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2009 Human Rights Report: Seychelles

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

March 11, 2010

Seychelles is a multiparty republic of approximately 87,000 citizens. In 2006 voters elected President James Michel, who assumed power in 2004 when former president France Albert Rene resigned. International observers deemed the process credible, although there were complaints of unfair campaign practices. The president and the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF), which since July has been renamed the People's Party, dominated the country through a pervasive system of political patronage and control over government jobs, contracts, and resources. The 2007 national assembly elections did not result in any change in the balance of power between the ruling People's Party (former SPPF) and the opposition Seychelles National Party (SNP). Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens. However, the following human rights problems were reported: prolonged pretrial detention; abuse of detainees; an inefficient and politically influenced court system; restrictions on speech, press, and assembly; official corruption; violence against women and children; violations of and restrictions on labor rights; and discrimination against foreign workers.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

The government or its agents did not commit any politically motivated killings; however, on July 28, a man was found dead in a cell while in police custody. Two police officers were suspended in connection with the case. An internal police inquiry was ongoing at year's end. The Office of the President ordered a separate investigation, but the report, presented to the president on November 3, was not made public to prevent interference with the ongoing police investigation.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices, but police and prison officers were accused of inhumane treatment of detainees.

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Following reports of unrest at the Montagne Posee Prison between March 6 and March 15, an investigation by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) found that private security guards had been brought in to support the prison guards and contain the situation. On March 6, a prisoner was bitten by a dog that was not appropriately muzzled and controlled by its handler, a private security guard. The prisoner was later taken to the hospital for treatment.

On March 11, the same dog bit eight inmates. All were sent to the hospital for treatment; one inmate was admitted after he suffered groin injuries. The prisoners had previously protested that one of the inmates should not have been sent to solitary confinement in the "black cell," a dark room only large enough to hold one person. Prison guards allegedly used pepper spray on the inmates and hit the legs of the prisoner who refused to go into the "black cell."

On March 15, the NHRC found that the same dog bit three other detainees. All three were sent to a hospital for medical treatment; one of the three was later admitted for further treatment.

On September 4, *Regar*, a local newspaper, reported that a prison guard at the Montagne Posee Prison assaulted a detainee on July 28. According to the newspaper, the detainee was beaten with a metal chain and suffered injuries to his ribs and lungs. He was later taken to a hospital for medical care. The prison guard was suspended from duty.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Detention centers previously included the Grand Police High Security Prison for violent inmates and the Montagne Posee Prison for all other prisoners and those awaiting trial or sentencing. In June 2007 the Grand Police High Security Prison began transitioning all inmates to the newly opened Montagne Posee Prison. This transition was completed in 2007, and the Grand Police High Security Prison was closed, leaving Montagne Posee Prison as the only prison in the country. Prison officials stated that staff shortages forced guards to limit prisoner time outside their cells. The new facility housed high security and ordinary prisoners, including female prisoners, as well as those in pretrial detention. As of November 17, the prison, which had a maximum capacity of 400, held 323 prisoners, including 311 men and 12 women. Female prisoners were kept separately in a section of the prison until the completion of the women's prison wing in February. The NHRC noted that juveniles were kept together with adult inmates. Remand prisoners were still kept with convicted criminals.

On February 8, a group of prisoners petitioned the president to rectify the shortage of water, food, utensils, and poor sanitary conditions at the prison. The NHRC found that violence erupted between prison guards and a detainee on the morning of March 11, after the latter complained that he had not received the soap that his relatives sent him. In response prison authorities stated that prison guards would need to thoroughly search incoming packages due to drug activities in the prison. The NHRC recommended that additional staff be immediately recruited and that existing prison staff be trained to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

The government generally permitted independent monitoring of prison conditions by local and international human rights groups. During the year the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) did not make any requests for prison visits.

Prison authorities recruited 16 new prison guards; on October 14, the new recruits completed a two-week course as part of the first phase of their training.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions. Unlike the previous year, there were no reports of arbitrary arrest or detention.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The president has complete control over the security apparatus, which includes the National Guard, the Seychelles People's Defense Forces (SPDF), the Presidential Protection Unit, the Coast Guard, and the police. The police commissioner, who reports directly to the president, commands the unarmed police and the armed paramilitary Police Mobile Unit, which together have primary responsibility for internal security. When necessary, police were assisted by the SPDF on matters of internal security.

Corruption remained a problem. The Enquiry Board, a police complaint office, existed but was rarely used. In practice private attorneys filed complaints or published them in the opposition party newspapers *Regar* and *Le Nouveau Seychelles Weekly*. Although human rights was included as a core precept in officer training, such training was limited in practice.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention

The constitution and law provide that persons arrested must be brought before a magistrate within 24 hours, with allowances for boat travel from distant islands; however, police did not always respect this requirement. The constitution and law also provide for detention without charge for up to seven days if authorized by court order, and police generally respected this provision. Detainees have the right to legal counsel. Free counsel is not a legal right, but courts usually provided it to indigent persons. Courts provided bail for most offenses. Although warrants are required by law, police made some arrests and detentions without a warrant.

The law provides that detainees have a right to prompt judicial determination of the legality of detention; to be notified promptly of charges against them; and are allowed prompt access to family members. However, there were cases in which these rights were not respected.

The constitution provides for remand prisoners to be released after six months detention if their case has not been heard within that period; however, prolonged pretrial detention was a problem. Prisoners often waited more than three years for trial or sentencing due to the inefficiency of the judicial system. Approximately 23 percent of the prison population consisted of pretrial detainees. The NHRC recommended that other institutions work to reduce the prison population to avoid stretching the already limited resources of the prison.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary was inefficient and subject to executive influence. Both civil and criminal court cases generally lasted years. There were no reports of judicial corruption, although there was a widespread public perception that some judges were corrupt.

The judicial system includes magistrates' courts (or small-claims courts), the Supreme (or trial) Court, the Constitution and Law Court, and the Court of Appeal.

One supreme court judge, one appeals court judge, and two magistrate court judges were citizens by birth. All others were either naturalized citizens or citizens of other Commonwealth countries. The bar association criticized the government for not advertising domestically that judicial positions were available. Critics widely believed that some foreign justices bent to the will of the executive branch because of fear that they might lose their jobs.

Several justices of the peace were responsible for small-claims cases, and there were allegations that many of the justices were appointed because of their affiliation with the People's Party.

An 18-member part-time family tribunal heard and decided all matters relating to the care, custody, access to, and maintenance of children, except paternity cases, which remained under the courts. The government empowered the family tribunal to issue protection orders to victims of family violence. Most members of the tribunal were not legally trained and were affiliated with the People's Party.

Trial Procedures

Defendants have the right to a fair public trial, and trials were public in practice. A magistrates' court or the Supreme Court heard criminal cases, depending on the gravity of the offense. Cases involving murder or treason use juries.

Defendants are considered innocent until proven guilty, and have the right to be present at their trial, to confront witnesses, and to appeal. The constitution makes provision for defendants to present evidence and witnesses and to cross-examine witnesses in court. Defendants have the right to access government-held evidence; however, in practice such requests were often delayed. The law provides for defendants to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. The above rights are enjoyed equally by all citizens.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The constitution and law provide for an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters; however, the judiciary was inefficient and subject to executive influence.

On March 10, the NHRC was established to examine cases of human rights abuses. Prior to the creation of the NHRC, citizens turned to the ombudsman office to investigate human rights abuses and to seek redress for other issues.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions in practice. However, there remained widespread suspicion of government monitoring of private communication without legal process.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the government did not respect these rights in practice. The law provides restrictions "for protecting the reputation, rights, and freedoms of private lives of persons" and "in the interest of defense, public safety, public order, public morality, or public health." As a result, civil lawsuits could be filed to penalize journalists for alleged libel. Journalists practiced self-censorship.

Individuals could not criticize the government publicly or privately for fear of reprisal.

On November 27, *Regar* reported that the Supreme Court awarded damages, ranging from 30,000 to 75,000 rupees (\$2,750 to \$6,875), to 13 victims of the 2006 police assault on SNP partisans for an alleged illegal gathering.

On August 21, two independent media consultants published a report on the media and recommended the creation of a media council and a media association, as well as a joint consultation committee. The latter would act as a consultative platform and would settle any issue between the media council and the media association. The report also recommended amendments to the libel laws. The media association was established in August.

There are two privately owned daily newspapers, the *The Rising Sun* and *The Nation*, and a government-owned newspaper, which generally supported government policies. *The Nation* gave limited attention to the opposition and generally ignored news that reflected adversely on the government. There were three weekly political party newspapers: *Regar*, *The People*, and *Le Nouveau Seychelles Weekly*.

The law allows the minister of information technology to prohibit the broadcast of any material believed to be against the "national interest" or "objectionable." The law also requires telecommunications companies to submit subscriber information to the government.

The government owned the only television station and all radio stations. The law allows for independent radio and television, but the licensing fee of 800,000 rupees (\$73,320) per year discouraged the opening of any independent broadcasters. Following the 2006 elections, the opposition SNP collected funds for the radio licensing fee and announced plans to apply for a license. Subsequently, and as a response to the SNP plan, the National Assembly passed an amendment to the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Act that prevents political parties and religious groups from obtaining radio licenses. By year's end the Law and Order Committee, established in 2007, had not made recommendations on the amendment to the act.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet; however, there were reports that the government monitored e-mail and Internet chat rooms. Individuals and groups engaged in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail. According to the International Telecommunication Union statistics for 2008, approximately 38 percent of the country's inhabitants used the Internet.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

Opposition activists claimed that the government limited academic freedom by reportedly not allowing academic professionals to reach senior positions in the academic bureaucracy without demonstrating at least nominal loyalty to the People's Party. The government controlled faculty appointments to the Polytechnic and the University of Seychelles, which opened on September 15.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly and association; however, the government did not always respect it.

On August 28, *Regar* reported that police denied the SNP permission to hold a public meeting on private property, claiming that the meeting would cause annoyance to nearby residents and breach the security and peace of the area.

Freedom of Association

The constitution and law provide for freedom of association; however, the government did not always respect this right. There were complaints that government officials intimidated and even dismissed civil servants who participated in opposition party activities.

c. Freedom of Religion

The constitution and law provide for freedom of religion, and the government generally respected this right in practice.

Religious groups are not required to register but must apply to the Ministry of Finance to receive tax exemptions.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The Jewish community numbered fewer than 10 persons; there were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

For a more detailed discussion, see the *2009 International Religious Freedom Report* at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/>

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons,

Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The constitution and law provide for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. Although it was not done during the year, the law allows the government to deny passports to any citizen if the minister of defense finds that such denial is "in the national interest."

The law prohibits the forced exile of citizens, and the government did not use forced exile in practice.

Protection of Refugees

The law provides for the granting of refugee status or asylum in accordance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa, but the government has not established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice the government provided protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular group, or political opinion.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The constitution and law provide citizens the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections based on universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

In July 2008 an SNP candidate won a national assembly by-election by an 87 percent margin. Only candidates from the SNP and the Democratic Party (DP) contested the election. There were reports that partisans of the former SPPF (the present People's Party) harassed opposition supporters in the days prior to the voting, and both the SNP and DP filed complaints with the electoral commissioner's office.

The 2007 national assembly elections produced no change in the balance of power between the ruling party and the opposition SNP. International observers found the elections to be credible. Minor complaints of electoral irregularities were filed with the electoral commissioner.

In 2006 approximately 88 percent of eligible voters elected incumbent and then-SPPF presidential candidate James Michel with 54 percent of the vote. International observers characterized the electoral process as credible and well-organized; however, opposition partisans filed complaints with the electoral commissioner's office regarding unfair campaign and electoral practices.

There were reports that opposition parties could not operate without restrictions or outside interference. On August 8, *Regar* reported that police denied the SNP permission to hold a public meeting (see section 2.b.).

The newly renamed People's Party, which assumed power in a 1977 coup, continued to use its political resources and those of the government to develop and maintain a nationwide organization that extended to the village level.

There were reports that People's Party membership conferred business and political advantage; for example, some members of opposition parties claimed that they lost their government jobs because of their political affiliation and were at a disadvantage when applying for government licenses and loans.

There were 10 women in the 34-seat National Assembly, seven elected by direct election and three by proportional representation. Following the July 2008 cabinet reshuffle, there were two women in the cabinet.

Section 4 Official Corruption and Government Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption; however, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. The World Bank's 2009 Worldwide Governance Indicators reflected that corruption was a problem. There were reports of rewards to People's Party supporters in the form of job assistance, land distribution, free building materials, and monetary payments.

Public officials were subject to financial disclosure laws upon taking office; however, there were no reports that such disclosures occurred in practice.

An ombudsman has legal authority to investigate and report on allegations of official fraud and corruption. He investigated 128 cases during the year involving problems such as labor law litigation, human rights abuse, and land and property disputes. Only one case involved allegations of fraud and corruption.

There are laws allowing public access to government information, although the government did not enforce them, and citizens routinely did not have access to such information.

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

A small number of international human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and one domestic human rights group, the Center for Rights and Development (CEFRAD), generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were generally cooperative and responsive to the views of international NGOs; however, cooperation with CEFRAD, which was perceived as being aligned with the opposition, was limited. For example, the government refused to permit CEFRAD and other local groups to observe the 2006 presidential election or the 2007 legislative elections.

A government-run National Humanitarian Affairs Committee (NHAC) operated with a range of members from both civil society and the government. The ICRC acted as a technical adviser to the NHAC.

On March 10, the NHRC was established by law to investigate allegations of human rights abuse, including those committed by members of law enforcement agencies. The commission enjoyed the government's cooperation and

operated without government or party interference, had adequate resources, and was considered effective. It issued a report on the March Montagne Posee Prison disturbances and recommended additional staff and training (see section 1.c.).

Section 6 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law affirm the right to be free from all types of discrimination but do not prohibit discrimination based on specific factors. In practice there was no overt discrimination in housing, employment, education, or other social services based on race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, or disability.

Women

Rape, spousal rape, and domestic abuse are criminal offenses punishable by a maximum of 20 years' imprisonment. The government enforced the law effectively and the Family Tribunal issued 500 protection orders related to domestic violence during the year. Rape was a problem. The police registered 66 rape cases for the year; however, many rape cases went unreported for fear of reprisal or social stigma. The Social Affairs Division of the Ministry of Health and Social Development and Women in Action and Solidarity Organization (WASO), a local NGO, provided counseling services to rape victims, and two rape victims received counseling services from the NGO during the year. At year's end, there were no statistics available for the number of prosecutions regarding rape cases.

Domestic violence against women was a continuing problem. Police rarely intervened in a domestic dispute unless it involved a weapon or major assault. Authorities often dismissed the few cases that reached a prosecutor, or the court gave the perpetrator a light sentence.

In 2008 the Ministry of Health and Social Development launched the 2008-12 National Strategy Plan on Domestic Violence. In November GEMSA Plus, a local NGO working for the rights and empowerment of women, jointly organized a 16-day campaign against gender violence with the help of the Ministry of Health and Social Development, and 10 persons attended a workshop to raise awareness of the different forms of domestic violence.

Prostitution is illegal but remained prevalent. Any person found guilty of prostitution may be imprisoned for two years. Police generally did not apprehend persons for prostitution unless their actions involved other crimes.

The law prohibits sexual harassment, but it was rarely enforced. The penal code does not provide any penalty for persons found guilty of sexual harassment; however, the court can order a person accused of sexual harassment to "keep a bond of peace," which allows the court to assess a fine if the harasser fails to cease the harassment.

The government recognized the right of couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children. Health clinics and local health NGOs were permitted to operate freely in disseminating information on family planning under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and Social Development. There were no restrictions on the right to access contraceptives but few couples reportedly used these measures. The government provided free childbirth services; however, women preferred using nurses or midwives during childbirth as well as prenatal and postnatal care, unless the mother or child suffered more serious health complications. Men and women received equal access to diagnosis and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Women enjoyed the same rights as men. The society is largely matriarchal. Unwed mothers are the societal norm, and the law requires fathers to support their children. There was no officially sanctioned discrimination in employment, and women were well represented in business. There was no economic discrimination against women in employment, access to credit, equal pay for equal work, or owning or managing a business. Inheritance laws do not discriminate against women.

Children

Citizenship is derived by birth in the country or from parents, and births are registered immediately. Failure to do so, however, did not result in the denial of public service.

The government requires children to attend school through the 10th grade and made free public education available through the secondary level until age 18.

The law prohibits physical abuse of children; however, child abuse was a problem and was rarely reported. Sexual abuse of children, usually perpetrated by stepfathers and older brothers, was a problem. According to WASO, rape of girls under the age of 15 continued to be a problem; however, most cases went unreported for fear of reprisal or cultural stigma. Authorities prosecuted very few child abuse cases in court due to lack of efficient working relations between government agencies and departments. The strongest public advocate for young victims was a semiautonomous agency, the National Council for Children.

On April 29, *The Nation* reported that a local NGO, Young Soldiers for Christ, observed an increase in prostitution and feared that some youth could engage in prostitution as a consequence of the economic downturn.

The age of consent for marriage is 15 years. Girls were not allowed to attend school when they were pregnant, and many did not return to school after the birth of a child.

Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits trafficking in persons for all purposes, and there were no reports that persons were trafficked to, from, through, or within the country.

The Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* can be found at www.state.gov/g/tip.

Persons with Disabilities

The constitution and law provide for the right of persons with disabilities to special protection, including reasonable provisions for improving the quality of life; however, there are no laws providing for access to public buildings, transportation, or state services, and the government did not provide such access for persons with disabilities. There was no discrimination reported against persons with disabilities in housing, employment, or education, or in the provision of other state services.

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

The law does not specifically prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, and there were no reports that such discrimination occurred.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

There were no reports of violence or discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Section 7 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law provides workers with the right to form and join unions of their choosing; however, police, military, prison, and firefighting personnel may not unionize. The law is silent regarding the rights of foreign or migrant workers to join a union. Some citizens were reluctant to join the Seychelles National Trade Union (SNTU), a nongovernmental labor union, due to fear of government reprisal. Unions organized between 15 and 20 percent of the workforce.

The Seychelles Federation of Workers' Unions (People's Party-associated) was the only trade union in active operation; the SNP-associated SNTU ceased operations in 2007. Despite the legal provisions allowing workers to form and join unions, membership in the SNTU had continued to decrease because workers feared losing their jobs. The SNTU claimed that employers did not reinstate workers fired for union activity.

Strikes are illegal unless arbitration procedures are first exhausted. Observers noted that the Industrial Relations Act provisions regarding the holding of strikes hinder unions' right to strike.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows for unions to organize and conduct their activities without interference. The law provides workers with the right to engage in collective bargaining, but this seldom occurred. The government has the right to review and approve all collective bargaining agreements in the public and private sectors. There was little flexibility in setting wages. In the public sector, which employed more than 50 percent of the labor force, the government set mandatory wage rates for employees. The employer generally set wages in the private sector through individual agreements with the employee, while the government set wage rates in the few larger businesses.

The law authorizes the Ministry of Employment and Human Resource Development to establish and enforce employment terms, conditions, and benefits, and in practice workers frequently obtained recourse against their employers through the ministry.

Unions engaged in collective bargaining in the private sector; however, observers noted that private sector employers were reluctant to do so.

The law prohibits antiunion discrimination, and there were no reports of it during the year.

There was one export processing zone, the Seychelles International Trade Zone (SITZ), with 25 participating companies. Only the Seychelles Trade Zone Act applied in the SITZ, and the government did not require the SITZ to adhere to labor, property, tax, business, or immigration laws.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, and there were no reports that such practices occurred.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law states that the minimum age for employment is 15, "subject to exceptions for children who are employed part time in light work prescribed by law without harm to their health, morals, or education." In practice the government followed these requirements. It is otherwise a criminal offense punishable by a fine of 6,000 rupees (\$550) to employ a child under the age of 15. The Ministry of Employment and Human Resource Development enforced child labor laws. The ministry handled such complaints within its general budget and staffing and did not report any case requiring investigation. No children were found working in the fishing, tourism, agricultural, boat-building, or processing industries; the Ministry of Education carried out regular checks to ensure that children were actually attending school.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no official private sector minimum wage. The government encouraged but did not require the private sector to grant the minimum public sector wage. Since 2006 the minimum public sector wage has remained at 2,325 rupees (\$213) per month. Even with free public services, primarily health care and education, a single salary at the low end of the pay

scale did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. Private employers generally paid higher wages than the government to attract qualified workers.

The legal maximum workweek varied from 45 to 55 hours, depending on the economic sector; in practice some workers worked up to 60 hours per week. Government employees worked fewer hours. Regulations entitled each full-time worker to a 30-minute break per day and a minimum of 21 days of paid annual leave. The government permitted workers to work overtime up to 60 additional hours per month. The government generally enforced these regulations. The law requires premium pay for overtime work.

Foreign workers--mainly employed in the construction and commercial fishing sectors--did not enjoy the same legal protections as citizens. Companies sometimes paid foreign workers lower wages, forced them to work longer hours, and provided them with inadequate housing.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development has formal responsibility for drafting the government's comprehensive occupational health and safety regulations, and the ministry supported these standards, although, due to limited resources, safety and health inspectors rarely visited job sites. Occupational injuries were most common in the construction, marine, and port industries. The law has been amended to allow workers to remove themselves from dangerous or unhealthy work situations, report the employer to the Health and Safety Commission, and seek compensation without jeopardizing their employment.