

Sexual Orientation / Gender Identity References

U.S. Department of State

Human Rights Reports for 2007

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[Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007](#)

Africa

Angola

Reports of discrimination against homosexuals and those with HIV/AIDS occurred. The law criminalizes sodomy. Discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS is illegal, but lack of enforcement allowed employers to discriminate against persons with the disease. There were no reports of violence against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Benin

There were no reports of overt discrimination or violence based on a person's sexual orientation or HIV/AIDS status. In April 2006 the government enacted a law making it illegal to discriminate against a person, at any stage of hiring or employment, based on his or her HIV status.

Botswana

There was societal discrimination against homosexuals, persons with HIV/AIDS, and members of the San ethnic group.

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On September 10, the Registrar of Societies rejected a registration application from the NGO Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals of Botswana Organization (LEGABIBO). Officials stated that the application was not approved as it was believed that LEGABIBO would be used for unlawful purposes since homosexual acts are criminal offenses in the country.

The constitution and law prohibit governmental discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, nationality, creed, sex, or social status, and the government generally respected these provisions in practice. However, the law does not prohibit discrimination by private persons or entities, and there was societal discrimination against women; persons with disabilities; minority ethnic groups, particularly the San; persons with HIV/AIDS; and homosexuals.

The law prohibits homosexuality, but there were no reports of enforcement action by the authorities. There were, however, reports of societal discrimination and harassment of homosexuals. On September 10, the government rejected an application to register an NGO that supports homosexuals and bisexuals.

Burkina Faso

Societal discrimination against homosexuals and persons with HIV/AIDS were problems.

Homosexuals were discriminated against and were at times victims of verbal and physical abuse. Both religious and traditional beliefs were intolerant of homosexuality. There were no reports that the government responded to societal violence and discrimination against homosexuals.

Burundi

The constitution bans marriage between individuals of the same sex. Societal discrimination against homosexuals was widespread. The government took no steps to counter discrimination against homosexuals.

Cameroon

The government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit numerous human rights abuses. . . . Other problems included official corruption; societal violence and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation (FGM); trafficking in persons, primarily children; discrimination against indigenous pygmies and ethnic minorities; and discrimination against homosexuals.

During the year approximately 200 privately owned newspapers were published; however, most appeared irregularly, primarily due to lack of funding. Only an estimated 25 were published on a regular basis. *Mutations*, *La Nouvelle Expression*, *Le Messager*, and the newly created *La Jour* were the only privately owned newspapers published daily. Newspapers were distributed primarily in urban areas, and most continued to criticize the government and report on controversial issues, including corruption, human rights abuses, homosexuality, and economic policies.

On April 7, the police arrested Georges Gilbert Baongla, publisher of the weekly *Le Dementi*, a Yaounde-based private newspaper, for publication of obscene materials, public contempt of morals, and contempt of decency. The charges stemmed from a March 27 report regarding an alleged homosexual scandal involving an unidentified government minister. The Yaounde prosecutor formally charged Baongla and transferred him to the Yaounde Central Prison. In May a Yaounde court gave Baongla a suspended six-month prison sentence and fined him \$1,000 (500,000 CFA francs).

The law does not explicitly forbid discrimination based on race, language, or social status, but does prohibit discrimination based on gender and mandates that "everyone has equal rights and obligations." The government, however, did not enforce these provisions effectively. Violence and discrimination against women, trafficking in persons, discrimination against ethnic minorities, and discrimination against homosexuals were problems.

Homosexual activity is illegal, with a possible prison sentence of six months to five years and a possible fine ranging from approximately \$40 to \$400 (20,000 to 200,000 CFA francs). While prosecution under this law was rare, homosexuals suffered from harassment and extortion by law enforcement officials. In addition, false allegations of homosexuality were used to harass enemies or to extort money.

On August 29, gendarmes arrested and detained three young homosexuals in the Douala neighborhood of Bonapriso after neighbors called the gendarmes to report a fight over a sexual transaction. The three were scheduled for trial on November 7 and the trial continued at year's end.

In October the Bonanjo High Court refused to release six Douala men held in New Bell Prison on charges of homosexuality. The Douala High Court formally charged them with homosexuality and the trial was pending at year's end.

In June 2006 the administration of the Douala-based Eyengue Nkongo College, a private high school, expelled 34 students (including 12 women), alleging they were homosexuals. One female student was arrested upon her expulsion. One woman who lived near the school and two former schoolmates were also arrested. On July 7, the Douala First Instance Court released them after giving them a suspended three-year prison term and a fine of \$50 (25,000 CFA francs) on homosexuality charges.

Cape Verde

There were no reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Central African Republic

The penal code criminalizes homosexual behavior; however, there were no reports that police arrested or detained persons they believed to be homosexual. Societal discrimination against homosexuals persisted during the year, and many citizens denied the existence of homosexuals or attributed their existence to undue Western influence.

Chad

Societal discrimination continued to be practiced against homosexuals and those afflicted with HIV/AIDS.

Comoros

There were no reports of discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS. Homosexuals did not publicly discuss their sexual orientation due to societal pressure.

Republic of the Congo

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on political, sexual or religious orientation. However, the social stigma associated with homosexuality was significant. There was no open homosexuality in the country.

In contrast, persons with HIV/AIDS were fairly well organized and sought fair treatment, especially regarding employment. NGOs worked widely on HIV/AIDS issues, including raising public awareness that those living with HIV/AIDS were still able to contribute to society. The law provides avenues for wronged persons to file lawsuits if they were, for example, terminated from employment due to their HIV/AIDS status.

Cote d'Ivoire

The law did not provide for the protection of homosexuals or persons living with HIV/AIDS from societal and other forms of discrimination. Societal stigmatization of these groups was widespread, and the government did not act to counter it during the year.

Djibouti

There was no known societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Equatorial Guinea

Societal stigmatization and discrimination against homosexuals was strong, and the government made no effort to combat it.

Eritrea

There was societal abuse and discrimination against women; widespread practice of female genital mutilation (FGM); governmental and societal discrimination against members of the Kunama ethnic group; widespread societal discrimination based on sexual orientation, and reports of discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS. There were limitations on workers' rights.

Homosexuality is illegal, and homosexuals faced severe societal discrimination.

Ethiopia

Homosexuality is illegal and punishable by imprisonment. Instances of homosexual activity determined to be cruel, involving coercion, or involving a minor (age 13 to 16) are punishable by not less than three months or more than five years in prison. Where children under 13 years of age are involved, the law provides for imprisonment of five to 25 years. While society did not widely accept homosexuality, there were no reports of violence against homosexuals.

Gabon

There was considerable discrimination against women and persons with HIV/AIDS. One local NGO worked closely with the Minister of Health to combat both the associated stigma and the spread of the disease. The same organization also worked to combat the stigma associated with homosexuality but did not receive any assistance from the government for these activities.

The Gambia

There were no discriminatory laws based on sexual orientation; however, there was societal discrimination based on sexual orientation, which remained a social taboo. In an October 13 speech to commemorate the end of Ramadan, the president condemned homosexuality as un-Islamic.

Ghana

Human rights problems included deaths resulting from the excessive use of force by police; vigilante justice; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; police corruption and impunity; prolonged pretrial detention; forcible dispersal of demonstrations; corruption in all branches of government; violence against women and children; female genital mutilation (FGM); societal discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, homosexuals, and persons with HIV/AIDS; trafficking in women and children; ethnic discrimination and politically and ethnically motivated violence; and child labor, including forced child labor.

The law criminalizes homosexuality, and lesbians and gays faced widespread discrimination, as well as police harassment and extortion attempts. There is a minimum misdemeanor charge for homosexual activity, and homosexual men in prison often were subjected to sexual and other physical abuse.

Guinea

Discrimination against homosexuals is not prohibited by law, but there are no discriminatory laws based on sexual orientation. Although there were deep social,

religious, and cultural taboos against homosexuality, there were no official reports of discrimination against homosexuals.

Guinea-Bissau

There was no open discussion of homosexuality or HIV/AIDS, and the government did not address discrimination on either basis.

Kenya

At year's end there were no known developments in the 2005 petition by 31 pretrial detainees in Embu Prison to separate young boys from their adult counterparts to protect them from sodomy in the cells. A 2005 media report noted that high court judges touring King'ong'o Maximum Security Prison discovered several minors, one only 15 years old, serving long sentences among adult prisoners. The judges ordered the prison to provide information on the minors' convictions and imprisonment in order to conduct a review, but there were no known developments in the review during the year.

There was societal discrimination based on sexual orientation. The Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) and other civic leaders condemned homosexuality and argued against legalizing gay marriages. A group in Mombasa created the Muslim Youth Pressure Group to oppose homosexuality.

There was societal discrimination against homosexuals and persons with HIV/AIDS.

Lesotho

The law prohibits discrimination in the workplace on the basis of HIV/AIDS status. The law does not address sexual orientation, and general discrimination against homosexuals was present in the workplace.

Liberia

There was no societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Madagascar

The law does not prohibit discrimination against homosexuals, and there was general societal discrimination against them.

Malawi

Societal violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and against persons with HIV/AIDS occurred but there were no government statistics on the extent of the problem. The National AIDS Commission stated that discrimination was a problem in

both the public and private sector but believed the problem was decreasing due to HIV awareness campaigns.

Homosexuality is illegal, although there were no prosecutions for homosexuality during the year.

Mali

The constitution and law provide for freedom of association, and the government generally respected this right; however, the law prohibits association deemed immoral. In June 2005 the governor of the District of Bamako cited this law to refuse official recognition of a gay rights association.

Societal discrimination based on sexual orientation and persons with HIV/AIDS occurred.

Mauritania

There was no evidence of either societal violence or systematic government discrimination based on sexual orientation. Although Shari'a outlaws homosexuality under certain conditions, secular laws do not.

Mozambique

The law does not specifically prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, and there were occasional such reports. Despite the absence of a law, the LDH reported cases of discrimination against homosexuals in the judicial system. The Workers Law, passed during the year, includes an article that prevents discrimination in the workplace based on a number of factors, including sexual orientation.

Namibia

There were no reported cases of discrimination against homosexuals. Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of senior government officials making disparaging public remarks about homosexuals.

Niger

Homosexuals experienced social discrimination.

Nigeria

On August 4, Bauchi State police arrested 18 men and charged them with "addressing each other as women and dressing themselves as women," which is illegal under the Shari'a penal code. The men, all in their twenties, were also originally charged with sodomy, but the charges were later changed to "vagrancy" under the Bauchi State

Islamic code. After being released on bail, all 18 men were rearrested on September 14 on new charges of criminal conspiracy, membership in an unlawful society, and obscene or indecent acts, which are collectively punishable by eight years in prison, caning, and fines. At a November 29 hearing, the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) asked for postponement due to witnesses traveling. No trial date was announced by year's end.

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AI estimated that two-thirds of the women in certain communities in Lagos State experienced physical, sexual, or psychological violence in the family, with husbands, partners, and fathers responsible for most of the violence. Discriminatory laws exacerbated the problem. For example, the penalty for sexual assault of a man is more severe than the penalty for the same offense against a woman.

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Homosexuality is illegal under federal law; homosexual practices are punishable by prison sentences of up to 14 years. In the 12 northern states that had adopted Shari'a law, adults convicted of engaging in homosexual intercourse are subject to execution by stoning, although no such sentences were imposed during the year. Because of widespread taboos against homosexuality, very few persons were openly homosexual.

During the year the National Assembly considered an antigay marriage bill that would duplicate existing laws on marriage and sexual relations while making it more difficult for advocacy groups to operate. The bill had not passed by the end of the year.

Rwanda

Discrimination based on sexual orientation occurred, and in September some members of parliament publicly called for legislation criminalizing homosexuality. There were reports that police officers assaulted and arrested homosexuals. There were also reports of landlords evicting tenants based on sexual orientation.

Sao Tome and Principe

There was societal discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Senegal

Homosexuality is a criminal offense, and homosexuals faced widespread discrimination and social intolerance. However, they were not generally targeted for violence and harassment.

Seychelles

There were no reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

South Africa

The post-apartheid constitution outlaws discrimination based on sexual orientation, and in December 2006 the country legalized same-sex marriage. There was some societal violence and discrimination against homosexuals, but no reports of official violence or discrimination.

Sudan

Homosexuality is a crime, but no one has been prosecuted on the charge; there is societal but not official discrimination against homosexuals.

Swaziland

Societal discrimination against homosexuals was prevalent, and homosexuals often concealed their sexual preferences.

Togo

A 2005 law prohibits discrimination against persons infected with HIV/AIDS; however, such persons continued to face significant societal discrimination. There was also societal discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The penal code provides that a person who engages in a homosexual act may be punished by one to three years' imprisonment and fined \$220 to \$550 (100,000 to 500,000 CFA francs).

Uganda

The government's human rights record remained poor. Although there were improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained, including unlawful killings by security forces; instances of torture and abuse of suspects by security forces; vigilante justice; harsh prison conditions; official impunity; arbitrary arrest; incommunicado and lengthy pretrial detention; restrictions on the right to a fair trial and on freedoms of speech, press, and association; some limits on freedom of religion; sexual abuse of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps; restrictions on opposition parties; electoral violence and irregularities; government corruption; violence and discrimination against women and children, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and sexual abuse of children; trafficking in persons; violence and discrimination against persons with disabilities and homosexuals; and forced labor, including by children.

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The government announced it would initiate new regulations to provide a framework under which NGOs and churches would operate, following increased reports in July about their illegal activity, including extortion, fraud, trafficking in persons, and homosexual practices. The NGO Board said it would institute a survey to scrutinize the activities of 7,000 registered NGOs, including churches.

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Homosexuals faced widespread discrimination and legal restrictions. It is illegal for homosexuals to engage in sexual acts, based on a legal provision that criminalizes "carnal acts against the order of nature" with a penalty of life imprisonment.

Public resentment against homosexuality sparked demonstrations and significant public debate during the year. The government took a strong position against the practice. A local NGO, Sexual Minorities in Uganda, protested several members' alleged harassment by police for their vocal stand against sexual discrimination.

On September 10, the Red Pepper tabloid published a list of 40 first names of alleged homosexual men residing in Kampala. There were no confirmed reports of arrests, as originally reported, based on a similar list published by the same tabloid in August 2006.

Zambia

The law prohibits "carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature," but it does not specifically outlaw homosexuality. There was societal discrimination against homosexuals.

Zimbabwe

The government continued to use repressive laws to suppress freedoms of speech, press, association, academic freedom, assembly, and movement. Government corruption remained widespread. High-ranking government officials made numerous public threats of violence against demonstrators. The following human rights violations also continued to occur: harassment of human rights and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and interference with their attempts to provide humanitarian assistance; violence and discrimination against women; trafficking of women and children; discrimination against persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, and persons living with HIV/AIDS; harassment and interference with labor organizations critical of government policies; child labor; and forced labor, including of children.

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Over a period of years, President Mugabe publicly denounced homosexuals, blaming them for Africa's ills. Although there was no statutory law proscribing the activities of homosexuals, common law prevents homosexual men, and to a lesser extent, lesbians, from fully expressing their sexual orientation and, in some cases, criminalizes the display of affection between men. In July 2006, the 2004 amended criminal code became effective, broadening the definition of sodomy to include "any act involving physical contact between males that would be regarded by a reasonable person to be an indecent act."

East Asia and the Pacific

Australia

On June 21, HREOC presented a report to Parliament noting 58 federal laws that denied same-sex couples and their children basic financial and work-related entitlements available to heterosexual couples and their children. At year's end the new government was considering the report.

In October police reported that there were nine "sexual preference prejudice" assaults during the year around Oxford Street in Sydney, a popular gay area.

Brunei

There were no reports of societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS. The law makes it a criminal offense to have "sexual intercourse against the order of nature." There were no reports of official discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, access to education, or health care.

Burma

Many citizens viewed homosexuals with scorn. Penal code provisions against "sexually abnormal" behavior were applied to charge gays and lesbians who drew unfavorable attention to themselves. Nonetheless, homosexuals had a certain degree of protection through societal traditions.

Cambodia

There were no reported cases of sexual orientation discrimination in employment, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care. However, homosexuality was typically treated with fear and suspicion, and there were few support groups based on sexual orientation where such cases could have been reported.

China

No laws criminalize private homosexual activity between consenting adults. According to the Ministry of Health, the country has approximately 30 million homosexuals between the ages of 15 and 60. Societal discrimination and strong pressure to conform to family expectations deterred most gay individuals from publicly discussing their sexual orientation. Published reports stated that more than 80 percent of gay men married because of social pressure.

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Nearly all trafficking victims initially came to Hong Kong willingly to engage in prostitution. Most came from rural areas of the mainland, Thailand, or the Philippines on 14-day tourist visas, although a very small number entered using forged documents. The

overwhelming majority were women, although an increasing number of young men were coming to Hong Kong to work as homosexual prostitutes. While many came on their own, some were lured by criminal syndicates and promises of financial rewards but faced circumstances of debt bondage. Syndicates sometimes held passports and travel documents until debts were paid.

Taiwan

Several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported that law enforcement officials monitored Internet chat rooms and bulletin boards and used Internet addresses to identify and prosecute adults responsible for posting sexually suggestive messages. Critics alleged the Child and Youth Sexual Transaction Prevention Act (CYSTPA), which is intended to protect children from sexual predators, is being used to punish constitutionally protected free speech between consenting adults.

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There were no laws prohibiting homosexual activities. According to homosexual rights activists, anti homosexual violence was rare, but societal discrimination against homosexuals and persons with HIV and AIDS was a problem.

Homosexual rights activists alleged that communities regularly used police pressure to shut down neighboring gay- and lesbian-friendly bars and bookstores. Homosexual rights activists and free speech advocates alleged that the police prejudicially applied obscenity laws to discourage the sale of gay pornography. Homosexual rights groups also complained that law enforcement agencies monitored Internet chat rooms and bulletin boards for sexually suggestive messages and prosecuted adult message-posters in violation of constitutional free speech guarantees.

In March the LY extended the financial, legal, and medical protections of the Family Violence Prevention and Service Act to gay and lesbian couples. The LY also passed legislation limiting artificial insemination and other infertility treatments to married couples. Doctors convicted of providing infertility treatments to unmarried persons face fines of up to \$46,000 (NT\$1.5 million). Homosexual rights activists alleged the restrictions unfairly discriminate against homosexuals, who are not permitted to marry under the law.

In May the LY passed legislation extending employment discrimination protection to homosexuals. Employers convicted of discriminating against jobseekers on the basis of birthplace, sexual orientation, or age face fines of up to \$46,000 (NT\$1.5 million).

In September a Kaohsiung court denied a lesbian couple's request to adopt a child, citing concerns that the child could develop gender-identity disorder and suffer ridicule from her peers.

On October 13, some 12,000 persons took part in the fifth annual homosexual rights rally, calling for society to respect the civil rights of Taiwan's estimated one million homosexuals.

Fiji

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The preexisting penal code criminalizes homosexual acts between males, but the judiciary has held these provisions to be unconstitutional. There was some societal discrimination against homosexuals and persons with HIV/AIDS, although there was no systemic discrimination. There were no known cases of violence directed at homosexuals or person with HIV/AIDS.

Indonesia

On January 22 and 23, two gay men in Banda Raya, Aceh, were physically and verbally abused by their neighbors and then arbitrarily arrested, beaten, and sexually abused by police. Four police officers were suspended and administratively sanctioned for their abuse of the men. At year's end the case was still under investigation, but the authorities maintained they were unable to file charges because one of the victims had fled Aceh and the other refused to be questioned.

Japan

There were no reports of societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Kiribati

Sodomy and acts of "gross indecency" between males are illegal, but there were no reports of prosecutions under these provisions. Societal discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and against persons with HIV/AIDS were not significant problems.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

No information was available on other societal abuses and discrimination, such as societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Republic of Korea

The law forbids discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, disability, age, social status, regional origin, national origin, ethnic origin, physical condition or appearance, marital status, pregnancy and child delivery, family status, race, skin color, thought or political opinion, record of any crime for which punishment has been fulfilled, sexual orientation, or medical history, and the government generally respected these provisions. However, traditional attitudes limited opportunities for women, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. While courts have jurisdiction to decide discrimination

claims, many of these cases were instead handled by the NHRC. From January to August, 779 such cases were brought before the NHRC.

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A 2007 Human Rights Watch letter maintained that, although the law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, transgender people were at risk of discrimination in employment, education, housing, and healthcare.

Laos

Within lowland Lao society, despite wide and growing tolerance of homosexual practices, societal discrimination persisted against such practices.

Malaysia

Television stations censored programming in line with government guidelines. The government banned some foreign newspapers and magazines and, occasionally, censored foreign magazines or newspapers, most often for sexual content; however, the Internet provided a means to bypass such restrictions. The government maintained a "blacklist" of local and foreign performers, politicians, and religious leaders who were not allowed to appear on television or broadcast on radios.

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Although there are no laws that prohibit homosexuality, laws against sodomy and "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" exist and were enforced. Religious and cultural taboos against homosexuality were widespread. The government's response to HIV/AIDS was generally nondiscriminatory, although stigmatization of AIDS sufferers was common.

Marshall Islands

There were no accounts of societal violence based on sexual orientation or HIV/AIDS infection. There are no enforced laws criminalizing homosexuality. In general homosexuals were accepted in society.

Micronesia

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

Mongolia

Homosexuality is not specifically proscribed by law. However, Amnesty International and the International Lesbian and Gay Association criticized a section of the penal code that refers to "immoral gratification of sexual desires," arguing that it could be used against homosexuals. Homosexuals reported harassment by police, but remained divided over the overall level of societal discrimination.

New Zealand

The law prohibits violence or discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation and against persons with HIV/AIDS. During the 12-month period ending June 30, the HRC received 52 discrimination complaints relating to sexual orientation (3.1 percent of all complaints), but it did not keep records as to whether violence was involved. The Ministry of Justice received no reports of societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS, and there were no criminal prosecutions relating to these crimes.

Palau

There were no reports of cases of violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against person with HIV/AIDS.

Papua New Guinea

Sodomy and acts of "gross indecency" between males are illegal, but there were no reports of prosecutions under this law during the year. There were no specific reports of societal violence or discrimination against homosexuals, but homosexuals were vulnerable to societal stigmatization.

Philippines

There was no widespread discrimination based on sexual orientation; however, there were anecdotal reports of abuse and discrimination against homosexuals. In April an organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons applied for accreditation in the election of party-list representatives. The Commission on Elections denied their application.

Samoa

Sodomy and "indecent between males" are illegal. The government actively enforced the law with regard to such acts involving exploitation of minors, with punishment of up to 14 years in prison if the minor is under 16 years of age. However, these provisions were not actively enforced with regard to consensual homosexual acts between adults. There were no reports of societal violence or discrimination against homosexuals or persons with HIV/AIDS.

Singapore

Consensual homosexual sex is illegal but in practice was not prosecuted.

Thailand

NGOs complained that employers discriminated against male homosexuals after reviewing military documents that permanently labeled these individuals as having a mental disorder. According to the military, as many as 500 individuals every year were affected by the practice, which reportedly stopped in April. NGOs estimated that at least 10,000 individuals had been affected by the army regulations nationwide. The law did not permit transgendered individuals from changing their gender on identification documents.

Timor-Leste

The law makes no reference to homosexual activity. Gays and lesbians were not highly visible in the country, which was predominantly rural, traditional, and religious. There were no reports or documented instances of discrimination.

Tonga

Sodomy is illegal, but there were no reports of prosecutions under this provision. Persons who engaged in openly homosexual behavior faced societal discrimination.

Tuvalu

Societal discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation was not common and there were no reports of such discrimination.

Vanuatu

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

Vietnam

A homosexual community existed but was largely underground. There was low public awareness of the issue and little evidence of discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Europe and Eurasia

Albania

The constitution and law prohibit such actions; however, the police and prison guards sometimes beat and abused suspects and detainees. The Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC) and the Albanian Human Rights Group (AHRG) reported that police sometimes used excessive force or inhumane treatment. According to the AHRG, most

mistreatment took place at the time of arrest or initial detention. Roma, Balkan-Egyptians, and homosexuals were particularly vulnerable to police abuse.

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The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, disability, language, or social status; however, discrimination against women, Balkan-Egyptians, Roma, and homosexuals persisted.

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As in previous years, NGOs claimed that police targeted the homosexual community for abuse. According to the Albanian Gay and Lesbian Association, the police arbitrarily arrested homosexuals and then physically and verbally abused them while they were in detention.

The Albanian Human Rights Group reports that during the year police harassed members of the Albanian Gay and Lesbian Association and other known homosexuals, sometimes searching their homes without a warrant.

Andorra

There were no reports of societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Armenia

The government's human rights record remained poor, and serious problems remained. Citizens were not able to freely change their government; authorities beat pretrial detainees; the National Security Service (NSS) and the national police force acted with impunity; authorities engaged in arbitrary arrest and detention; prison conditions were cramped and unhealthy, although slowly improving; authorities imposed restrictions on citizens' privacy, freedom of press, and freedom of assembly. Journalists continued to practice self-censorship, and the government and laws restricted religious freedom. Violence against women and spousal abuse remained problems, as well as trafficking in persons, discrimination against persons with disabilities, and societal harassment of homosexuals.

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The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status; in practice, however, there was societal discrimination against women, ethnic and religious minorities, persons with disabilities, and homosexuals.

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Persons who were openly gay were exempted from military service, purportedly because of concerns that they would be abused by fellow servicemen. However, the legal pretext for this exemption is predicated on a medical finding of gays possessing a mental disorder, which is stamped in their passports and can affect their future. Local observers noted that unlike in previous years, there were no reported cases of police harassment of homosexuals through blackmail, extortion, or violence. Nevertheless,

societal attitudes and harassment towards homosexuality remained severe, and hampered homosexuals' access to medical care.

Austria

There was some societal prejudice against gays and lesbians; however, there were no reports of societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Azerbaijan

The government did not officially condone discrimination based on sexual orientation; however, there was societal prejudice against homosexuals.

According to the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association's 2007 report, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transsexuals in the country were subjected to human rights abuses, discrimination, and social exclusion. The report characterized the community as "vulnerable and exposed to extortion by law enforcement officials," facing problems such as ridicule, forced bribes, abuse, and in some cases rape by law enforcement officials. The report noted that the community lived under a constant fear of being "outed" to family, friends, and colleagues.

Belarus

Homosexuality is not illegal, although discrimination was a problem. Homophobia was widespread, and harassment occurred. According to a local gay rights group, government-controlled media discouraged participation in the protests following the March 2006 presidential election by saying they were part of a "gay revolution." In July 2006 state media broadcast a police expose of a Latvian diplomat in Minsk, whom authorities accused of distributing pornography. The program exploited his sexual orientation and included several minutes of hidden-camera footage of the diplomat engaging in homosexual activities. The police dropped the investigation several months later.

In November 2006 gay rights leaders were forced to cancel an international lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender conference after police raided an apartment, seizing conference materials and detaining organizers.

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The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status; however, the government did not always protect these rights in practice. Violence against women and children, trafficking of persons, and discrimination against persons with disabilities, Roma, ethnic minorities, and homosexuals were problems.

Belgium

In its annual report for 2006, the CEOOR noted an increase in discrimination based on health or medical conditions, sexual orientation, and age. The CEOOR in 2006 registered 192 discrimination complaints based on disability. Most complaints were job-related. Courts have occasionally ruled against landlords who refuse to lease to same-sex couples.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

While the law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, it was not enforced in practice, and there was frequent societal discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons.

For example, in September RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik publicly commented on the sexuality of the BiH Transparency International director, stating that he would not permit him to enter his offices because "I simply do not allow various 'faggots' into my cabinet." The Bosnian Gay and Lesbian community, led by the NGO Q Association, immediately condemned the statement as hate speech.

Gays and lesbians who were open about their orientation faced frequent harassment and discrimination, including termination from employment. In some cases, dismissal letters explicitly stated that sexual orientation was the cause of termination, making it extremely difficult for them to find another job.

According to unreliable government statistics, there were less than 200 officially registered cases of HIV/AIDS in the country. The NGO XY-Association for Sexual and Reproductive Health estimated that the actual number of cases was at least three times that, or approximately 600 cases, and the UN Programme on HIV/AIDS estimated the number at less than 1,000. There was a significant stigma against persons with HIV/AIDS, a general lack of awareness of HIV/AIDS, and extremely limited resources to identify and assist those affected.

Bulgaria

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but the government did not effectively enforce this prohibition. Reports of violence against sexual minorities were rare, but societal discrimination, particularly discrimination in employment, although less common than in earlier years, was a problem. Although in 2006 the gay-rights organization Gemini won three cases it filed with the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, individuals continued to be reluctant to pursue legal remedies for discrimination due to the stigma of being openly identified as gay.

Croatia

There was some societal violence and discrimination against homosexuals.

During an annual Gay Pride parade in July in Zagreb, approximately 20 participants claimed that antigay groups followed them during and after the parade and beat some of them on side streets away from the event. Among the persons beaten at the event or later were Italian Senator Gianpaolo Silvestri and citizens from other European countries. Despite over 500 police protecting some 300 participants, a group of young persons attempted to throw five or six Molotov cocktails into the event. Police arrested a 25-year-old-man and charged him with a hate crime for the incident. In October the state prosecutor indicted the suspect. This was the first time that someone was indicted for a hate crime since this type of crime was introduced into the Criminal Code in June 2006.

Societal discrimination against homosexuals was frequently present in the form of insults, stereotypical jokes and societal prejudices. According to a 2006 national survey conducted on a random sample of 200 sexual minority members, 14.4 percent of interviewees had experienced physical violence over a period of 36 months. More than 56 percent had been exposed to insults or threats. More than half had a friend or partner who had been the victim of violence because of their sexual orientation. Such violence and harassment most frequently occurred in open public places and the perpetrators usually did not know the victim. The survey found that 22 percent of persons who experienced violence because of their sexual orientation reported it to the police, but that for one in four or these, going to police resulted in further embarrassment, humiliation, and inappropriate police behavior towards the victims. Police investigated but made no arrests in the 2006 attack by a dozen persons on two homosexual British tourists in a bar in which one of the tourists sustained a concussion, ear injury, and loss of teeth. Police also investigated but made no arrests in the 2006 attack by at least three persons on two German homosexual tourists in Split while they walked on the waterfront holding hands; one of the victims sustained a nose fracture and the other a slight chest injury.

Cyprus

Despite legal protections, homosexuals faced significant societal discrimination, and few homosexuals in the country were open about their sexual orientation. One NGO reported that there were complaints of discrimination toward homosexuals and persons with HIV/AIDS. NGOs were reluctant to initiate awareness campaigns.

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The law criminalizes homosexuality in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. Homosexuality remained highly proscribed socially and rarely discussed.

Czech Republic

There were no reported cases of violence or discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation or who were HIV-positive.

Denmark

Defendants have the right to question witnesses against them and to present their own witnesses; they are presumed innocent until proven guilty; and the right of appeal encompasses both procedural matters and sentences imposed. The law provides that criminal sentences can be increased when bias is proved as a motive. Bias can be based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.

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The law prohibits any public speech or dissemination of statements or other pronouncements by which a group of persons is threatened, derided, or degraded because of their race, skin color, national or ethnic background, faith, or sexual orientation; offenders may be fined or imprisoned for up to two years. The law also prohibits "blasphemy" and provides that a person who publicly mocks or insults a legally existing religious community's tenets of faith or worship may be fined or imprisoned for up to four months.

Estonia

A gay rights parade took place in Tallinn on August 11 without incident. The government had failed to protect participants of a gay rights parade in 2006.

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In April police fined four persons and issued warnings to several others for verbally and physically attacking participants in a 2006 gay rights parade. A similar parade took place on August 11 without incident.

Finland

There were no reports of societal violence or discrimination against persons based on their sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

France

On January 25, an appeals court affirmed an earlier verdict fining UMP deputy Christian Vanneste \$4,440 (3,000 euros) for defamatory comments against homosexuals.

Vanneste was required to pay a portion of his fine to three gay rights groups for his public assertion that "homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality. If one extended [the homosexual lifestyle] universally, it would be dangerous for humanity. There [already] is a social model that consists of heterosexual marriage and the education of children."

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The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment or service, public or private. Although there were isolated incidents of violence against homosexuals, authorities pursued and punished offenders.

Georgia

While there are no laws that criminalize homosexual behavior, it was not widely accepted in society.

Germany

In 2006 the federal OPC recorded 17,597 right-wing, "politically motivated crimes" (PMCs), an increase from 15,361 in 2005 and the highest number since 2000. There were also 2,369 left-wing PMCs, 477 PMCs by foreigners, and 168 other types of PMCs. The Federal Criminal Office defines politically motivated crimes as offenses related to the victims' ideology, nationality, ethnicity, race, skin color, religion, worldview, ancestry, sexual orientation, disability status, appearance, or social status. The OPC report listed 182 right-wing extremist organizations and groups. Authorities estimated membership in these groups plus right-wing extremists who were unorganized to be 38,600 at the end of 2006.

To address right-wing extremism, authorities conducted a variety of educational programs to promote tolerance, many focusing on anti-Semitism and xenophobia. Government agencies cooperated with NGOs in the formulation and administration of these programs. Following the attack on eight Indians in Muegeln, the federal government announced that it would increase funding for programs to combat right-wing extremism by \$7 million (5 million euros), in addition to a comparable increase in October 2006.

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Despite increasing public awareness, media and other reports indicated that societal and job-related discrimination against homosexuals occurred, though such instances were rare.

Five victims were hospitalized in June after eight right-wing radicals attacked a group of actors in Halberstadt (Saxony-Anhalt), still costumed from their performance of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." Four previously convicted right-wing extremists went on trial for this attack on October 9 in Magdeburg. On December 5, the four men were released from custody on the basis of insufficient evidence while the adjudication of the case proceeds. One suspect who made a partial confession was obliged to report his whereabouts periodically to the police.

Greece

The constitution and the law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status; however, the government did not respect these rights consistently in practice. Violence against women and children, trafficking in persons,

and discrimination against ethnic minorities, particularly Roma, and homosexuals were problems.

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The NGO Greek Homosexual Community (EOK) alleged that police often abused and harassed homosexuals and transvestites and subjected them to arbitrary identity checks and bodily searches in public places.

Hungary

Homosexuality is legal, but on one occasion right-wing groups subjected homosexuals to physical abuse. Despite a police escort, the approximately 2,000 participants in the annual gay pride march on July 7 encountered a crowd of several hundred antigay demonstrators who hurled verbal abuse, beer bottles, eggs, nylon bags filled with sand, and two smoke bombs at them. This counterdemonstration was organized by the far-right-wing party Jobbik. Later in the evening, after police had observed the dispersal of the antigay demonstrators and departed, witnesses reported a number of physical assaults on persons entering and leaving a nightclub that marked the terminus of the march. Police allegedly failed to respond to phone calls reporting these incidents. Several NGOs criticized police for inaction and for charging the 17 persons arrested in connection with the parade with group disorderly conduct, instead of the more serious charge of incitement against a community or violation of the freedom of assembly.

Iceland

The law establishes fines and imprisonment of up to three months for those who publicly deride or belittle the religious doctrines of a lawful religious association active in the country. Additionally, the law establishes fines and imprisonment of up to two years for anyone who publicly ridicules, slanders, insults, threatens, or in any other manner publicly assaults, a person or a group of people on the basis of their nationality, skin color, race, religion, or sexual orientation. There were no reports that the law was invoked during the year.

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There were no reports of societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Ireland

The law prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, and membership in the Traveller community. However, discrimination against racial minorities, including immigrants and Travellers, remained a problem.

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There was no reported societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Italy

There were reports of societal discrimination based on sexual orientation. In July newspapers published the story of a student in Sicily who was insulted and abused by classmates and expelled from school by the teacher because of his perceived homosexuality. The minister of education ordered an investigation.

In June 2005 the Administrative Court of Catania criticized the Ministry of Transport for having requested the revocation of a driver's license of a homosexual based on his sexual orientation. A civil trial seeking restitution was underway at year's end.

Latvia

The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens and the large resident noncitizen community; however, there were problems in some areas. These included: serious police abuse of detainees and arrestees; poor conditions at police detention facilities; poor prison conditions and overcrowding; judicial corruption; obstacles to due process; violence against women; child abuse; trafficking in persons; violence against ethnic minorities; and societal violence and occasional government discrimination against homosexuals.

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, language, disability, or social status; however, violence against women and racial minorities, societal discrimination against women and homosexuals, child abuse, and trafficking in persons were problems.

In contrast with 2006, there were no reports of societal violence or discrimination against homosexuals; however, the population at large had little tolerance for homosexuality. On December 10, Roman Catholic Cardinal Janis Pujats delivered a speech criticizing homosexuality, in what some observers described as a call for gays to be banned from holding political office.

In contrast with 2006, when the Riga City Council cancelled a permit for a gay pride parade, a gay pride event and concert was held in a park in Riga in 2007 with permission from the city and under heavy police protection. There were reports of verbal harassment by opponents from outside the security perimeter, but there were no violations of public order.

Liechtenstein

A government-contracted study published in December found evidence of discrimination based on sexual orientation. In a poll 71 percent of homosexuals who responded said that discrimination was widespread in the country; 58 percent of the overall population expressed the view that homosexuality remained a taboo. There also were some reports of discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Lithuania

The law and constitution provide for the right to peacefully assemble, and the government generally respected this right in practice for most groups; however, the government denied parade permits to gay rights groups on several occasions during the year.

In April the Vilnius municipality refused to issue a permit for a public event, sponsored by the European Commission, to promote tolerance and respect for persons with disabilities, homosexuals, and persons of different religions. Municipal officials said they withheld the permits because they were afraid of possible violence by counter-demonstrators. In response to, and at the same place and date for which the tolerance event was planned, a group calling itself "For Morals and Nation" organized an antihomosexual rally on May 25. Anti-homosexual flyers were posted in many locations in Vilnius prior to the event. Approximately 50 persons were at the event, and they passed out antihomosexual flyers to passersby. In May the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman started an investigation to determine if the municipality acted legally by cancelling the prodiversity event; however, the ombudsman later terminated the investigation due to lack of available information. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), European Commission officials, and some Lithuanian officials criticized the withholding of the permit.

In October, a gay rights NGO requested a permit to unfurl a rainbow flag in Town Hall Square on October 25 as part of the annual conference of the European division of the International Lesbian and Gay Association. The municipality refused. The reason given was that construction work underway in Town Hall Square could jeopardize the safety of participants. The NGO challenged the city in court, but the court did not overturn the city's decision.

Local human rights organizations and members of the homosexual community reported that physical abuse on the street, discrimination, and persistent social exclusion of homosexuals were problems.

On September 11, the ECHR ruled that the government violated the rights of a transsexual woman who had appealed to the Ministry of Health for permission for a sex change operation, as recommended by her doctors. The ministry deferred acting on the doctors' recommendation on the grounds that the parliament had not approved a law on sex change. The court ordered Lithuania to pay compensation of \$7,000 (5,000 euros), and Lithuania is obligated to pass a law on sex change within three months. If parliament does not pass a law within three months, the court obliged the country to pay \$68,000 (40,000 euros) to the plaintiff, the approximate cost of a sex change operation in Western Europe. In December the government appealed the decision and requested the court review this case again.

Macedonia

A local NGO representing the rights of homosexuals reported incidents of societal prejudice against homosexuals, including harassment or discrimination by employers and state officials. The Macedonian Association for Free Sexual Orientation faced bureaucratic obstacles in organizing activities. The press carried homophobic articles.

Moldova

There were reports of governmental and societal discrimination based on sexual orientation. According to the gay-rights NGO GenderDoc-M, lack of community recognition, negative media portrayals, and condemnation by the Orthodox Church often led to public ostracism of gays, lesbians, and their families. On April 11, Chisinau municipal authorities refused permission to GenderDoc-M to hold a demonstration calling for legislation to bar discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (see Section 2.b.).

In Transnistria homosexuality was illegal, and gays and lesbians were subject to governmental and societal discrimination.

On April 11, Chisinau municipal authorities refused the gay rights NGO GenderDoc-M permission to hold a demonstration calling for legislation to bar discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The denial was issued despite a February 13 Supreme Court ruling that a similar ban in 2006 was a violation of the right of assembly.

Montenegro

Society generally showed antipathy towards homosexuals, leading most homosexuals to conceal their identity. Violence against homosexuals was rare and not condoned by the government. There were no reports of violence or discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Netherlands

Anti-Semitism among right-wing extremists appeared to increase during the year. The independent Registration Center for Discrimination on the Internet described several hundred right-wing Web sites as extremist, including those of Stormfront.org, Polinico, National Alliance, and Holland Hardcore. The sites targeted not only Jews but also Muslims, blacks, and homosexuals.

Authorities denied asylum to persons who came from a so-called safe country of origin or who resided for some time in a safe country of transit. European Union guidelines were used to define such countries. NGOs, including Amnesty International, and the UNHCR, raised cases in which protection from refoulement appeared to have been violated and called for stricter policies to prevent refoulement, which the authorities promised to investigate. These charges also drew intense political scrutiny and gave rise

to parliamentary hearings that reversed or delayed government proposals to return asylum seekers from central and southern Iraq, as well as homosexuals and Christian converts from Iran.

There was increasing harassment of homosexuals in larger cities, primarily from some groups of Muslim youth. For example, Moroccan youths beat a prominent foreign gay activist on the Dutch National Day, April 30. However, most harassment consisted of verbal epithets and abuse. Police gave antigay violence high priority. In response to criticism that the police did not register antigay incidents separately, the Amsterdam police for the first time in 2007 kept such records. It recorded 234 antigay incidents. Most of them involved cursing and threats, but in 79 cases violence was used.

Poland

There was discrimination against women in the labor market, sexual exploitation of children, trafficking in women and children, and societal discrimination and violence against ethnic minorities and homosexuals.

During the year there were some reports of skinhead violence and societal discrimination against persons based on their sexual orientation.

On April 21, an estimated 2,000 persons took part in Krakow's annual gay March for Tolerance to call for an end to prejudice against homosexuals in the country. In contrast to previous years the event took place in the city center without incident and organizers said they were satisfied with police protection.

At the same time, a counter Tradition and Culture March organized by the nationalist All Poland Youth took place along a route outside of the city center. Authorities assigned 530 police officers to keep an estimated 300 counter-marchers on a separate route away from the March for Tolerance. Clashes between the All Poland Youth demonstrators and police erupted as some marchers threw eggs, stones and ran at police cordons. Police arrested some 13 protestors.

On May 16, in remarks to the press, then Minister of Education and Sejm member Roman Giertych stated that he planned to prohibit the spread of homosexuality in schools by proposing amendments to the law to prohibit activities that promoted "homosexuality, pornography, or other phenomena violating moral norms." Giertych's proposal was not implemented and his political party, the League of Polish Families, was no longer represented in parliament.

On May 18, the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) raised concerns over violence and hatred against homosexuals in the country. In its concluding observations, the CAT recommended that the government incorporate an offence in the criminal code to punish hate crimes as acts of intolerance, inciting hatred and violence based on sexual orientation.

On May 19, for the second consecutive year, Warsaw authorities allowed the annual Equality Parade to take place in the city center. Approximately 4,000 local and international gay rights advocates participated in the march without serious incident. However, several prominent members of parliament publicly denounced the event. For example, Roman Giertych called the participants "foul pederasts." Another member of his party, Wojciech Wierzejski, labeled the group a "degenerate horde." The parade was banned in 2005 by Warsaw city officials, a decision that the ECHR stated was a violation of freedom of association and assembly.

Romania

Homosexuals continued to suffer societal discrimination. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights NGOs complained that police singled out their community members for violence and harassment (see section 5).

NGOs reported that police abuse and societal discrimination against homosexuals was common and that open hostility prevented the reporting of some harassment and discrimination. Members of the gay and lesbian community continued to voice concerns about discrimination in public education and the health care system.

Approximately 400 people participated in the annual "march of diversity" gay pride parade in Bucharest on June 9. The local authorities mobilized hundreds of police to protect the participants, but there were still verbal and violent physical attacks against the marchers. One group of protesters threw stones, trash, and firecrackers at march participants, and also attacked the police. Police arrested over 100 people, including 13 minors. Five young men were charged with violent actions and 50 persons received fines for misconduct. Some participants in a counterdemonstration organized by the New Right and some religious organizations displayed symbols of the Iron Guard and wore t-shirts displaying a portrait of Legionnaire leader Codreanu. Although the law forbids the display and promotion of Nazi and neo-Nazi symbols, the authorities did not take any legal action against the counter-demonstrators.

Following repeated requests by the Accept Association, an NGO promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights, police announced that an investigation was initiated in March regarding the case of six participants in the 2006 "march of diversity" who were assaulted by a group of youths on the subway.

Among persons held in police detention, an increasing number of young men who other inmates perceived as being homosexual complained of harassment and of being subjected to violence by other inmates, while authorities failed to effectively protect them.

In June Georghe Becali, the owner of a soccer team and head of the right-extremist New Generation Party, launched a strong attack against gays in a public address, calling on them not to attend his team's soccer matches.

In July a Bucharest court ruled in favor of a person who accused the Distrigaz Sud gas utility of discrimination in access to services on grounds of sexual orientation. A Distrigaz Sud employee verbally harassed the plaintiff when the latter came to pay Accept Association's utility bill. The plaintiff was then physically assaulted by a company security guard. The court ordered Distrigaz Sud to pay the victim moral damages of approximately \$1,300 (3,000 lei). Accept Association and the victim also complained to the CNCD and a decision of that body remained pending.

A study released in June by the Institute of Public Policies and Romani CRISS pointed to the danger of online discrimination and hate speech on the discussion forums of four national dailies. The study revealed that hate speech was mostly directed against Roma and homosexuals.

Russia

Abuse of prisoners by other prisoners continued to be a problem. Violence among inmates, including beatings and rape, was common. There were elaborate inmate-enforced caste systems in which informers, homosexuals, rapists, prison rape victims, child molesters, and others were considered to be "untouchable" and were treated harshly, with little or no protection provided by prison authorities.

While homosexuality is not illegal, the gay community continued to suffer societal stigma and discrimination. Medical practitioners reportedly continued to limit or refuse their access to health services due to intolerance and prejudice. According to recent studies, male homosexuals were refused work due to their sexuality. Openly gay men were targets for skinhead aggression, which was often met with police indifference. A few gay rights organizations operated out of public view.

In May during violent attacks on gay rights activists, Moscow police enabled antigay demonstrators to disrupt a gay pride demonstration instead of protecting human rights and gay rights advocates.

Police did not investigate or take action against any of several hundred protesters that shouted threats and threw rocks, bottles, and eggs at participants in a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender "open party" in Moscow in April 2006 or against any of approximately 100 protestors that gathered outside a gay club the next night and conducted themselves in a similar manner.

The law provides for freedom of assembly, but local authorities increasingly restricted this right in practice. Permits are required for public meetings, demonstrations, or marches, and must be requested between five and ten days before the event. Local elected and administrative officials selectively denied some groups permission to assemble, or offered alternate venues that were in inconvenient locations. Permits are not required for religious gatherings and assemblies, and unlike past years, there were no reported incidents of authorities denying religious groups access to venues where they could hold assemblies.

On May 27, participants in a Moscow gay rights demonstration were assaulted by counter-demonstrators. Security forces did little to protect the demonstrators and arrested approximately 25 gay rights activists.

Serbia

Violence and discrimination against homosexuals was a problem. Some NGOs reported that homosexuals were denied equal opportunities in education and employment. A 2006 survey by YIHR indicated that lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender persons experienced widespread threats, hate speech, verbal assault, and physical violence. The Anti-Discrimination Coalition criticized the lack of police response to three attacks on patrons of two clubs in Belgrade frequented by homosexuals on October 12 and November 3. The NGO characterized the attacks as part of antigay campaign.

Although the broadcasting law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, the media carried slurs against homosexuals.

Human rights organizations were sometimes targeted for their vocal support of gay rights, sometimes leading to harassment. For example, on February 28 in Nis, two YIHR members were followed and harassed by unknown persons who expressed anger that they "protect gays and lesbians" and accused them of being anti-Serb.

In a 2006 poll conducted by lesbian rights organization Labris, 65 percent of homosexual respondents claimed they had experienced violence due to their sexual orientation. Only ten percent of respondents had reported this violence to the police.

(KOSOVO)

UNMIK and the PISG generally respected the human rights of residents; however, there were problems in some areas, particularly relating to minority populations. The most serious of these were cases of politically and ethnically motivated violence; injuries from unexploded ordnance or landmines; lengthy pretrial detention and lack of judicial due process; corruption and government interference in the judiciary; societal antipathy against Serbs and the Serbian Orthodox Church; lack of progress in returning internally displaced persons to their homes; corruption in the PISG; violence and discrimination against women; trafficking in persons, particularly girls and women for sexual exploitation; societal violence, abuse, and discrimination against minority communities; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities; abuse and discrimination against homosexuals; and child labor in the informal sector.

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation; however, there were reports of violence and discrimination directed against gays and lesbians.

Traditional societal attitudes about homosexuality intimidated most gays and lesbians into concealing their sexual orientation. Gays and lesbians generally felt insecure, with many reporting threats to their personal safety. The print media at times reinforced

these attitudes by publishing negative articles about homosexuality that characterized gays and lesbians as mentally ill and prone to sexually assaulting children. Individual homosexuals also reported job discrimination. At least one political party, the Islamic-oriented Justice Party, included a condemnation of homosexuality in its political platform.

On May 18, following a celebration of the International Day Against Homophobia outside Pristina, four males, three wearing dresses, were driving home when they were stopped by the police and forced out of their car. The police took them to a nearby police station, where, after compelling them to show their identification, officers made discriminatory and derogatory comments to them. The KPS did not open a file on this case, and the victims refused to give statements out of fear of further discrimination. The Center for Social Emancipation, a local NGO promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights, stated that there were a number of other cases of discrimination against homosexuals during the year but that victims refused to allow it to present their cases publicly out of fear of discrimination.

There were no updates in the March 2006 assault case involving unknown assailants who severely beat two men they observed engaging in homosexual sex. One of the victims later died of his injuries.

Slovenia

The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. There were reports of trial delays, indirect government influence on the media, and cursory procedures for review of asylum applications. Societal violence against women, trafficking in women and girls, discrimination and violence against Roma and homosexuals, and discrimination against former Yugoslav residents without legal status were also problems.

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the government generally enforced these provisions in practice. However, violence against women and children, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against homosexuals and Roma were problems.

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation; however, societal discrimination was widespread, and isolated cases of violence against homosexuals occurred. Recent data on the problem's scope was not available. A 2004 Peace Institute poll of members of the gay and lesbian community found that 53 percent of respondents had experienced verbal, sexual, or physical harassment because of their sexual orientation. More recent polling data was not available.

On June 30, the seventh annual gay pride parade in Ljubljana took place with the support of local government officials, although there were reports that bystanders shouted homophobic slurs at participants, and antigay graffiti and stickers were seen in various locations around the city. Organizers reported satisfactory police presence

during the parade. However, at a gay pride event that evening, four persons attacked a gay man who subsequently required hospitalization. Police responded immediately and reported the assault as a homophobic attack, but were unable to locate the attacker. Gay pride activists reported that, despite being notified of the attack, the Slovene Press Agency did not report the assault.

In July 2006 a law legalizing homosexual civil unions came into force. Gay activists, however, filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court in November 2006 claiming that the law does not afford the same social, family, and inheritance rights as those granted to heterosexual married couples. The court had not issued a ruling on the complaint by year's end.

Spain

There was no major societal violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS. Gay marriage is legal.

Sweden

The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provided effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse. Reported human rights problems included isolated incidents of excessive police violence; prison overcrowding and lengthy pretrial detention; government surveillance and interference; isolated cases of anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic discrimination; violence against women and children; trafficking in women and children; and societal discrimination against foreign-born residents, Roma, and homosexuals.

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. Although the government effectively enforced these laws, violence against women and children, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against resident foreigners, Roma, and homosexuals remained areas in need of improvement.

There were isolated incidents of societal violence and discrimination against homosexuals. The ombudsman against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation registered 47 reported cases during the year, compared with 45 cases in 2006. Additionally, the ombudsman's office initiated eight new discrimination investigations, compared to 11 new investigations in 2006. The government has a working group to promote equal rights for homosexuals, bisexuals, and transsexuals.

During the year the media reported that individuals associated with the openly Nazi organization National Socialist Front Party perpetrated numerous discriminatory acts involving violence and harassment. The reports included cases of assault and hate speech, unauthorized demonstrations, illegal distribution of posters, illegal possession of weapons, disorderly conduct, and threats against the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights.

Turkey

While the law does not explicitly discriminate against homosexuals, gay and lesbian rights organizations Lambda Istanbul and Kaos GL claimed that vague references in the law relating to "the morals of society" and "unnatural sexual behavior" were sometimes used as a basis for discrimination by employers. The law also states that "no association may be founded for purposes against law and morality." This article has been applied in attempts to shut down or limit the activities of NGOs working on gay and lesbian issues.

In July 2006 the Istanbul governor's office petitioned the Beyoglu chief public prosecutor to initiate a case to close the organization Lambda Istanbul, alleging that it violated the civil code by being an organization contrary to laws and morals. On March 13, the prosecutor rejected the complaint. The governor's office then applied to the Istanbul Penal Court, which accepted the complaint and held the first hearing on July 19. At year's end the case remained pending, and Lambda Istanbul was still operating.

On February 24, Bilgi University students established the country's first gay and lesbian university club. Approximately 15 parents lodged complaints with the university administration, and the Turkish Higher Education Council opened an inquiry into the university. Bilgi's dean of students, Professor Halit Kakinc, responded that closing down the club would violate human rights. The club was operating normally at the end of the year.

Access to the Web sites of Kaos GL, Pembe Hayat, and Lambda Istanbul is blocked from all the computers on the campus of Anadolu University in Eskisehir. (MG note: again, freedom of press? End note)

On May 15, members of the groups Pembe Hayat and Kaos GL protested at the Esat Police Station in Ankara. Protestors claimed that transsexuals and transvestites had been unjustly taken into custody and faced mistreatment during their detention. Police officers on duty prevented the protestors from making a press statement during the demonstration.

Ukraine

The Constitution and the law prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and other grounds; however, the government did not enforce these provisions effectively, in part due to the continuing absence of an effective judicial system. Violence against women and children, gender-based discrimination, trafficking in persons, and harassment and discrimination against ethnic minorities and homosexuals, and a rise in xenophobic violence were problems.

Gay and lesbian rights organization Nash Mir (Our World) expressed concern about ongoing discrimination and characterized the attitudes of political and religious leaders as indifferent or even outright hostile towards the gay community. For example in

February, Leonid Hrach, then chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Human Rights, National Minorities, and International Relations, publicly stated "the state must protect society against evil, from violence, including such evil as homosexuality." Other issues of concern included reports of ongoing police abuse of gays, threats by police to inform gays' families and employers of their lifestyle, and the lack of access to medical treatment and information for gay men on prevention of HIV/AIDS.

A gay student expelled from the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (MAUP) in 2005 won a lawsuit against the school, which then offered him readmission.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Antigua/Barbados

....there were occasional reports of police brutality, corruption, excessive force, discrimination against homosexuals, and allegations of abuse by prison guards.

Authorities exonerated the police officer who shot Kelly Jackson in the leg while taking him into custody in January 2006.... There was no information about what happened to the police officer who shot a 13-year-old suspect running away from detention in June 2006.

Argentina

The Argentine Homosexual Community (CHA) received 1,600 complaints of discrimination during the year, including complaints of wrongful termination of employment of individuals on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV-positive status. The law prohibits termination of employment of HIV-positive employees. In December CHA reported that a Buenos Aires provincial police officer raped, beat, and tortured a transvestite. There were no reports indicating that charges had been filed or that an investigation had begun by year's end.

On November 2, police detained Rodolfo Aguilares in connection with the November 2006 killing of transgender activist Pelusa Liendro, who was found stabbed in her car 10 days after the broadcast of an undercover video tape she and other activists made of police harassment and abuse of transgender persons in Salta Province. Aguilares, a friend of the murder victim, was in detention at year's end

Bahamas

Societal discrimination against homosexuals occurred, with some persons reporting job and housing discrimination based upon sexual orientation. Although homosexual relations between consenting adults are legal, there was no legislation to address the human rights concerns of homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals, or transgendered persons. In

March 2006 the Constitutional Review Commission found that sexual orientation did not deserve protection against discrimination.

Religious organizations and individual activists opposed a September request by a gay rights group for the cable monopoly to add a gay and lesbian channel to its programming. In the ensuing media controversy, opponents called for recriminalizing homosexual acts, and religious leaders criticized a major newspaper for giving what they considered undue coverage to the gay rights group. Media reports, in turn, referred to a "campaign" against the "gay agenda" or lifestyle by opponents of the proposal. The organizer of a gay and lesbian cruise accused authorities of harassment in shutting down a party at a downtown club on October 7, due to alleged lewd behavior and immigration violations. Police officials denied inappropriate conduct.

Sensationalistic media reporting of reputed gay links in two high-profile murders in Nassau in November, under police investigation at year's end, reflected the atmosphere of societal intolerance.

Barbados

The law criminalizes consensual homosexual relations, and there are no laws that prohibit discrimination against a person on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, housing, education, or health care. In March the UN Human Rights Committee expressed its concern over discrimination against homosexuals in the country. Although no statistics were available, anecdotal evidence suggested that societal discrimination against homosexuals occurred. In September the chief of prisons admitted that some homosexual prisoners had been placed in special security cells but were still beaten by other inmates for being homosexual.

Bolivia

Although the law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, language, or social status, there was significant discrimination against women, indigenous people, and the small black minority. The human rights ombudsman reported that "persons with HIV/AIDS, indigenous persons, peasant farmers, and homosexuals, in this order, were the most discriminated against within society."

Brazil

Although the law prohibits and penalizes discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, or social status, discrimination against women, Afro-Brazilians, homosexuals, and indigenous people continued.

State and federal laws prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the federal and state governments generally enforced these laws.

According to the NGO Bahian Gay Group, 83 male homosexuals, 30 transvestites, and three lesbians were killed during the year, for a total of 116 killings, compared with 88 in 2006. The Northeast was the most violent area against homosexuals, with 60 percent of the cases reported. The most violent states were Pernambuco with 16 homicides, Bahia with 13, and Rio Grande do Norte with eight.

During the year the group Rio without Homophobia, in partnership with other NGOs and the Rio de Janeiro state government, developed a program that included professional counseling services, medical assistance, rights defense, and a witness protection program.

Chile

During June a skinhead group hacked into and defaced the Web site of the Movement for Homosexual Integration and Liberation (MOVILH). According to MOVILH's *Fifth Annual Report on the Human Rights of Sexual Minorities*, 49 cases of discrimination (including two killings) due to sexual orientation were registered in 2006. The report cited a 15 percent decrease in reports but an increase in the use of violence against gays, lesbians, transvestites, and transgendered individuals. On August 26, the Chilean Confederation of Sexual Diversity was formed, grouping together 13 organizations of sexual minorities from around the country.

Neo-Nazi and skinhead groups engaged in gang-type criminal activities and violence against immigrants, homosexuals, punk rockers, and anarchists. While these groups share the anti-Semitic rhetoric of neo-Nazi groups, there were no reports of neo-Nazi attacks targeting the Jewish community. Police arrested persons involved in neo-Nazi attacks, and neo-Nazis have been dismissed from the armed forces and Carabineros.

Colombia

Paramilitary members who refused to demobilize and new illegal groups killed journalists, local politicians, human rights activists, indigenous leaders, labor leaders, and others who threatened to interfere with their criminal activities, showed leftist sympathies, or were suspected of collaboration with the FARC. They also reportedly committed massacres and "social cleansing" killings of prostitutes, homosexuals, drug users, vagrants, and gang members in city neighborhoods they controlled. New illegal groups, according to CINEP, were responsible for the deaths of 128 civilians from January through June, a 52 percent increase from 58 deaths reported during the same period in 2006.

According to CINEP, extrajudicial killings attributed to the government were a combination of false reports of guerrillas killed in combat and "social cleansing" (including vagrants, homosexual populations, and other "undesirables").

Cuba

Sexual assault occurred at prisons. At Manto Negro Prison in Havana, the country's largest women's prison, forced homosexual relationships were common. In many such cases, women serving lengthy sentences targeted younger women. Those who resisted faced potential violence, including beatings and stabbings. Guards frequently looked the other way and failed to punish perpetrators. The government did not release information on the treatment of minors at either youth or adult prisons or detention centers.

Child prostitution was a problem, with young girls engaging in prostitution to help support themselves and their families. While underage prostitution was widely apparent, there were no reliable statistics available regarding its extent. Children may marry with the consent of their parents at age 14, but the law provides for two to five years' imprisonment for anyone who "induces minors under 16 years of age to practice homosexuality or prostitution." Minors played a key role in the country's thriving sex trade, which was fueled by visits by thousands of foreign tourists. There was anecdotal evidence that, on an individual basis, workers in state-run hotels, travel company employees, taxi drivers, bar and restaurant workers, and law enforcement personnel were complicit in the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Dominica

There are no laws that prohibit discrimination in employment, housing, education, or health care against a person on the basis of sexual orientation or against persons living with HIV/AIDS. Although no statistics were available, anecdotal evidence suggested that societal discrimination against homosexuals and persons living with HIV/AIDS occurred. The government and the Dominica Planned Parenthood Association operated programs designed to discourage discrimination against HIV/AIDS-infected persons and others living with them.

Ecuador

Societal problems continued, including violence against women; discrimination against women, indigenous people, Afro-Ecuadorians, and homosexuals; trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation of minors; and child labor.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status; however, women, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, Afro-Ecuadorians, homosexuals, and transgendered persons continued to face discrimination.

El Salvador

Although the constitution provides for freedom of association, there were concerns regarding registration delays of certain types of civil society groups. NGOs asserted that

the Ministry of Governance delayed approval of or denied legal status for NGOs with particular human rights or political agendas, including the case of a gay, lesbian, and transgender advocacy NGO denied such status in 2005.

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of HIV status and sexual orientation, although in practice discrimination was widespread. There were reports of violence and discrimination by public and private actors against persons with HIV/AIDS, and against homosexual, lesbian, and transgender persons, including denial of legal registration for a homosexual rights advocacy group.

Grenada

The law criminalizes consensual homosexual relations, providing penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment. Society generally frowned upon homosexuality, and many churches condemned it. There was no perceptible discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS, partly because the disease was widespread in the general population, including women infected by partners engaging in sex with men and boys. The government encouraged citizens to be tested and to get treatment. An NGO, GRENCHAP, provided counseling to those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Guatemala

Human rights and societal problems included the government's failure to investigate and punish unlawful killings committed by members of the security forces; widespread societal violence, including numerous killings; corruption and substantial inadequacies in the police and judicial sectors; police involvement in kidnappings; impunity for criminal activity; harsh and dangerous prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; failure of the judicial system to ensure full and timely investigations and fair trials; failure to protect judicial sector officials, witnesses, and civil society representatives from intimidation; threats and intimidation against journalists; discrimination and violence against women; trafficking in persons; discrimination against indigenous communities; discrimination and violence against gay, transvestite, and transgender persons; and ineffective enforcement of labor laws, including child labor provisions.

The law does not criminalize homosexuality, but it also does not expressly include sexual orientation or HIV status among the categories prohibited from discrimination. There was social discrimination against gay, lesbian, and transgender persons and persons with HIV/AIDS. Homosexual rights support groups alleged that members of the police regularly waited outside clubs and bars frequented by sexual minorities and demanded that patrons and persons engaged in commercial sexual activities provide protection money. Due to a lack of trust in the judicial system and out of fear of further persecution or social recrimination, victims were unwilling to file complaints.

Police threatened persons engaged in prostitution and other commercial sexual activities with false drug charges to extort money or sexual favors and harassed homosexuals and transvestites with similar threats of false charges. Critics accused the

police of indiscriminate and illegal detentions when conducting antigang operations in some high-crime neighborhoods. Security officials allegedly arrested and imprisoned without charges, or sometimes using false drug charges, suspected gang members; at times police arrested these persons without a warrant.

Honduras

There are no discriminatory laws based on sexual orientation, but in practice social discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation was widespread. Representatives of sexual diversity rights NGOs asserted that their members were killed, beaten, and subjected to other mistreatment by security authorities. In cases where lesbians, gays, and transgender persons were found dead, the prosecutor often encountered serious difficulties because the victims had either concealed their identity or sexual orientation or, in many cases, were hiding from their families. Criminal investigations were categorized by female or male gender but did not recognize a "transgender person" category. Sexual diversity rights groups asserted that security forces, government agencies, and private employers engaged in antigay discriminatory hiring practices. These groups also reported intimidation, fear of reprisal, and police corruption made gay and lesbian victims of abuse reluctant to file charges or proceed with prosecutions.

The government required, as a condition for legal registration, sexual diversity rights organizations to remove any reference in their bylaws to promotion of respect for the rights of gay, lesbian, or transgender persons. In March the secretary general of the Ministry of Governance and Justice commented publicly that the government denied registration to gay rights advocacy NGOs because their stated purposes did not comport with "good custom."

On April 24, Javier Medina, president of the Asociacion Kukulcan, filed an appeal against the Ministry of Governance and Justice's 2006 unilateral modifications to the legal registrations of Colectivo Violeta, Asociacion Kukulcan, and Asociacion de Gay, Lesbianas y Travestis. These modifications removed references to gay rights advocacy and instead stated that these organizations' purposes were only to combat HIV/AIDS. Medina stated that homosexuals were vulnerable and subject to constant and increasing human rights violations. There was no information available on the status of Medina's appeal.

The sexual diversity rights organization the Lesbian-Gay Rainbow Association of Comayagua reported that between January and March, seven homosexuals were killed due to their sexuality by unknown actors and that a number of gay persons had fled the country out of fear of social and security force persecution.

On March 18, police beat and detained Donny Reyes, the treasurer of the Lesbian-Gay Rainbow Association of Comayagua. Police then reportedly put Reyes in a jail cell with 57 gang members who raped and beat him. Reyes filed a formal complaint and

was subsequently harassed by police. At year's end there was no information about further developments in the case.

Amnesty International reported that on April 10, five men physically assaulted with police encouragement transvestite activist Josef Fabio Estrada. The police reportedly prevented other persons from aiding Estrada during the attack. On April 27, security authorities charged Estrada with attempted homicide and robbery and temporarily held him in a penitentiary for convicted criminals. Security officials reportedly neither detained nor brought charges against Estrada's attackers. There was no further information regarding any investigation of these incidents.

On May 26, police reportedly arrested and detained arbitrarily transvestite activist Claudia Spellmant and seven other gay persons and allegedly physically abused them. There was no information available regarding any investigation of these incidents.

By year's end police had detained two suspects in the August 2006 killing of Ramon Valladares, director of the Comunidad Gay Sampedrana.

Persons with mental illnesses, as well as those with tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, were held among the general prison population. Human rights organizations charged that prison officials used excessive force against prisoners, including beatings, as well as isolation and threats. There were credible reports that security officials condoned rapes and other physical assaults on detainees who were homosexuals (see section 5).

Jamaica

While the government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, there were serious problems in some areas, including: unlawful killings committed by members of the security forces, mob violence against and vigilante killings of those suspected of breaking the law, abuse of detainees and prisoners by police and prison guards, poor prison and jail conditions, continued impunity for police who committed crimes, an overburdened judicial system and frequent lengthy delays in trials, violence and discrimination against women, trafficking in persons, and violence against suspected or known homosexuals.

The law prohibits "acts of gross indecency" (generally interpreted as any kind of physical intimacy) between men, in public or in private, which are punishable by 10 years in prison.

The Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All Sexuals, and Gays (J-FLAG) continued to report human rights abuses, including police harassment, arbitrary detention, mob attacks, stabbings, harassment of homosexual patients by hospital and prison staff, and targeted shootings of homosexuals. Police often did not investigate such incidents. J-FLAG members also reported death threats, as well as threats to burn down its offices. In

October members of J-Flag reported that they were considering sending a prominent AIDS spokesman abroad due to concerns for his personal safety in the country.

Authorities postponed the trial of six suspects arrested for the 2005 robbery and murder of Lenford "Steve" Harvey, and it had not been held by year's end.

Male inmates deemed by prison wardens to be homosexual were held in a separate facility for their protection. The method used for determining their sexual orientation was subjective and not regulated by the prison system, although inmates were said to confirm their homosexuality for their own safety. There were numerous reports of violence against homosexual inmates, perpetrated by the wardens and by other inmates, but few inmates sought recourse through the prison system. One foreign homosexual man held in prison complained about harassment and for his safety was moved to a maximum-security prison and placed in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day.

Homosexual men were hesitant to report incidents against them because of fear for their physical well-being. Human rights NGOs and government entities agreed that brutality against homosexuals, by police and by private citizens, was widespread in the community.

Mexico

While homosexuals experienced a growing social acceptance, the National Center to Prevent and Control HIV/AIDS stated that discrimination persisted. Homophobic beliefs and practices were common, reflected principally in entertainment media programs and everyday attitudes. Reports of attacks against homosexuals and transsexuals were frequent.

The law prohibits several types of discrimination, including bias based on sexuality, and requires federal agencies to promote tolerance.

There were several incidents of harassment and violent attacks against homosexuals. There were no updates on the minor arrested for the 2005 killing of Octavio Acuna, an activist for the rights of persons with HIV/AIDS.

Nicaragua

The most significant human rights abuses during the year included: harsh prison conditions; arbitrary application of justice, lack of respect for the rule of law, and widespread corruption and politicization of the judiciary, the Supreme Electoral Council (SEC), and other government organs; intimidation and harassment of journalists and undermining of press freedom; intimidation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); politicization of the Office of Human Rights Ombudsman; domestic violence; violence against children and widespread child labor; discrimination against indigenous

communities; discrimination against homosexuals and persons with HIV/AIDS; trafficking in persons; and violations of trade union rights, especially in free trade zones (FTZs).

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, language, or social status. In practice the government often did not enforce these legal protections, and aggrieved persons filed few discrimination suits or formal complaints.

There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination against persons of Afro-Caribbean descent, indigenous communities, homosexuals, and persons with HIV/AIDS.

Although sexual orientation is not mentioned specifically, the constitution states that all persons are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection. The penal code criminalizes the public encouragement of homosexual acts with a penalty of between one and three years' imprisonment, but this prohibition was not enforced. Members of the gay community complained about use of homophobic language by deputies Wilfredo Navarro and Freddy Torres during a September 14 National Assembly debate, which was publicized on television. There were allegations that a garment factory summarily fired homosexuals and that the company's management tolerated workplace violence against homosexuals.

The law provides specific protections for persons with HIV/AIDS against employment and health services discrimination. Although there were no reliable statistics, there was societal discrimination against persons based on alleged HIV/AIDS or sexual orientation status. Several NGOs worked to educate communities about HIV/AIDS discrimination issues, but persons with HIV/AIDS were often stigmatized by their communities, and there was a general lack of awareness and education among the public and health care professionals about prevention, treatment, and transmission of HIV/AIDS.

Panama

A law prohibiting homosexuality was not enforced. There was societal discrimination against homosexuals, and gay persons were often denied employment opportunities. The internal regulations of the PNP describe homosexuality as a "grave fault." There were reports that the PNP fired police officers because of the officers' sexual preferences, and that officers hid their sexual orientation due to fear of job termination. The director of the Office of Professional Responsibility of the Police defended the regulations policy on the basis that both physical and mental health was required of police officers.

Paraguay

Most trafficking occurred to exploit victims for the purposes of prostitution, domestic servitude, and manual labor. Anecdotal evidence suggested that several hundred women and children, the groups most at risk for trafficking, were trafficked abroad annually. In October the ILO reported that traffickers coerced hundreds of males under the age of 18 to become transgendered prostitutes (taxi boys). Most persons were trafficked to transit points in Argentina and Brazil, or for exploitation in the Tri-Border

Area. The most significant foreign destinations were Argentina and Spain; smaller numbers of victims went to Brazil, Italy, and Bolivia. Domestically, most victims were trafficked to Asuncion and Ciudad del Este.

Peru

While homosexuals and persons with HIV/AIDS faced extensive discrimination, there were efforts to combat it. The Ministry of Health created public policies to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation, including a four-year (2007-11) strategic plan for the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS. In 2006 the Ministry of the Interior adopted the Handbook of Human Rights Applied to the Civil Police, which stipulates that the police must respect human rights, especially of the most vulnerable groups; it refers explicitly to lesbians, gays, and transvestites. On July 7, hundreds of persons, including public officials, union leaders, lesbians, homosexuals, and bisexuals, marched in downtown Lima.

Saint Kitts and Nevis

There are no laws that prohibit discrimination against a person on the basis of sexual orientation. Although no statistics were available, anecdotal evidence suggested that societal discrimination against homosexuals and persons with HIV/AIDS occurred.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

There are no laws that prohibit discrimination against a person on the basis of sexual orientation. Although no statistics were available, anecdotal evidence suggested there was some societal discrimination against homosexuals and persons with HIV/AIDS. Local NGOs, including the SVGHRA, circulated a petition to Parliament that called for an end to all such discrimination.

Suriname

The law prohibits discrimination based on race and ethnicity but does not address discrimination based on disability, language, or social status. While the law does not specifically prohibit gender discrimination, it provides for protection of women's rights to equal access to education, employment, and property. In practice several societal groups, including women, Maroons, Amerindians, persons with HIV/AIDS, and homosexuals, suffered various forms of discrimination.

Although the law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, there were reports that homosexuals continued to suffer from employment discrimination. Persons with HIV/AIDS continued to experience societal discrimination in employment and medical services. An NGO working with HIV-infected persons reported that law enforcement agencies and the fire department conducted HIV testing as part of their hiring procedures.

The Equal Opportunities Act does not specifically include gays and lesbians. However, there are no laws that discriminate based on sexual orientation. HIV/AIDS was viewed as a significant medical concern for the government and society. Any incidents of violence against this group were usually isolated events.

Kenny Mitchell, a self-identified homosexual, filed a lawsuit against the state for being arrested in December 2006 and detained at Couva Police Station for three days without being charged. He claimed that he was taunted by officers for being homosexual and was denied access to his diabetes medication.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

Afghanistan

In early November authorities arrested and detained Ghaus Zalmi for publishing an unofficial translation of the Koran in Dari. Religious scholars alleged the translation was un-Islamic for misinterpreting verses about alcohol, begging, homosexuality, and adultery, as well as for not providing a parallel text in Arabic for comparison. Protests calling for Zalmi's punishment were held in various towns. The parliament prohibited Zalmi from leaving the country, and a commission of clerics and prosecutors was established to examine the text. At the end of the year, Zalmi remained in jail, and no charges have been filed. The editor is in hiding.

The law criminalizes homosexual activity; however, the authorities only sporadically enforced the prohibition. A recent UNHCR report noted that most homosexual persons hid their sexual orientation. Many observers believed that societal disapproval of homosexuality was partly the cause for the prevalence of rape of young boys. During 2006 the Taliban published a new set of rules that explicitly forbade the recruitment of young boys for sexual pleasure.

Bangladesh

Homosexual acts remained illegal; however, in practice the law is rarely invoked. The law states that "whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall be liable to fine."

There were some informal support networks for homosexual men, but organizations to assist lesbians were rare.

Incidents of attacks on homosexuals were difficult to track because victims' desired confidentiality, and local human rights groups did not monitor this area, but they were

known to occur. Government safeguards were nonexistent. There were few studies on homosexuality in the country.

Bhutan

Homosexuality is illegal in Bhutan and is punishable as a petty misdemeanor with a prison sentence ranging from one month to one year. There were no reported cases of anyone charged under the statutes.

India

The law punishes acts of sodomy, buggery, and bestiality; however, the law was often used to target, harass, and punish lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons. Human rights groups argued that gay and lesbian rights were not addressed along with other human rights concerns in the country. Gays and lesbians faced discrimination in all areas of society, including family, work, and education. Activists reported that in most cases, homosexuals who did not hide their orientation were fired from their jobs. Homosexuals also faced physical attacks, rape, and blackmail. Police committed crimes against homosexuals and used the threat of arrest to coerce victims into not reporting the incidents.

Voices Against 377, a high-profile campaign to overturn Section 377, which outlaws homosexuality, led by writers Vikram Seth and Amartya Sen, continued at year's end. In February 2006 the Supreme Court ruled that the Delhi High Court should not have dismissed an earlier case brought by two NGOs on behalf of Seth and Sen and referred the case to the Delhi High Court. There were no further developments regarding this case during the year.

In March a new media outlet based in Kolkata, Ananda Bazar Patrika, reported the attack and killing of apparently effeminate men in Kolkata. No police cases were filed.

There were no developments in the January 2006 arrests of gay men in Lucknow through a sting operation in which police officers posed as gay men on the Internet and, after entrapping one man, forced the individual to call other gay men, also arrested. Several NGOs claimed that the arrests were illegal, that evidence against the men was fabricated, and that the police violated the men's right to privacy.

There were no developments in the January 2006 complaint against two constables of the Azad Maidan police station for using decoys in a train station public toilet to entrap and extort money from gay men. The Azad Maidan police apprehended the two constables and handed them to railway police.

In March the UN Development Program (UNDP) released a report on "launda dancers", young men and boys hired to dance in women's clothing at marriage ceremonies and Hindu festivals in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Dancers were vulnerable to exploitation by orchestra leaders, who cheated them of earnings or forced them into prostitution.

Sexual assault and gang rape by intoxicated clients were frequent and dancers were at high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Some laundas had illegal castrations to join the hijra (traditional transvestite) community, but they often suffered from post operation complications for which they could not get government medical care.

Kazakhstan

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status; however, the government did not enforce this effectively. Violence against women, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against persons with disabilities, homosexuals, and non-ethnic Kazakhs in government were problems.

Although there were no official statistics on discrimination based on sexual orientation, there were reports of such discrimination. Representatives of international organizations reported that negative social attitudes towards marginalized groups, including homosexuals, impeded these groups' willingness to come forward and, consequently, hindered their access to HIV/AIDS programs. The law prohibits discrimination against persons with HIV and AIDS; however, observers report that cultural stigmas against drug users and other at-risk groups continued to affect general access to information, services, treatment, and care.

Kyrgyzstan

The following human rights problems were reported: some restrictions on citizens' right to change their government; torture and abuse by law enforcement officials; impunity; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of judicial independence; pressure on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and opposition leaders, including government harassment; an increase in pressure on independent media, including assaults on staff and vandalism of property; government harassment and detention of assembly organizers; pervasive corruption; discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and homosexuals; child abuse; trafficking in persons; and child labor.

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status; however, in practice there was discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and homosexuals.

According to a 2005 Dutch study, persons of nontraditional sexual orientation, particularly homosexual men, were among the most oppressed groups, although the country does not outlaw homosexuality. Those whose nontraditional sexual orientation was publicly known risked physical and verbal abuse, possible loss of work, and unwanted attention from police and authorities, particularly lower-ranking officers. Incarcerated gay men were often openly victimized in prisons by inmates and officials alike.

Maldives

The law prohibits homosexuality, and citizens did not generally accept homosexuality. The punishment for men includes banishment for nine months to one year or whipping 10 to 30 times. For women, the punishment is house arrest for nine months to one year.

Nepal

The country has no laws that specifically criminalize homosexuality; however, government authorities, especially police, sometimes harassed and abused homosexuals. According to Blue Diamond Society, an indigenous NGO that worked to protect against discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities, harassment of homosexuals continued.

Between July and September, authorities arrested five transgender persons in Kathmandu. All were released on the same or next day.

On July 2, the NA fired a trainee after keeping her in solitary confinement for 49 days because she was a lesbian. On July 20, the NA fired Bhakti Shat after keeping her for 60 days in solitary confinement for the same offense. Bhakti Shat had served in the NA for four years prior to her dismissal. At year's end, her case was pending.

On December 21, the Supreme Court ruled that sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and intersex) are "natural persons" and should be allowed to enjoy all the rights defined by national and international human rights law and instruments.

Pakistan

Homosexual intercourse is a criminal offense; however, the government rarely prosecuted cases. Homosexuals rarely revealed their sexual orientation, and there were no cases brought during the year of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Sri Lanka

The law criminalizes homosexual activity but was not enforced. Some NGOs working on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues did not register with the government. As in recent years, human rights organizations reported that police harassed, extorted money or sexual favors from, and assaulted gay men in Colombo and other areas.

There was no official discrimination against those who provided HIV prevention services or against high-risk groups likely to spread HIV/AIDS, although there was societal discrimination against these groups.

Turkmenistan

Homosexuality between men is illegal and punishable by up to two years in prison.

Uzbekistan

On July 31, authorities closed the independent *Odam Orasida*, a popular Islamic-oriented weekly, citing alleged breaches of the media law. The weekly had discussed social issues such as infant mortality, homosexuality, and prostitution from a Muslim viewpoint, competing with government-supported newspapers or publications that limited their content to mostly entertainment and celebrity gossip. Since its launch in February, it increased its circulation in Tashkent to 24,000, higher than that of most official publications.

Nearly all of the risk behaviors associated with being HIV-positive, including prostitution, injecting drug use, and homosexual activity, are crimes. Homosexual activity is punishable by up to three years' imprisonment. Some homosexuals reportedly left the country due to the restrictive environment.

NEAR EAST

Algeria

The law criminalizes public homosexual behavior and there is no specific legal protection of homosexuals in the country. There was also generally societal discrimination against homosexuals, but not violence or official discrimination. While some homosexuals lived openly, the vast majority did not.

Bahrain

The law does not criminalize homosexual relationships between consenting adults of at least 21 years of age. Reports of crimes in the media did not regularly specify if a victim of a crime was an alleged homosexual or had HIV/AIDS. While discrimination was not common or apparent, both attributes are socially taboo and not widely covered in the media.

Egypt

The government has asserted that referral to emergency courts usually has been limited to terrorism or national security cases, as well as major cases of drug trafficking; however, the government also has occasionally used emergency courts to prosecute homosexuals, heterodox religious groups, and political dissidents. Government authorities ignored judicial orders in some cases. The government used the Emergency

Law to try cases outside the scope of combating terrorism and grave threats to national security.

Although the law does not explicitly criminalize homosexual acts, police have in the past targeted homosexuals using Internet-based "sting" operations leading to arrests on charges of "debauchery." There were no reports of such Internet entrapment cases during the year.

Iran

Violence and legal and societal discrimination against women, ethnic and religious minorities, and homosexuals; trafficking in persons; and incitement to anti-Semitism remained problems.

On August 6, the general prosecutor ordered to close the last major reformist daily *Shargh*. The ban placed on *Shargh* in September 2006 was lifted on May 14, but the paper was operational for less than three months before being closed again. The government reportedly closed the newspaper in response to a published interview with a writer accused of being a homosexual activist.

In 2004 the judiciary formed the Special Protection Division, a volunteer unit that monitored and reported moral crimes. The law prohibited and punished homosexuality; sodomy between consenting adults was a capital crime. The punishment of a non-Muslim homosexual was harsher if the homosexual's partner was Muslim. At a speech at Columbia University in September, the president publicly denied the existence of homosexuals in the country.

Iraq

There were continued reports of societal discrimination and reported violence against individuals based on sexual orientation.

In April the Iraqi Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender organization stated that eight killings took place between January and April, while several other gay activists were arrested and tortured. During the year reports of persons targeted because of their sexual orientation that were kidnapped or disappeared in Baghdad included a taxi driver, a tailor, a translator, a chef, a college student, and a transvestite. Islamist death squads reportedly were involved in the killings.

Israel

There was societal discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, and homosexuals; child abuse also persisted.

There was no legal discrimination against homosexuals. However, cultural and religious traditions reject homosexuality, and Palestinians alleged that PA security officers harassed, abused, and sometimes arrested homosexuals due to orientation.

Societal violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or against persons with HIV/AIDS existed in isolated cases. The government continued to uphold laws criminalizing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or HIV/AIDS. Gay Pride events, including a large march in Tel Aviv, were held peacefully and without violence or widespread disruption.

Jordan

Societal discrimination against homosexuals existed. There were reports of individuals leaving the country out of fear they would be harmed by their family for being homosexual.

Kuwait

Homosexuality is illegal, and there was discrimination against homosexuals in societal attitudes and legal issues.

On December 10, the National Assembly approved a law to impose a fine of \$3,450 (1,000 dinars) and/or one year's imprisonment for those imitating the appearance of the opposite sex in public. According to HRW, in December police arrested several individuals they believed were imitating the appearance of the opposite sex. For example, on December 18, police arrested three individuals at a police checkpoint in Salimeya and days later arrested three more individuals in Kuwait City. On December 21, police arrested three individuals in Hawalli district and two others at a police checkpoint. According to HRW, the men were subjected to physical and psychological abuse while in detention in Tahla prison. HRW reported that the detainees did not have access to counsel. At year's end the men remained in detention.

There were no developments in the 2006 case in which police raided a party where homosexuals were allegedly celebrating a wedding. In 2005 police charged a group of 28 alleged homosexuals with creating a public disturbance after they met outside a fast-food restaurant.

Unmarried men faced housing discrimination based solely on marital status. Emiri decree 125 of 1992 prohibits single men from obtaining accommodation in many urban residential areas as determined by the Municipal Council. At year's end the government had not completed the 2005 plan by the Council of Ministers to construct housing for noncitizen single males on the outskirts of the capital and remove them from urban residential areas.

Lebanon

Discrimination against homosexuals persisted during the year. The law prohibits what is termed unnatural sexual intercourse, which is punishable by up to one year in prison. The law was sometimes applied to homosexuals. There are no discriminatory laws against persons with HIV/AIDS.

Morocco

There was some societal violence based on sexual orientation. The penal code criminalizes homosexual acts but was infrequently enforced. On November 23, the home of a man who had hosted an alleged gay wedding the previous weekend was ransacked by an angry mob. On December 10, he and five other participants were tried and convicted for violating the law against homosexual acts. At year's end they remained in jail.

Oman

The penal code criminalizes homosexuality. Individuals can be prosecuted based on a complaint and sentenced to a jail term of six months to three years.

Saudi Arabia

Under Shari'a as interpreted in the country, sexual activity between two persons of the same gender is punishable by death or flogging. It is illegal for men "to behave like women" or wear women's clothes and for women to wear men's clothes. There were reports of societal discrimination based on sexual orientation.

There were reports of discrimination, physical violence, and harassment toward homosexuals. In October a court in al-Baha Province sentenced two men to 7,000 lashes each for engaging in sexual intercourse with other men. According to AI, the two men have reportedly received part of their sentence.

According to press reports, on March 19, police arrested 17 men in Dammam at a party in which men dressed as women. The men, locally known to be homosexuals, were arrested in a private apartment after a neighbor contacted officials due to loud noise.

At year's end there was no further information on men arrested in August and November 2006. In August 2006 the media reported that 250 young men were detained and subsequently 20 were arrested at a suspected "gay wedding" in Jizan. In November 2006 the media reported that police arrested five men for preparing to stage a beauty contest for homosexual men. The five men had previously been arrested in May for the same offense. The media also reported that several months before this incident, 92 men had been arrested at a gay party in Al-Qatif for wearing women's clothes, make-up, and wigs. At year's end none of these men had been sentenced.

Syria

There were no reports of violence or discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS. However, there was a belief among human rights activists that the extent of the problem was widely underreported. The law criminalized homosexuality.

United Arab Emirates

Both civil law and Shari'a criminalize homosexual activity, and Islamic religious law holds the death penalty as punishment for individuals who engage in consensual homosexual activities. During the year there were reports that the government deported and sentenced to prison individuals for being openly homosexual.

Crossdressing, according to the law, is a punishable offence. On February 3, Dubai police called several men and women to be interrogated for crossdressing in public during a sports celebration parade.

On July 14, three citizen men gang-raped a 15-year-old Swiss-French boy. The authorities initially did not disclose that one of the men was hepatitis and HIV-positive and threatened to charge the victim with homosexual acts when he first reported the rape. The victim left the country before any criminal prosecution. Authorities sentenced on December 12 two of the men to 15 years in jail, and the third defendant, a 17-year-old, (prosecuted at Juvenile Court) awaited his sentence at year's end.

According to the NGO the Initiative for an Open Arab Internet, Internet access was widely available. Etisalat, the country's only Internet service provider, reported in July that 60 percent of the country's population was connected through Etisalat. A proxy server blocked material deemed inconsistent with the religious, cultural, political and moral values of the country, including dating and matrimonial sites; gay and lesbian sites; sites concerning the Baha'i Faith; sites originating in Israel; and sites explaining how to circumvent the proxy server. The proxy server occasionally blocked broad categories of sites including many that did not meet the intended criteria. Etisalat populated its proxy server list of blocked sites primarily from lists of Web sites purchased from commercial companies, although individuals could also report offensive sites.