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LITHUANIA 2018 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Republic of Lithuania is a constitutional, multiparty, parliamentary democracy. Legislative authority resides in a unicameral parliament (Seimas) and executive authority resides in the Office of the President. Observers evaluated the 2014 presidential elections and the 2016 parliamentary elections as generally free and fair.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

There were no reports of egregious human rights abuses.

The government took measures to prosecute or otherwise punish officials who committed abuses, whether in the security services or elsewhere.

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. In its report published on February 1, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) stated it had heard allegations of excessive force exerted by police after a detainee had been subdued during arrest.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Some prison and detention center conditions did not meet international standards.

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Physical Conditions: The CPT report noted substandard conditions at the Alytus Prison, Marijampole Prison, and Panevezys Prison. Inmates in all prisons, but especially the Alytus and Marijampole prisons, complained about the quality and especially the quantity of food. The CPT reported its impression that the provision of health care in the penitentiaries it visited "was rather poor and the services were not well organized."

The delegation received a number of allegations of deliberate physical mistreatment and of excessive use of force by prison staff at the Alytus and Marijampole prisons. The CPT also found an apparent increase in interprisoner violence in those two prisons and new reports of interprisoner violence at the Panevezys Prison. The CPT committee attributed the situation to "accommodation in cramped large-capacity dormitories" and "a low number of custodial staff, insufficient to ensure the safety of prisoners."

The CPT reported a detainee may be held in a holding jail for up to 15 days after seeing a judge. It called for the prompt transfer of detainees to remand prisons.

Administration: The Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman generally investigated credible prisoner complaints and attempted to resolve them, usually by making recommendations to the institutions concerned and monitoring their implementation. The law requires the ombudsman's office to investigate detention centers and other institutions. The ombudsman's office reported that prison institutions were responsive to all of its interventions. On September 1, the ombudsman's office identified two of the 20 prisoner complaints to be legitimate and merited. The parliamentary ombudsman visited Alytus and Marijampole prisons five times and detention facilities 46 times.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring by independent nongovernmental observers. The CPT visited the country in 2016 and published the report in February 2017. On April 20-27, it revisited many of the same places of confinement it had visited earlier. The report of this later visit was not available at the end of the year.

Improvements: Between January and September, the government renovated housing, medical units, and food services in facilities in Siauliai, Alytus, and Pravieniskes.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

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The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and provides 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 police and the State Border Guards Service are subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior. The Special Investigative Service, the main anticorruption agency, reports to the president and parliament. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the police, the State Border Guards Service, and the Special Investigative Service. The government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Except for persons arrested during the commission of a crime, warrants are generally required for arrests, and judges may issue them only upon the presentation of reliable evidence of criminal activity. Police may detain suspects for up to 48 hours before formally charging them. Detainees have the right to be informed of the charges against them at the time of their arrest or their first interrogation.

Bail is available and was widely used.

The law provides for access to an attorney and the government provides one to indigent persons. A detained person has the right to meet with a lawyer of his or her choice in private before his or her first interrogation. Some detainees who had appointed government attorneys complained that they met their attorney for the first time at the court hearing, even in instances when they had requested an attorney shortly after their arrest. Detainees had prompt access to family members.

Pretrial Detention: The law permits authorities to hold suspects under house arrest for up to six months, a period that a judge may extend at his or her discretion. A pretrial judge may order that a suspect facing felony charges be detained for up to three months, but only to comply with extradition requests or to prevent the accused from fleeing, committing new crimes, or hindering the investigation. In many cases the law permits detention to be extended to 18 months (six months for juveniles), subject to appeal to a higher court. Judges frequently granted such extensions, often based on the allegation that the defendant would pose a danger to

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society or influence witnesses. The maximum period authorities may detain an adult charged with minor offenses is nine months.

In the first half of the year, the average length of pretrial detention was approximately 13 months. As of September 1, approximately 57 percent of incarcerated persons were pretrial detainees. The law allows defense attorneys access to the evidence prosecutors use to justify pretrial detention.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

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

Trial Procedures

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

Defendants have the right to a presumption of innocence, to prompt and detailed information about the charges against them, to a fair and public trial without undue delay, and to be present at their trial. Defendants have the right to communicate with an attorney of their choice (or have one provided at public expense), adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense, and free assistance of an interpreter from the moment charged through all appeals. They are entitled to confront witnesses against them, to present witnesses and evidence in their defense, and to be free of compulsion to testify or confess guilt. They enjoy the right of appeal.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Plaintiffs may sue for legal relief or temporary protection measures from human rights violations. Persons alleging human rights abuses may also appeal to the parliamentary ombudsman for a determination of the merits of their claims. Although the ombudsman may only make recommendations to an offending institution, such institutions generally implemented the ombudsman's recommendations. Individuals alleging violations of the European Convention on

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Human Rights by the government may, after exhausting domestic legal remedies, appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.

Property Restitution

The government has laws and mechanisms in place to address the issue of property restitution, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups reported that the government has made some progress on the resolution of Holocaust-era claims, including for foreign citizens. A philanthropic foundation created in 2011 to receive government compensation for Communist and Nazi seizures of Jewish community-owned property distributed funds to individuals and to Jewish educational, cultural, scientific, and religious projects. According to an agreement between the government and the Jewish community, the foundation was to disburse $44 million by 2023. The foundation distributed a one-time payment of $1 million to individual survivors in 2013 and 2014. The remaining funds were allocated to support Jewish educational, cultural, scientific, and religious projects, as decided by the foundation board. As in the previous year, the foundation received $4.34 million for this purpose, which brought the total received since 2011 to $26.2 million. Jewish and ethnic Polish communities continued to advocate for private property restitution because there has been no opportunity to submit individual claims since 2001, when the country's existing restitution law stopped allowing citizens to apply for private property restitution. Despite changes to the citizenship law in 2011 that made it easier to reacquire the country's citizenship, the government did not reopen the application period for these communities and others who had been excluded from filing claims based on citizenship.

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

The constitution prohibits such actions, but there were reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

The law requires authorities to obtain a judge's authorization before searching an individual's premises. It prohibits indiscriminate monitoring, including of email, text messages, or other digital communications intended to remain private. Domestic human rights groups alleged that the government did not always properly enforce the law. In the first nine months of the year, the State Data Protection Inspectorate investigated 618 allegations of privacy violations, compared with 435 such allegations in the first nine months of 2017. Most complaints were

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individuals' claims that their personal information, such as identity numbers, had been collected without a legal justification.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

The constitution provides for freedom of expression, including of 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 speech and the press.

Freedom of Expression: The constitutional definition of freedom of expression does not permit slander; disinformation; or incitement to violence, discrimination, or national, racial, religious, or social hatred. Inciting hatred against a group of persons is punishable by imprisonment for up to two years. Inciting violence against a group of persons is punishable by imprisonment for up to three years.

It is a crime to deny or "grossly to trivialize" Soviet or Nazi German crimes against the country or its citizens, or to deny genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes.

Press and Media Freedom: Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views. They are subject to the same laws that prohibit hate speech and criminalize speech that grossly trivializes international and war crimes.

It is illegal to publish material that is "detrimental to minors' bodies or thought processes" or that promotes the sexual abuse and harassment of minors, sexual relations among minors, or "sexual relations." Human rights observers continued to criticize this law. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) groups claimed that it served as a rationale for limiting LGBTI awareness-raising efforts and that agencies overseeing publishing and broadcast media took prejudicial action against the coverage of stories with LGBTI themes.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: On February 14, the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania imposed a one-year suspension on the Russian-language channel RTR Planeta for inciting violence and hatred.

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Libel/Slander Laws: The law makes insulting or defaming the president of the country in mass media a crime punishable by a fine. Authorities did not invoke it during the year.

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 the International Telecommunication Union, 78 percent of the country's households 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 government generally respected the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, with the exception of some organizations associated with the Soviet period.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly and the government generally respected this right.

Freedom of Association

Although the law provides for this freedom and the government generally respected it, the government continued to ban the Communist Party and other organizations associated with the Soviet period.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

d. Freedom of Movement

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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 refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

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.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: In compliance with the EU's Dublin III Regulation, authorities barred asylum seekers arriving from safe countries of origin or transit and returned them to such countries without reviewing the substantive merits of their applications. The government's participation in the EU's efforts to address high levels of migration into Europe was an exception to this policy.

Durable Solutions: Since 2015, 468 refugees entered the country under the EU's relocation program, of whom 338 subsequently left the country for other EU states.

Temporary Protection: The government may grant "temporary protection" to groups of persons. Authorities may also grant "subsidiary protection" to individuals who may not qualify as refugees. During the first half of the year, the government provided "temporary protection" to six persons.

Stateless Persons

According to UNHCR as of May, 3,320 stateless persons lived in the country. The law permits persons born on the territory or legally residing there for 10 years and who are not citizens of any other country to apply for citizenship. Applicants must possess an unlimited residence permit, knowledge of the Lithuanian language and constitution, and the ability to support themselves.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

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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: Presidential elections, including a runoff between the two candidates receiving the most votes, took place in 2014. Parliamentary elections took place in 2016. Observers evaluated these elections as generally free and fair.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The constitution provides for freedom of association, which includes membership in political parties and organizations, although the government continued to prohibit the Communist Party.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit the 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 incidents of government officials engaging in corrupt practices with impunity.

Corruption: In 2017 the Special Investigative Service, the country's main anticorruption agency, conducted 171 pretrial investigations. On February 22, the board of Vilnius University Hospital suspended the director due to alleged reports of abuse and large-scale corruption.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires appointed and elected officials to declare their assets and incomes annually. The declarations were available to the public. Administrative sanctions were imposed for noncompliance.

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

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

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Government Human Rights Bodies: The Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman has three mandates: to investigate complaints about abuse of office or other violations of human rights involving public administration; to implement the national prevention of torture mechanism under the UN's Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; and to serve as an accredited national human rights institution (NHRI). As an NHRI the parliamentary ombudsman is responsible for reporting on and monitoring human rights problems, cooperating with international and domestic human rights organizations, and promoting human rights awareness and education.

The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman governs an independent public institution with responsibility for implementing and enforcing rights under the law and for investigating individual complaints.

A Children's Rights Ombudsman is responsible for overseeing observance of children's rights and their legal interests. It may initiate investigations of possible violations of such rights, either upon receipt of a complaint or on its own initiative.

Parliament's human rights committee prepares and reviews draft laws and other legal acts related to civil rights and presents recommendations to government institutions and other organizations about problems related to the protection of civil rights. It also receives reports from the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

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

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape and domestic violence are criminal offenses. Penalties for domestic violence depend on the level of injury to the victim, ranging from required public service to life imprisonment. In the first eight months of the year, authorities received 82 reports of rape, compared with 100 during the same period in 2017. Convicted rapists generally received prison sentences of three to five years. No law specifically criminalizes spousal rape, and no data on spousal rape was available.

The law permits rapid government action in domestic violence cases. For example, police and other law enforcement officials may, with court approval, require perpetrators to live separate from their victims, avoid all contact with them, and surrender any weapons they may possess.

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Domestic violence remained a pervasive problem. In 2017, 82 percent of all domestic violence reports were against women. In the first eight months of the year, police received 27,425 domestic violence calls and started 6,970 pretrial investigations, four of which were for killings. In August a woman in the Panevezys region was run over and seriously injured by her husband. Emergency services arrived after five hours only when an outsider called the emergency line. Neighbors did not hide the fact that the man regularly abused his wife. According to the Human Rights Monitoring Institute's (HRMI) *2016-2017 Human Rights Review*, even though the number of reported cases of violence increased in 2017, the percentage of pretrial investigations remained low. According to the HRMI, victim blaming was widely prevalent.

The country had a 24/7 national hotline and 29 crisis centers for victims of domestic violence. The Ministry of Social Security and Labor continued an *Action Plan for Domestic Violence Prevention and Assistance to Victims for 2017-2020* and allocated 978,700 euros ($1.2 million) for the year.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment. In March several women reported cases of sexual harassment against a member of parliament (MP) who allegedly harassed them during a job interview. On December 19, the Constitutional Court completed its investigation for impeachment and declared that the MP violated the constitution and breached the parliamentary oath of office.

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

Discrimination: Men and women have the same legal status and rights.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship can be acquired either by birth in the country or through one's parents. The government registered all births promptly.

Child Abuse: On July 1, amendments to the Law on the Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child came into force and banned all violence against children. Sexual abuse of children remained a problem despite prison sentences of up to 13 years for the crime. In the first eight months of the year, the Ministry of the Interior recorded 41 cases of child rape and 110 cases involving other forms of child sexual abuse. The government operated a children's support center to provide medical and psychological care for children, including those who

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suffered from various types of violence. It also operated a national center in Vilnius to provide legal, psychological, and medical assistance to sexually abused children and their families.

According to the Department of Statistics, there were 5,625 reports of child abuse in 2017 compared with 2,681 in 2016. In the first eight months of the year, the children's rights ombudsman reported receiving 168 complaints. In July a new law on the Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child went into effect.

Child Line (a hotline for children and youth) received 153,004 telephone calls from children between January and August. Child Line also received and answered 748 letters from children, whose concerns ranged from relations with their parents and friends to family violence and sexual abuse.

Early and Forced Marriage: The minimum age for marriage is 18.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: Individuals involving a child in pornographic events or using a child in the production of pornographic material are subject to imprisonment for up to five years (see also section 2.a., Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press). Persons who offer to purchase, acquire, sell, transport, or hold a child in captivity are subject to imprisonment for three to 12 years. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children's Rights reported receiving one complaint of alleged sexual exploitation of children. According to the Ministry of the Interior, during the first eight months of the year, officials opened three criminal cases involving child pornography during the first eight months of the year. The age of consent is 16.

Institutionalized Children: As of September 1, the children's rights ombudsman received eight complaints and started two investigations regarding children's rights violations in orphanages and large-family foster homes.

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

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The Jewish community consisted of approximately 3,000 persons. There were reports of anti-Semitism, especially on the internet.

Police had instructions to take preemptive measures against illegal activities, giving special attention to maintaining order on specific historical dates and certain religious or cultural holidays.

On March 15, parliament removed Vigilijus Sadauskas from the position of ombudsman for academic ethics and procedures amid allegations of anti-Semitism. Sadauskas had offered a reward to students who submitted a research thesis about Jewish crimes in the 20th century.

On June 24, the government adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. There was no proactive enforcement of these requirements. The equal opportunities ombudsman investigated cases of alleged discrimination based on disability (see section 7.d.).

Although the law mandates that buildings be accessible to persons with disabilities, according to the Lithuanian Disability Forum, approximately 50 percent of public buildings were not accessible for persons with disabilities, including many state health institutions for persons with disabilities and buildings belonging to establishments of higher education.

In 2017 the equal opportunity ombudsperson found that 65 percent of voting stations were not accessible for persons with disabilities.

According to the Council of Europe, there were an estimated 15,000 persons under 18 with disabilities in the country. The law requires that all schools that provide compulsory and universally accessible education make available education to students with disabilities. The country has a tradition of separate schools for children with various disabilities.

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According to the Lithuanian Disability Forum, only 16.5 percent of 109 schools inspected in the 2011-2015 period were accessible to persons with disabilities, 31.2 percent had limited accessibility, and 52.3 percent were completely inaccessible. The law prohibits persons with disabilities who have been deprived of their legal capacity from voting or standing for election.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law prohibits discrimination against ethnic or national minorities, but intolerance and societal discrimination persisted. According to the 2011 census, approximately 14 percent of the population were members of minority ethnic groups, including Russians, Poles, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Karaites, and Jews.

On July 19, Fabian Sanchez, an Ecuadorian residing in Vilnius, was waiting at a bus stop when two men shouting “Lithuania for Lithuanians” physically assaulted him. In August, Vilnius police arrested two suspects, completed their investigation, and transferred the case to the Vilnius City District Court for further investigation.

According to a former Vilnius County prosecutor, judges and other law enforcement officials seldom prosecuted discrimination and incitement of racial, ethnic, religious, or other hatred on the internet, giving priority to “real-life” crimes with identifiable victims.

Representatives of the Polish minority, approximately 200,000 persons according to the 2011 census, continued to raise their concerns about restrictions on the use of Polish letters in official documents, particularly passports, and the lack of a law on protecting national minorities’ rights.

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

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. Gender identity remains unrecognized in the law. Societal attitudes toward LGBTI persons remained largely negative.

In May the National LGBTI Rights Organization (LGL) released a survey that found more than 50 percent of LGBTI students felt unsafe at school because of

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their sexual orientation. Another 27 percent reported hearing anti-LGBTI remarks from teachers or school staff sometimes, often, or frequently.

In August and September, an unknown suspect set fire to the door of the home of openly gay film director Romas Zabarauskas. In August arsonists also burned the door of the LGL. Police arrested two suspects in the crime against the LGL. The police investigation into the fires allegedly targeting members of the LGBTI community continued at year's end. On September 17, Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius visited the LGL office to express support and solidarity and to discuss the recent acts of violence in Vilnius against the LGBTI community.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

NGO experts noted that individuals with HIV/AIDS continued to be subject to discrimination, including in employment, and treated with fear and aversion.

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 law prohibits employer discrimination against union organizers and members and requires reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. These provisions also apply to migrant workers.

There were some specific legal limits to these rights. The law prohibits law enforcement officials, first aid medical workers, and other security-related personnel from collective bargaining and striking, although they may join unions. The law does not afford workers in essential services, whose right to strike is restricted or prohibited, alternative procedures for impartial and rapid settlement of their claims or a voice in developing such procedures.

In the event of a disagreement between management and labor, any such disputes are to be settled by a labor arbitration board formed under the jurisdiction of the district court where the registered office of the enterprise or entity involved in the collective dispute is located. Labor-code procedures make it difficult for some workers to exercise the right to strike. The law prohibits sympathy strikes and allows an employer to hire replacement workers in certain sectors to provide for minimum services during strikes.

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Penalties ranged from fines to imprisonment and were insufficient to deter violations. According to the International Trade Union Confederation, the judicial system was slow to respond to cases of unfair dismissal and no employer faced penal sanctions for antiunion discrimination as envisaged in the law. No courts or judges specialized in labor disputes.

The government generally respected freedom of association but did not enforce the labor code effectively, although resources, inspections, and remediation were adequate. Employers did not always respect collective bargaining rights, and managers often determined wages without regard to union preferences except in large factories with well-organized unions.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor and the government generally enforced the law effectively. Penalties ranged from a fine to imprisonment, which were sufficient to deter violations.

There were instances of forced labor, most of which involved Lithuanian men subjected to forced labor abroad.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law sets the minimum age for most employment at 16 but allows the employment of children as young as 14 for light work with the written consent of the child's parents or guardians and school. The government has not created a list of jobs considered "light work." The law mandates reduced work hours for children, allowing up to two hours per day or 12 hours per week during the school year and up to seven hours per day or 32 hours per week when school is not in session. According to the law, hazardous work is any environment that may cause disease or pose a danger to the employee's life, such as heavy construction or working with industrial chemicals. Under the law, children under 18 may not perform hazardous work.

The State Labor Inspectorate is responsible for receiving complaints related to employment of persons younger than 18. In the first eight months of the year, the inspectorate identified 18 cases in which 30 children were working illegally,

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without work contracts, in the wholesale, retail, agriculture, forestry, fishery, and construction sectors.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The law prohibits employment discrimination but does not specifically address HIV-positive or other communicable disease status, or gender identity. The law obliges the employer to implement the principles of gender equality and nondiscrimination, which prohibit direct and indirect discrimination, and psychological and sexual harassment. The employer must apply the same selection criteria and conditions when hiring new employees; provide equal working conditions, opportunities for professional development, and benefits; apply equal and uniform criteria for dismissal; pay equal wages for the same work and for work of equal value; and take measures to prevent psychological and sexual harassment in the workplace.

The government effectively enforced the law, issuing penalties adequate to deter violations.

The law stipulates that discrimination based on sex should also cover discrimination related to pregnancy and maternity (childbirth and breastfeeding).

The equal opportunity ombudsman (EOO) monitored the implementation of discrimination laws. As of September 28, the EOO received 160 complaints. To address the gender equality problem, the EOO in cooperation with the Association of Municipalities and the Lithuanian Women's Lobby Organization continued implementing a three-year project to visit all 60 municipalities to give presentations on discrimination and gender equality problems.

NGOs reported that workers in the Romani, LGBTI, and HIV-positive communities faced social and employment discrimination (see section 6). Non-Lithuanian speakers and persons with disabilities faced discrimination in employment and workplace access.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

According to the National Department of Statistics, as of January 1, the minimum monthly wage increased by 5 percent and was above the poverty line.

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The law limits annual maximum overtime hours to 180 hours, and establishes different categories of work contracts, such as permanent, fixed-term, temporary agency, apprenticeship, project work, job sharing, employee sharing, and seasonal work. The occupational safety and health standards are current and appropriate for the main industries. The law applies to both national and foreign workers.

The government enforced standards effectively across all sectors including the informal economy, which accounted for an estimated 25 percent of the economy. The State Labor Inspectorate, which is responsible for implementing labor laws, had a staff sufficient to enforce compliance. In 2017 the inspectorate received 4,462 complaints related to labor-contract disputes. The inspectorate also conducted 7,477 inspections at companies and other institutions. Of these cases, 85 percent were related to underpayment, late payment of wages, or worker safety. Workers dissatisfied with the results of an investigation can appeal to the court system. The State Labor Inspectorate continued to conduct seminars for managers of companies, local communities, and persons looking for work. The seminars dealt with preventing and combating illegal employment, the administration of labor contracts, and worker's rights.

According to the State Labor Inspectorate, violations of wage, overtime, safety, and health standards occurred primarily in the construction, retail, and manufacturing sectors. The inspectorate received complaints about hazardous conditions from workers in the construction and manufacturing sectors. As of September 1, the State Labor Inspectorate recorded 25 fatal accidents at work and 85 severe work-related injuries, compared with 28 and 93, respectively, in 2017. Most accidents occurred in the transport, construction, processing, and agricultural sectors. To address the problem, the inspectorate continued conducting a series of training seminars for inspectors on technical labor inspection. Workers have the legal right to request compensation for health concerns arising from dangerous working conditions.