

# SWEDEN 2018 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kingdom of Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a freely elected multiparty parliamentary form of government. Legislative authority rests in the unicameral parliament (Riksdag). Observers considered the national elections on September 9 to be free and fair. Efforts to form a new government continued at year's end. The king is largely a symbolic head of state. The prime minister is the head of government and exercises executive authority.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

There were no reports of egregious human rights abuses.

Authorities generally prosecuted officials who committed abuses in the security services or elsewhere in the government.

### **Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:**

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

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

#### **b. Disappearance**

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

#### **c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

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

#### **Prison and Detention Center Conditions**

There were no significant reports regarding prison, detention center, or migrant detention facility conditions that raised human rights concerns.

Physical Conditions: There were no major concerns in prisons and detention centers regarding physical conditions or inmate abuse.

Administration: Authorities conducted proper investigations of credible allegations of mistreatment.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring by independent, nongovernmental observers, including the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT).

#### **d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention**

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention and provide for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court, and the government generally observed these requirements.

#### **Role of the Police and Security Apparatus**

The national police and the national criminal police are responsible for law enforcement and general order within the country. The Security Service is responsible for national security related to terrorism, extremism, and espionage. The Ministry of Justice provides funding and letters of instruction for police activities, but it does not control how the police perform them. According to the constitution, all branches of the police are independent authorities.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the national police, the national criminal police, and the Security Service, and the government had effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year.

#### **Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees**

The law requires warrants based on evidence and issued by duly authorized officials for arrests. Police must file charges within six hours against persons detained for disturbing public order or considered dangerous and within 12 hours against those detained on other grounds. Police may hold a person six hours for questioning or as long as 12 hours if deemed necessary for the investigation, without a court order. After questioning, authorities must either arrest or release an individual, based on the level of suspicion. If a suspect is arrested, the prosecutor

has 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances) to request continued detention. Authorities must arraign an arrested suspect within 48 hours and begin initial prosecution within two weeks unless there are extenuating circumstances. Authorities generally respected these requirements.

Although there is no system of bail, courts routinely released defendants pending trial unless authorities considered them dangerous or there was a risk the suspect would leave the country. Detainees may retain a lawyer of their choice. In criminal cases the government is obligated to provide an attorney, regardless of the defendant's financial situation.

The law affords detainees prompt access to lawyers and to family members. A suspect has a right to legal representation when the prosecutor requests his detention beyond 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances). A 2015 CPT report noted that access to legal counsel was at times delayed. The type of crime that authorities accused a suspect of committing influenced the suspect's access to family members. Authorities sometimes did not allow a suspect any contact with family members if police believed it could jeopardize an investigation.

Restrictive conditions for prisoners held in pretrial custody remained a problem, although the law includes the possibility of appealing a decision to impose specific restrictions to the court of appeals and ultimately to the Supreme Court. According to the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, 1,831 persons were in pretrial custody. Approximately 50 percent of those were under restrictions on mail delivery or exercise. Authorities stated they took this step when detainees' contact with individuals outside the detention center could risk destroying evidence or changing witnesses' statements, thereby imperiling a continuing investigation.

#### **e. Denial of Fair Public Trial**

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

#### **Trial Procedures**

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

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence, have a right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them, and have a right to a fair, timely, public trial. Defendants may be present at their trial. Cases of a sensitive nature, including those involving children, rape, and national security, may be closed to the public. Defendants have the right to consult an attorney of their choice in a timely manner. In criminal cases the government is obligated to provide a defense attorney. Defendants generally have adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense, with free language interpretation as required, from the moment the defendant is charged through all appeals. Defendants may confront or question prosecution or plaintiff witnesses and present witnesses and evidence on their own behalf. They may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt. If convicted, defendants have the right to appeal.

### **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

### **Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies**

Individuals and organizations may seek civil remedies for human rights violations in the general court system. Citizens may appeal cases involving alleged violations of the European Convention on Human Rights by the government to the European Court of Human Rights.

### **Property Restitution**

The government did not confiscate property belonging to Jews, Roma, or other groups targeted by Nazi Germany during the Holocaust era, and Jewish and human rights nongovernmental organizations reported no disputes related to restitution.

### **f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence**

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

## **Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:**

### **a. Freedom of Speech and Expression, Including for the Press**

The constitution provides for freedom of expression, including for the press, and the government generally respected this right. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of expression, including for the press.

Freedom of Expression: The law criminalizes expression considered to be hate speech and prohibits threats or statements of contempt for a group or member of a group based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation. Penalties for hate speech range from fines to a maximum of four years in prison. In addition the country's courts have held that it is illegal to wear xenophobic symbols or racist paraphernalia or to display signs and banners with inflammatory symbols at rallies.

Press and Media Freedom: Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction. The law criminalizing hate speech applies as well to print and broadcast media, the publication of books, and online newspapers and journals.

Nongovernmental Impact: Journalists were subjected to harassment and intimidation. In August a member of the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) was arrested and charged with planning to murder two journalists. In September the man was sentenced to two and one-half years in prison. Utgivarna, an industry group representing major Swedish publishers, reported a general increase in threats to Swedish journalists during 2017 by criminal gangs, ISIS fighters, right-wing extremists, and other groups.

## **Internet Freedom**

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports that the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. According to data from the International Telecommunication Union, 96 percent of the population used the internet in 2017.

## **Academic Freedom and Cultural Events**

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

## **b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association**

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

### **c. Freedom of Religion**

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at [www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/](http://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/).

### **d. Freedom of Movement**

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

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Abuse of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons: Police reported several fires involving housing facilities or planned housing facilities for asylum seekers by suspected arsonists.

A report published on September 12 by UN Women found that the benefits system does not cover survivors of violence against women who are not legally resident in the country, and most shelters are not allowed to house survivors from this group. Hospital emergency rooms may treat the survivors. Private shelters may also accept illegal migrants, but may incur legal liability for hiding and housing an illegal migrant.

### **Protection of Refugees**

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. Applicants may appeal unfavorable asylum decisions.

Asylum seekers who have been denied residence are not entitled to asylum housing or a daily allowance, though many municipalities continued to support rejected asylum seekers through the social welfare system at the local level. The Council of Europe's human rights commissioner criticized the government over delays in the

appointment of guardians for unaccompanied minor refugees and in processing of asylum applications from unaccompanied minors.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: In accordance with EU regulations, the government denied asylum to persons who had previously registered in another EU member state or in countries with which Sweden maintained reciprocal return agreements.

Durable Solutions: The government assisted in the voluntary return of rejected asylum seekers to their homes and authorized financial support for their repatriation in the amount of 30,000 kronor (\$3,450) per adult and 15,000 kronor (\$1,700) per child, with a maximum of 75,000 kronor (\$8,600) per family. The country also participated in the European Reintegration Network that offers support for reintegration for returning rejected asylum seekers.

Temporary Protection: The government also provided various forms of temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees. In 2017 it provided temporary protection to 1,091 persons.

### **Stateless Persons**

According to UNHCR there were 35,101 stateless persons in the country in December 2017. The large number of stateless persons was due to the influx of migrants and refugees and the birth of children to stateless parents who remained stateless until either one parent acquired citizenship or a special application for citizenship (available for stateless children under the age of five) was made. Most stateless persons came from the Middle East (Gaza and the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq) and Somalia.

Stateless persons who were granted permanent residence could obtain citizenship through the same naturalization process as other permanent residents. Gaining citizenship generally took four to eight years, depending on the individual's grounds for residency, ability to establish identity, and lack of a criminal record.

### **Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process**

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

## **Elections and Political Participation**

Recent Elections: Observers considered the national elections held on September 9 to be free and fair.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit participation of women or members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate.

## **Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government**

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

Corruption: After three national auditors at the National Audit Office resigned after being accused of corruption in 2016, parliament made the dismissal of a national auditor easier.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires public officials and political parties to disclose their income and assets. The declarations are available to the public, and there are criminal and administrative sanctions for noncompliance.

## **Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights**

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials often were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The country had seven national ombudsmen: four justice ombudsmen; the chancellor of justice; the children's ombudsman; and the discrimination ombudsman with responsibility for ethnicity, gender, transsexual identity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disabilities. There were normally ombudsmen at the municipal level as well. The ombudsmen enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government or party interference. They had adequate resources, and observers considered them generally effective.

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



## Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, including spousal rape and domestic violence, are illegal, and the government enforced the law effectively. Penalties range from two to 10 years in prison.

Amnesty International alleged that “rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls remained widespread but there were few convictions.” In 2017 only 111 cases of the 3,430 reported were prosecuted. Authorities apprehended and prosecuted abusers in most cases of domestic violence reported to them. On October 2, the Malmo district court sentenced a man to four years and 10 months in prison for aggravated rape of a woman in a massage salon.

The law provides for protection of survivors from contact with their abusers. When necessary, authorities helped survivors protect their identities or obtain new identities and homes. Both national and local governments helped fund volunteer groups that provided shelter and other assistance for abused women.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law prohibits FGM/C. The government developed a national action plan to prevent FGM/C and work with victims.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: Honor-related violence often involved immigrants from the Middle East or South Asia. In 2017 the Swedish Prison and Probation Services estimated that 97 persons were in prison for committing honor-related violence.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment and provides for criminal penalties from a fine to up to two years in prison. The government generally enforced this law. During the year a flood of stories of assault and harassment forced the resignations of several high-profile persons.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization.

Discrimination: Women have the same legal status and rights as men, including under family, religious, personal status, labor, property, nationality, and inheritance law. Women were underrepresented in high-ranking positions in both the public and the private sectors.

Gender-based discrimination with respect to access to credit, owning or managing a business, and access to education and housing is prohibited and was not commonly reported. The government enforced the laws effectively.

## **Children**

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived from one's parents. The tax authority immediately registered in the national population register all children born in the country, regardless of their parents' citizenship or immigration or residency status in the country.

Child Abuse: The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically. Penalties for such range from a fine up to 10 years in prison. Cases of child abuse were reported. Authorities may remove abused children from their homes and place them in foster care. The children's ombudsman published a number of reports and publications for children and those working to protect children from abuse.

Early and Forced Marriage: The minimum age of marriage is 18, and it is illegal for anyone under 18 to marry. The government will legally recognize as valid the marriage of anyone who comes to the country after the age of 18, even if they were married abroad before the age of 18. The country does not recognize a foreign child marriage if either of the parties was a Swedish citizen or resident in the country at the time of marriage.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law criminalizes "contact with children under 15 for sexual purposes," including internet contact intended to lead to sexual assault. Penalties range from fines to one year in prison. The law prohibits the sale of children; penalties range from two to 10 years in prison. It also bans child pornography with penalties ranging from fines to six years in prison. Authorities enforced the law. The minimum age for consensual sex is 15.

Displaced Children: Stockholm police reported underage children, mainly from Morocco, Algeria, and other countries in North Africa, lived on the streets. Many of these children had sought asylum in the country, but did not qualify and were at risk of removal. Social Services offered accommodation for children or foster families regardless of asylum status.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the

Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data.html>.

## **Anti-Semitism**

Leaders of the Jewish community estimated there were 20,000 to 30,000 Jews in the country and approximately 6,000 registered members of Jewish congregations. The National Council for Crime Prevention (NCCP) registered 182 anti-Semitic crimes in 2016, the latest year available, compared with 277 in 2015, a decrease of approximately 34 percent. Anti-Semitic crimes included threats, verbal abuse, vandalism, graffiti, and harassment in schools. Anti-Semitic incidents were often associated with neo-Nazi movements and events in the Middle East and the actions of the Israeli government. Swedish Jews were often blamed for Israeli policies.

The most common forms of anti-Semitism were unlawful threats or harassment (49 percent of complaints), hate speech (27 percent), vandalism or graffiti (10 percent), and defamation (5 percent). Ten violent anti-Semitic hate crimes were reported in 2016, the latest year available, an increase from eight such crimes in 2015. Authorities initiated an investigation in 58 percent of the complaints of anti-Semitism reported in 2015; 37 percent were directly dismissed due to lack of evidence. Formal charges were brought in only 4 percent of the cases.

Police, politicians, media, and Jewish groups have stated that anti-Semitism has been especially prevalent in Malmo. The Simon Wiesenthal Center left in place its travel warning, first issued in 2010, regarding travel in southern Sweden, because Jews in Malmo could be “subject to anti-Semitic taunts and harassment.”

On June 21, three men in their early 20s (one Syrian, and two Palestinians) were sentenced for attempting to firebomb the synagogue in Gothenburg in December 2017. One of the Palestinian men was sentenced to two years in prison and expulsion; the others were sentenced to two years and 15 months in prison. The man facing expulsion appealed his sentence. The appellate court ruled on September 12 that he would not be expelled after serving his prison sentence due to his “special refugee status.” The prosecutor general appealed the decision not to extradite the Palestinian to the Supreme Court in October.

The newspaper *Expressen* reported on August 31 that a number of Sweden Democrats candidates in the general election had made anti-Semitic comments on social media. Martin Sihlen, a candidate for the municipal government in

Orkelljunga, questioned the number of people murdered in the Holocaust, referred to the “Jewish plague,” and wrote online that “Hitler did not lie about the Jews” and that “Hitler was not bad.” Per Olsson, a candidate for the municipal government in Oskarshamn, shared an image of Anne Frank wearing a shirt reading “Coolest Jew in the Shower Room,” as well as a photo of Adolf Hitler. Raghu Jacobssen, a candidate for the municipal government in Stenungsund, wrote: “As long as the Rothschilds run the economy, and as such the modern slavery on this planet, there will be antisemitism. #Jews #Israel.” He also shared an image stating: “What’s the difference between a cow and the Holocaust? You can’t milk a cow for 70 years straight.” The Sweden Democrats expelled the three candidates in response to media reports about their activities online.

The government allocated 22 million kronor (\$2.5 million) for grants to increase security for threatened places of worship and other parts of civil society. All religious communities and civil society actors who feel they have been threatened may apply for the grant.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency continued to cooperate with religious communities on a national level to promote dialogue and prevent conflicts leading to anti-Semitic incidents. It continued to train police officers to detect hate crimes and visited high schools to raise awareness of such crimes and encourage more victims to report abuses. The government made information available in several languages for victims of hate crimes and provided interpreters to facilitate reporting. Police hate-crime officers operated throughout the country.

The Living History Forum is a public authority commissioned to address societal problems related to religious and ethnic tolerance, democracy, and human rights using the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as its starting point. The Forum sensitized the public, and particularly the young, to the need to respect the equal value of all persons, with a specific focus on teaching about the Holocaust as a means of fighting Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism.

The Media Council initiated a No Hate Speech Movement campaign and worked to stop anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. The government allocated five million kronor (\$575,000) annually for 2018-20 to strengthen the opportunities for study visits to Holocaust memorial sites, which allowed more students and teachers to visit them.

## **Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at [www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/](http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/).

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. In May new legislation expanded these protections to cover businesses with fewer than 10 employees. The government effectively enforced these provisions and held accountable those responsible for violations.

Government regulations require new buildings and public facilities to be fully accessible. Observers reported cases of insufficient access to privately owned buildings used by the public, such as apartments, restaurants, and bars. Some means of public transportation remained inaccessible.

### **National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities**

Societal discrimination and violence against immigrants and Roma continued to be problems during the year.

Police registered reports of xenophobic crimes, some of which were linked to neo-Nazi or white supremacy ideology. Police investigated and the district attorney's office prosecuted race-related crimes. The Security Service estimated the violent extreme right-wing group at 500 persons. Expo, a private foundation that researches and maps antidemocratic, right-wing extremists and racist tendencies in the country, noted increased radicalization and activities in the white supremacist groups. Neo-Nazi groups operated legally (see section 2.a.). The NRM was the largest white supremacy group with approximately 160 active members, strengthened by several hundred additional supporters who attend rallies. The NRM registered as a political party and participated in the general elections in September. It did not win any seats in any of the elections.

The Red Cross estimated that 4,700 "vulnerable EU citizens," the vast majority of whom were Roma from Romania and Bulgaria, resided in the country in abject poverty at any given time. As EU citizens, they are allowed to stay in the country without permission for up to three months, but authorities did not enforce this limit. The police stated that most Roma were in the country voluntarily but that there were cases of trafficking and forced begging.

In its report published on February 27, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance noted a de facto segregation of the Rinkeby-Kista district of Stockholm, where 80 percent of the population was of immigrant origin or parentage, from the rest of the country's society. The result was lower levels of education, higher levels of unemployment, and separation from the country's mainstream culture mainly due to poor Swedish-language skills.

In December 2017 the Civil Right Defenders together with Stockholm University concluded in a report that being singled out by police due to ethnicity was a common experience for members of certain ethnic groups, including Afro-Swedes, Muslims, and Roma, mainly from marginalized residential areas of major cities.

### **Indigenous People**

The approximately 20,000 Sami in the country are full citizens with the right to vote in elections and participate in the government, including as members of the country's parliament. They are not, however, represented as a group in parliament. A 31-member elected administrative authority called the Sami parliament (Sametinget) also represented Sami. The Sami parliament acted as an advisory body to the government and had limited decision-making powers in matters related to preserving the Sami culture, language, and schooling. The national parliament and government regulations governed the Sami parliament's operations.

Longstanding tensions between the Sami and the government over land and natural resources persisted, as did tensions between the Sami and private landowners over reindeer grazing rights. Certain Sami have grazing and fishing rights, depending on their tribal history.

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

Antidiscrimination laws exist; apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals; and were enforced. In 2017 the NCCP reported 550 hate crimes based on sexual orientation and 80 reports of transphobic hate crimes.

Effective June 1, transphobia was defined as a hate crime.

### **Other Societal Violence or Discrimination**

In 2016 the NCCP identified 6,415 police reports with a hate crime motive, a majority with xenophobic motives.

In May the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) raised concerns in its periodic review over the level of racist hate crimes towards Afro-Swedes, Jews, Muslims, and Roma. The CERD also expressed concern over racist and extremist organizations' right to arrange public demonstrations.

An inquiry of all the country's Muslim congregations by Uppsala University showed that vandalism against mosques was common. During 2017 at least one Muslim place of worship was vandalized every week.

The police established democracy and hate crime groups in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmo. In January the government opened a National Center for Preventing Violent Extremism under the auspices of the NCCP. The center serves as a clearinghouse for information, best practices, and support of municipalities, agencies, and other actors.

## **Section 7. Worker Rights**

### **a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining**

The law provides for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The government respected these rights. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination, and provides for protection of workers from being fired because of union activity. If a court finds a dismissal to be unlawful, the employee has the right to reinstatement.

Foreign companies may be exempt from collective bargaining, provided they meet minimum working conditions and pay. Public-sector employees enjoy the right to strike, subject to limitations in the collective agreements protecting the public's immediate health and security. The government mediation service may also intervene to postpone a strike for up to 14 days for mediation. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) claimed the law restricts the rights of the country's trade unions to take industrial action on behalf of foreign workers in foreign companies operating in the country. The law allows unions to conduct their activities largely without interference. The government effectively enforced applicable laws. The Labor Court settles any dispute that affects the relationship between employers and employees. An employer organization, an employee organization, or an employer who has entered into a collective agreement on an

individual basis may lodge claims. The Labor Court may impose prison sentences sufficient to deter violations. Administrative and judicial procedures were not subject to lengthy delays and appeals.

Workers and employers exercised all legal collective bargaining rights, which the government protected. The government and employers respected freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. There were few reports of antiunion discrimination. ITUC quoted the Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees that employee representatives and occupational safety and health (OSH) representatives were most affected by antiunion discrimination.

### **b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor**

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, including by children, and the government effectively enforced the law. Penalties of imprisonment were generally sufficient to deter violations. Forced labor involving trafficked men and women occurred in agriculture (including involving companies providing foreign labor for berry picking), construction, hospitality, domestic work, forced begging, and theft, and there were reports of forced begging involving trafficked children (see section 7.c.). According to police an estimated 5,000 persons worked under slave-like conditions. In some cases employers or contractors providing labor seized the passports of workers and withheld their pay. Resources and inspections were adequate.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at [www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/](http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/).

### **c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment**

The law prohibits the worst forms of child labor. It permits full-time employment from the age of 16 under the supervision of local authorities. Employees younger than age 18 may work only during the daytime and under supervision. Children as young as 13 may work part time or perform light work with parental permission. The law limits the types of work children may or may not engage in. For instance, a child may not work with dangerous machinery or chemicals. A child may also not work alone or be responsible for handling cash transactions. The law considers illegal employment of a child in the labor market a civil rather than a criminal violation. According to the law, forcing a child to work may be treated as coercion, deprivation of liberty, or child abuse, and it carries a wide range of penalties, including fines and imprisonment. The government effectively



implemented these laws and regulations. Penalties were sufficient to deter violations.

According to the National Method Support Against Prostitution and Trafficking, an umbrella organization under the auspices of the Equality Agency, a total of 82 children were trafficked from outside the country in 2017. This was an increase compared with previous years. These children were subjected to forced begging, forced petty theft, and sexual exploitation. Police and social services reportedly acted promptly on reported cases.

#### **d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation**

The law prohibits discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The government effectively enforced applicable law, and penalties were sufficient to deter violations. The law requires equal pay for equal work. Discrimination in employment or occupation occurred. The discrimination ombudsman investigated complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. In 2017 the ombudsman received 706 complaints of discrimination in the labor market, of which 128 were related to gender. Workers with disabilities faced workplace access discrimination. Of the complaints of ethnic discrimination, 227 involved the labor market. Complaints may also be filed with the courts or with the employer. Labor unions generally mediated in cases filed with the employer.

#### **e. Acceptable Conditions of Work**

There is no national minimum wage law. Annual collective bargaining agreements set wages, which were greater than the poverty income level. By regulation both foreign and domestic employers must offer conditions of employment on par with the country's collective agreements. Nonunion establishments generally observed these contracts as well.

The labor law and collective bargaining agreements regulate overtime and rest periods. The law allows a maximum of 200 hours of overtime annually. Collective agreements determined compensation for overtime, which could take the form of money or time off. The law requires a minimum period of 36 consecutive hours of rest, preferably on weekends, over a seven-day period.

OSH standards were appropriate. The responsibility for identifying unsafe situations remains with OSH experts and not the worker.

The Swedish Work Environment Authority, a government agency, effectively enforced these standards. During the year the government's more than 400 unannounced visits to check on work permits, taxes, and working environment regulations showed widespread violations. In 2017 the authority conducted approximately 22,000 labor dialogue visits and 16,000 labor inspections. The number of inspectors was adequate. The government's increase of the authority's budget resulted in the hiring of additional labor inspectors.

The Swedish Work Environment Authority issued occupational health and safety regulations, and trained union stewards and safety ombudsmen whom government inspectors monitored. Safety ombudsmen have the authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and to call in an inspector. The authority effectively enforced these rules. An employer may be fined for violating work environment regulations. Information regarding the penalties' sufficiency to deter violation was not available.

Many foreign seasonal workers, including berry pickers from Asia and Bulgaria, faced harsh conditions of work, including the seizure of passports, withholding of pay, and poor living and working conditions. The guidelines of the Swedish Retail and Food Federation cover EU citizens who pick berries in the country but not workers from outside the EU. Under the guidelines berry pickers are to be informed that they have the right to sell their berries to all buyers and that nobody has the right to control their workhours. In addition, a foreign company providing berry pickers to a local company must also demonstrate how it expects to pay workers in case of limited work or a bad harvest. The guidelines task food and retail organizations and brokers with ensuring their implementation.