society organizations asserted the grounds for punishing discrimination and violence motivated by hate in the law remained too limited and excluded major offences that may be motivated by discrimination or hate, especially failing to protect the most vulnerable groups, including women, persons with disabilities, LGBTI individuals, Roma, and members of other ethnic minorities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While the law does not explicitly discriminate against LGBTI individuals, legal references to "offenses against public morality," "protection of the family," and "unnatural sexual behavior" sometimes served as a basis for discrimination by

employers and abuse by police. LGBTI prostitutes reported police detained them to extract payoffs. LGBTI advocates accused courts and prosecutors of creating an environment of impunity for attacks on transgender persons involved in prostitution.

The law allows for up to three years in prison for hate speech or injurious acts related to language, race, nationality, color, gender, disability, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion, or sectarian differences. Human rights groups criticized the failure to include protections based on gender identity and noted that the law was sometimes used to restrict freedom of speech rather than to protect minorities. The Ministry of Interior explained that LGBTI definitions were not included in the law. Protections for LGBTI individuals are provided under a general “gender” concept. KAOS-GL, a domestic NGO focused on LGBTI rights, maintained that due to this failure to acknowledge the existence of LGBTI individuals, authorities withheld social protection from LGBTI individuals. KAOS-GL reported that neither the Ministry of Family and Social Policies nor the Ministry of Labor and Social Security would engage with LGBTI groups or consider the rights of LGBTI persons or their need for services and protection.

During the year LGBTI individuals continued to experience discrimination, intimidation, and violent crimes.

Human rights attorneys reported police and prosecutors frequently failed to pursue aggressively cases of violence against transgender persons. They often did not arrest suspects or hold them in pretrial detention, as was common with other defendants. When arrests were made, defendants could claim “unjustifiable provocation” under the penal code and request a reduced sentence. That provision states punishment “will be reduced if the perpetrator commits a crime under the influence of rage or strong, sudden passion caused by a wrongful act.” Judges routinely applied the law to reduce the sentences of those who killed LGBTI individuals. Courts of appeal upheld these verdicts based, in part, on the “immoral nature” of the victim.

During the campaign for the June 7 parliamentary election, some politicians engaged in hate speech directed at LGBTI individuals and other minorities. Human rights groups contended an increase in violent acts against LGBTI individuals in June and July was a direct result of bigotry fueled by political leaders. After Istanbul police used teargas, rubber bullets, and water hoses to prevent some participants from joining the LGBTI pride parade on June 28, a series of anti-LGBTI incidents occurred in both Istanbul and Ankara the following week. Gay men were attacked in Istanbul outside a shopping mall on June 30; the head of the Red Umbrella transgender-support NGO was attacked and raped in his home in Ankara on July 5; and violent anti-LGBTI posters were placed around Ankara on July 8. The LGBTI community responded by filing legal actions against the youth group that claimed to have created the posters and requesting a protective order for Red Umbrella’s chairperson. The government took no public action to respond to allegations of disproportionate use of force by police, police intimidation, the calls for anti-LGBTI violence, or the attacks in Istanbul and Ankara. The one openly LGBTI candidate for parliament in the June 7 elections, Baris Sulu, did not secure a seat and in August left the country, reportedly due to the intensity of threats he faced because of his LGBTI status.

There were active LGBTI organizations in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Mersin, Gaziantep, Eskisehir, and Diyarbakir, and unofficial groups in smaller cities and on university campuses. Groups reported harassment by police and government authorities. Many university groups in small cities complained that rectors had denied them permission to organize.

LGBTI organizations reported the government used regular and detailed audits against them to create administrative burdens and threaten the possibility of large fines. They

also reported challenges finding office space due to discrimination from landlords. Following the July 5 attack against him in his home, the chair of Red Umbrella reported he eventually had to threaten legal action against a landlord to rent a new apartment. He was forced to leave his previous apartment because the court denied a request to arrest the three men who attacked him in his home on July 5, leaving him at risk of a second attack.

LGBTI individuals faced discrimination in employment (see section 7.d.).

Turkmenistan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Although the law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, ethnic minority status, or social status, discrimination continued to be a problem, as did violence against women.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Same-sex sexual contact between men is illegal under a section of the criminal code on pederasty, with punishment of up to two years in prison and the possible imposition of an additional two- to five-year term in a labor camp. The law also stipulates sentences of up to 20 years for repeated acts of pederasty, homosexual acts with juveniles, or the spread of HIV or other sexually transmitted infections through same-sex contact. The law does not mention same-sex sexual contact between women. Enforcement of the law was selective. Antidiscrimination laws do not apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons. Society does not accept transgender individuals, and the government provided no legal protection or recognition of their gender identity.

There were reports of detention, threats, and other abuses based on sexual orientation and gender identity. No official information was available regarding discrimination against LGBTI individuals in employment, housing, statelessness, access to education, or health care. Since same-sex sexual activity and nonconforming gender identity were taboo subjects in the country's traditional society, observers noted social stigma prevented reporting of incidents.

Tuvalu

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and place of origin, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions. In 2005 the High Court stated it was a deliberate decision to omit gender as a prohibited basis of discrimination when drafting the constitution.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Sexual conduct between men is illegal, with penalties of seven to 15 years' imprisonment depending on the nature of the offense, but there were no reports of prosecutions of consenting adults under these provisions. The law does not specifically prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. There are no hate crime laws, nor are there criminal justice mechanisms to aid in the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex community. There were no reports of violence against persons based on sexual orientation or gender identity, but social stigma or intimidation may have prevented reporting of incidents of discrimination or violence.

Uganda

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, age, language, and HIV/communicable disease status. The government did not enforce laws against discrimination adequately, and locally or culturally prevalent discrimination against women, children, persons with disabilities, or certain ethnic groups were problems. The law does not address discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and the penal code prohibits "unnatural offenses" that authorities often used to arrest members of the LGBTI community.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct is illegal, according to a colonial-era law that criminalizes "carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature" and provides for a penalty up to life imprisonment. LGBTI persons faced discrimination, legal restrictions, and societal harassment and violence, intimidation, and threats.

On January 15, police arrested nine men who helped organize an HIV/AIDS testing clinic in the western Ntungamo District for "carnal knowledge against the order of nature." Police claimed four of those arrested were engaged in sexual activity at the time of arrest, a charge disputed by those arrested. The men were subjected to forced anal exams; their court cases continued at year's end.

In July a consortium of local LGBTI rights NGOs released a report that listed 89 human rights violations of LGBTI individuals in 2014. Of those, state actors perpetrated 47 violations and nonstate actors 42. The report commended some police officers for protecting the rights of LGBTI individuals and highlighted five such cases. In May 2014 police rescued a bisexual man from a mob that had locked him in a house and assaulted him.

In August 2014 the Constitutional Court nullified the Anti-Homosexuality Act, which the president signed into law in February 2014. The president stated repeatedly that the country did not need new anti-LGBTI legislation because homosexuality was already illegal under the penal code.

Some religious and political leaders delivered church sermons and wrote articles to lobby the public against LGBTI persons. On September 3, media quoted Amos Lapenga, director of ethics and integrity in the Office of the President, attributing the increase of "immoral acts like homosexuality" to foreigners.

Ukraine

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

While the constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases, the government lacked effective legal instruments to enforce the prohibitions, and both governmental and societal discrimination persisted. The law covers discrimination, although experts raised concerns the definition of discrimination was too narrow and the law lacked meaningful enforcement mechanisms.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

During the year the country updated its labor code to prohibit workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. No law, however, prohibits discrimination on this basis in other areas. LGBTI groups, along with international and domestic human rights organizations, criticized the lack of such language in the National Human Rights Strategy.

According to the LGBTI group Nash Mir (Our World), there were both positive and negative developments in the situation of the LGBTI community in the country. The group reported an improvement in social attitudes towards homosexuality and a decline in homophobic rhetoric from churches and leading political figures, and some members of the Verkhovna Rada voiced their support for LGBTI rights. The group reported, however, that the level of homophobic aggression from right-wing nationalist groups increased, and government agencies consistently avoided any discussion of problems facing the LGBTI community.

On June 6, several dozen men, including members of Right Sector, attacked the Equality March in Kyiv, beating protesters and police and throwing firecrackers laced with shrapnel. The attackers injured nine participants and 10 officers. While law enforcement authorities protected the march, the Kyiv City State Administration had initially discouraged march organizers from holding the event. Law enforcement authorities arrested more than a dozen persons on charges of hooliganism. In July several men attacked two LGBTI activists holding hands in central Kyiv.

On August 13, the district administrative court in Odesa prohibited a march supporting LGBTI rights at the request of the Odesa City Council (see section 2.b.).

Our World stated that violence against LGBTI persons was underreported. During the year the group recorded 16 assaults and four killings related to the victims' sexual orientation. Our World indicated that victims and families were reluctant to pursue hate crime charges in these cases due to homophobia. They reported an additional 52 cases of discrimination and abuse, mostly in the cities of Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa, and Zhytomir.

According to the Ukrainian Gay Alliance, an assailant killed a man in Odesa on December 12 due to his sexual orientation. The accused killer reportedly confessed to police that he killed his acquaintance due to his hatred for persons of a "nontraditional sexual orientation."

LGBTI victims also suffered from discrimination in court proceedings. On November 11, a Kharkiv court handed down a sentence of only eight years to a man who murdered another person solely due to his homosexuality.

According to HRW transgender persons in the country faced discrimination. They must undergo mandatory psychiatric treatment and an examination before a state medical board prior to receiving treatment for sexual reassignment. Transgender persons found the process humiliating and claimed to have difficulty obtaining official documents reflecting their gender.

According to Our World, the situation of LGBTI persons continued to deteriorate in Russia-occupied Crimea and the parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts controlled by Russia-backed separatists (see section 1.g. and the Crimea section).

Ukraine - Ukraine (Crimea)

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Occupying Russian forces created an atmosphere of impunity, creating a hostile environment for members of ethnic and religious minorities, and fostering discrimination and hostility against LGBTI persons.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Human rights groups and local gay rights activists reported most of the LGBTI community fled Crimea after the Russian occupation began. LGBTI individuals were verbally and physically assaulted for their sexual orientation, and members of the LGBTI community reported that they were “completely underground.” Russian occupation authorities prohibited any LGBTI groups from holding public events in Crimea. LGBTI individuals faced increasing restrictions on their right to peaceful assembly as occupation authorities enforced a Russian law that criminalizes the so-called propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations to minors (see section 6 of the *Country Reports on Human Rights* for Russia).

United Arab Emirates

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution provides for equality of citizens without regard to race or social status. Additionally, the law (including the Anti-Discrimination Law) prohibits discrimination based on disability, religion, belief, sect, faith, creed, race, and ethnicity. Legal and cultural discrimination, however, existed and went unpunished. The law does not prohibit discrimination based on sex, political opinion, national origin, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, or communicable diseases; however, the constitution states all persons are equal before the law. The government took some steps to advance the rights of women and promote their role in all sectors of society such as encouraging their participation as candidates in the October FNC election.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Both civil law and sharia criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity. Under sharia individuals who engage in consensual same-sex sexual conduct are subject to the death penalty. Dubai's penal code allows for up to a 10-year prison sentence for conviction of such activity. There were reports of arrests for consensual same-sex activity.

Due to social conventions and potential repression, LGBTI organizations did not operate openly, nor were gay pride marches or gay rights advocacy events held. Information was not available on official or private discrimination in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care based on sexual orientation and gender identity. There were no government efforts to address potential discrimination.

By law wearing clothing deemed inappropriate for one's sex is a punishable offense. The government deported foreign residents and referred the cases of individuals who wore clothing deemed inappropriate to the public prosecutor. For example, in August authorities arrested and deported two men for being drunk and wearing women's clothing in public.

United Kingdom

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

UK law prohibits discrimination based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, disability, language, sexual orientation, or social status, and the government routinely enforced the law effectively.

Bermudian law protects against discrimination because of race, place of origin, color, or ethnic or national origins, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, family status, religion or beliefs, political opinion, and, except where the nature of the an offense justifies different treatment, criminal record. Elderly persons are also a protected class in the areas of goods, facilities, services, and accommodations but not in employment. The law does not protect against discrimination of persons with mental, learning, and cognitive disabilities.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In Bermuda the legal minimum age for consensual sex is 16 for lesbians and 18 for gay men. On August 28, the Bermuda Human Rights Tribunal found that it could not deliver a "just verdict" in a 2014 case where a man posted derogatory comments ("I hate your kind.") on Facebook about a transvestite bus driver. The Tribunal stated that the Human Rights Act (HRA) applies only on racial grounds. On other grounds, the law only prohibits discriminatory "notices, signs, symbols, emblems or other representations." The Human Rights Commission also recommended that Parliament amend the HRA to provide a broader definition or section on gender that would include a range of transgender classifications. It pointed out that the question of whether there is protection against the discrimination of transsexual, transgender, or other persons who do not fit the traditional classification of male or female has not yet been tested in Bermuda.

In Bermuda during September, a number of well attended public meetings discussed same-sex marriage, which is prohibited in Bermuda. One foreign speaker made derogatory remarks about lesbian, gay, transgender, and intersex persons and same-sex marriage, and the government subsequently prohibited that person from traveling to Bermuda in the future.

The law in England and Wales prohibits discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, although individuals reported sporadic incidents of homophobic violence. It encourages judges to impose a greater sentence in assault cases where the victim's sexual orientation was a motive for the hostility, and many local police forces demonstrated an increasing awareness of the problem and trained officers to identify and moderate these attacks. From 2014 to 2015, police in England and Wales recorded 5,597 hate crimes related to sexual orientation and 605 transgender hate crimes.

In Scotland racial, sexual, or other discriminatory motivation may be an "aggravating factor" in crimes. Scottish law also criminalizes behavior that is threatening, hateful, or otherwise offensive at a regulated soccer match and penalizes any threat of serious violence and threats to incite religious hatred through the mail or the internet. Crime aggravated by sexual orientation was the second most common type of hate crime, with 841 charges reported in 2014-15 a decrease from 890 in 2013-14. Between March 2014 and March 2015, 21 charges were reported in Scotland with an aggravation of prejudice relating to transgender identity.

The PSNI recorded 196 hate crimes related to homophobia and 10 transphobic crimes in Northern Ireland from July 2014 to June 2015. In April, Health Minister Jim Wells stepped down following homophobic statements. In October a court convicted an Ashers bakery of discrimination for refusing an order from a gay customer and was ordered to pay 500 pounds (\$750) in damages to the individual.

Uruguay

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases. The government effectively enforced these prohibitions.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Authorities generally protected the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, although civil society representatives asserted that generally government mechanisms for protection are weak and ineffective. The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The annual LGBTI parade and street party, known locally as the March for Diversity, took place again without incident and gathered an estimated 40,000 participants. The NGO Colectivo Ovejas Negras implemented a domestic violence service hotline for LGBTI persons.

In July a transgender prostitute was killed by a male client in Montevideo. A court indicted the man for the murder, and he remained in detention awaiting trial.

In July the president of the Trans Union of Uruguay reported that since the 2009 enactment of the law, only 350 out of the estimated 3,000 transgender persons in the country have changed their official identity card. Alleged reasons were the slow and complex bureaucratic and legal procedures to do so.

Uzbekistan

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law and constitution prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, language, and social status. Nonetheless, societal discrimination against women and persons with disabilities existed, and child abuse persisted.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Sexual relations between men are punishable by up to three years' imprisonment. Although there have not been any known arrests or convictions under this provision since 2003, according to members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community, police and other law enforcement personnel used the threat of arrest or prosecution to extract heavy bribes from gay men. In November, CA-News reported that police threatened to charge a young man who had complained about shortages of electricity with homosexual activity. The law does not criminalize same-sex sexual activity between women.

Same-sex sexual activity was generally a taboo subject in society, and there were no known LGBTI organizations. There were no reports of official or societal discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care, but observers attributed the absence of such reports principally to the social taboo against discussing same-sex relationships.

Vanuatu

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

While the law prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, place of origin, political opinion, language, or sex, women remained victims of discrimination in the tradition-based society. The law does not specifically prohibit discrimination based on disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity age, HIV positive status, or other communicable diseases.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

There were no reports of societal violence or discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and the law is silent on the matter.

Venezuela

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, language, or social status; nonetheless, discrimination occurred against women; persons with disabilities; members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community; and indigenous persons.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution provides for equality before the law of all persons and prohibits discrimination based on “sex or social condition,” but it does not explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. According to a TSJ ruling, no individual may be discriminated against because of sexual orientation, but the ruling was rarely enforced. The media and leading advocates for the rights of LGBTI persons noted that victims of hate crimes based on sexual orientation or sexual identity frequently did not report incidents and were often subjected to threats or extortion if they filed official complaints.

Since the law has no definition of a hate crime, no official law enforcement statistics reflected LGBTI-related violence. Rather, most crimes against LGBTI persons were classified as “crimes of passion,” not crimes of hate. The NGO Stop VIH (HIV) denounced the September 17 stabbing death of a Margarita Island man as a hate crime motivated by the victim’s sexual orientation, and cited national statistics indicating that 47 such crimes were registered between May 2013 and May 2015. Incidents of violence were most prevalent in the transgender community. Leading advocates noted that the media underreported most cases of LGBTI-related crime and law enforcement authorities did not properly investigate to determine the motives for such crimes. LGBTI experts also noted an estimated 6,000 same-gender families, with and without children, lacked legal protection.

Local police and private security forces allegedly prevented LGBTI persons from entering malls, public parks, and recreational areas. NGOs reported the government systematically denied legal recognition to transgender and transsexual persons by preventing them from obtaining identity documents required for accessing education, employment, housing, and health care. This vulnerability often led transgender and transsexual persons to become victims of human trafficking or prostitution.

Psychological, verbal, and physical abuses towards the LGBTI community were common practice in schools and universities, according to leading advocates. No laws or policies protect LGBTI persons against bullying. As a result, according to NGOs, LGBTI students had a higher dropout rate than heterosexual students.

Vietnam

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social

status, but enforcement of these prohibitions was uneven. The government continued to demonstrate an increased tolerance and respect for rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuse Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law does not address discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Societal discrimination and stigma remained pervasive, and local media reported general harassment of transgender individuals, including those in custody.

No laws criminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct. In November the National Assembly passed a revised civil code with new provisions legalizing transgender individuals' right to change their sex, access health care, and change their gender identity.

In 2013 the Institute for Studies of Society, Economics, and Environment, a nonprofit organization working for the rights of minority groups, reported approximately 1.65 million individuals in the country identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex persons. In August more than 1,000 individuals participated in Pride Walk for Viet Pride in Ho Chi Minh City, and there were Viet Pride celebrations held in 17 cities and provinces, including a bike rally with more than 300 riders in Hanoi.

Western Sahara

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The living conditions and social mores affecting women, children, and persons with disabilities, as well as sexual orientation and gender issues, paralleled those in internationally recognized Morocco, and government laws and practice are the same. Reports of anti-Semitism were similarly rare as in Morocco, and the size of the Jewish community is unknown. Please see the Department of State's 2015 Human Rights Report for more detailed information on Morocco.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

No information in this sub-section. Please see the full country report for more.

Yemen

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law provides for equal rights and equal opportunity regardless of race, gender, language, belief, or disability, in accordance with the UN Charter, the International Declaration of Human Rights, and the Charter of the Arab League, as affirmed by the 1994 constitution, but the government-in-exile could not enforce the law in country. Discrimination based on race, gender, social status, sexual orientation and gender identity, and disability remained a serious problem. Some groups, such as the

marginalized Muhamasheen or Akhdam community and the Muwaladeen (Yemenis born to foreign parents), faced social and institutional discrimination based on social status. Societal discrimination severely limited women's ability to exercise equal rights.

Article 75 of the draft constitution completed in January, under the authority of the provisional government and awaiting review (see section 3), affirmed "equal rights, freedoms, and public duties without discrimination due to sex, skin color, race, origin, religion, sect, belief, opinion, economic or social status, disability, political or geographic affiliation, occupation, birth, or any other considerations."

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons faced discrimination and could face the death penalty, although there have been no known executions of LGBTI persons in more than a decade. The penal code criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual conduct, with the death penalty as a sanction, under the country's interpretation of Islamic law.

Due to the illegality of and possible severe punishment for consensual same-sex sexual conduct, there were no LGBTI organizations. Because the law does not prohibit discrimination, the government did not consider LGBTI problems "relevant" for official reporting, and few LGBTI persons were open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. The government blocked access to LGBTI internet sites. LGBTI persons in Aden reported threats from AQAP; non-Yemen-based LGBTI rights blogs reported on the killings of four gay men by AQAP in Aden.

Zambia

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, place of origin, ethnic group (tribe), gender, marital status, color, disability, language, and social status. The government did not effectively enforce the law. Violence and discrimination against women and children, discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and discrimination against persons with disabilities continued.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity and penalties for conviction of engaging in "acts against the order of nature" are 15 years' to life imprisonment. Conviction of the lesser charge of gross indecency carries penalties of up to 14 years' imprisonment. The government enforced laws against same-sex sexual activity and did not address societal discrimination against LGBTI individuals.

Societal violence against persons based on gender, sex, and sexual orientation continued. LGBTI persons in particular were at risk of societal violence due to prevailing prejudices, misperceptions of the law, lack of legal protections, and inability to access health services. Some politicians, media figures, and religious leaders expressed opposition to basic protection and rights for LGBTI persons in arguing against

same-sex marriage.

According to the VSU report for the first half of the year, there were 18 reported cases of “unnatural offenses,” compared with 23 for the same period in 2014. Rather than submit cases for trial, police on several occasions arrested suspected LGBTI persons on bogus charges, forcing them to spend at least one night in jail. In most cases police demanded bribes before releasing the individuals. Police increasingly charged transgender persons with “impersonation” and subjected them to verbal abuse and harassment while in detention. The charges could not generally be successfully prosecuted, and detainees were released. In October, however, police in Mongu arrested a transgender woman who was convicted of sodomy-related charges in November. She awaited sentencing at year’s end.

There were several other LGBTI court cases during the year. On May 15, the Lusaka High Court confirmed the acquittal of Paul Kasonkomona, whom police arrested in 2013 for promoting fair treatment of LGBTI persons. In its ruling the court stated that advocating for gay rights, although “repulsive to some,” was freedom of speech, which must be protected. In a separate ruling, the Chisamba Magistrate Court dismissed a case involving two men accused of engaging in acts against the order of nature. The court dismissed the prosecution’s evidence as inconsistent and uncorroborated.

Several groups quietly promoted LGBTI rights and provided services to LGBTI individuals, principally in the health sector. The groups held private social gatherings but did not participate in open demonstrations or marches in view of societal stigma against LGBTI persons.

According to LGBTI advocacy groups, societal violence occurred, as did discrimination in employment, housing, and access to education and health care. LGBTI groups reported frequent harassment of LGBTI persons and their families, including threats via text message and e-mail, vandalism, stalking, and outright violence. Activists also stated several LGBTI persons committed suicide.

Zimbabwe

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution’s bill of rights provides that no person may be deprived of fundamental rights, such as the right to life, personal liberty, security of person, freedom of assembly and association, equality, and political and socioeconomic rights. It prohibits discrimination based on one’s race, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, color, creed, gender, or disability. The bill of rights may not be arbitrarily amended and, in the section on the rights of women, states that all “laws, customs, traditions, and practices that infringe the rights of women conferred by this constitution are void to the extent of the infringement.” Nevertheless, discrimination against women and persons with disabilities persisted. The government and ZANU-PF continued to infringe on the right to due process, citizenship, and property ownership in ways that affected the white minority disproportionately.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The constitution does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. According to the country’s criminal code, “any act involving physical

contact between men that would be regarded by a reasonable person to be an indecent act” carries a penalty of up to one year in prison or a fine up to \$5,000. Despite that, there were no known cases of prosecutions of consensual same-sex sexual activity. Common law prevents gay men and, to a lesser extent, lesbians from fully expressing their sexual orientation. In some cases it criminalizes the display of affection between men.

The president and ZANU-PF leaders publicly criticized the LGBTI community. On September 28, the president stated, “we are not gays” during his remarks at the UN General Assembly and rejected the promotion of LGBTI rights, which he said were contrary to the country’s values, norms, traditions, and beliefs.

Members of Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ), the primary organization dedicated to advancing the rights of LGBTI persons, experienced harassment and discrimination. In December 2014 a group of intruders forced their way into the private year-end event of GALZ, attacking, robbing, and leaving 35 attendees injured. In contrast the Bulawayo-based Sexual Rights Center (SRC), an organization similarly dedicated to advancing the rights of “sexual minorities,” reported minimal harassment.

Religious leaders in this traditionally conservative and Christian society encouraged discrimination against LGBTI persons. In March, Walter Magaya, leader of the Healing and Deliverance Ministries, stated that gays and lesbians were “spiritually afflicted and just like all evil spirits, they need deliverance.”

LGBTI persons reported widespread societal discrimination based on sexual orientation. In response to social pressure, some families reportedly subjected their LGBTI members to “corrective” rape and forced marriages to encourage heterosexual conduct. Women in particular were subjected to rape by male family members. Victims rarely reported such crimes to police. LGBTI persons often left school at an early age due to discrimination and had higher rates of unemployment and homelessness. Many persons who identified themselves as LGBTI did not seek medical care for sexually transmitted diseases or other health problems due to fear that health providers would shun them or report them to authorities.