

POLAND 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Poland is a republic with a multiparty democracy. The bicameral parliament consists of an upper house (Senate) and a powerful lower house (Sejm). The president and the Council of Ministers headed by the prime minister share executive power. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe found the July 2020 presidential election was administered professionally despite legal uncertainty during the electoral process due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rescheduling of the election to a later date. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe noted that there was overall confidence in the administration of the October 2019 parliamentary election.

The police force is a national law enforcement body with regional and municipal units overseen by the Ministry of Interior and Administration. The Border Guard is responsible for border security and combating irregular migration; it reports to the Ministry of Interior and Administration. The Internal Security Agency has responsibility for investigating and combating organized crime, terrorist threats, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Central Anticorruption Bureau is responsible for combating government, business, and financial corruption and may investigate any matter involving public funds. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. Some members of law enforcement entities committed abuses.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: several cases of unlawful or arbitrary killings by police forces; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; restrictions on freedom of expression including criminal defamation and blasphemy laws; a report of mistreatment of irregular migrants from third countries; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of ethnic minorities; and violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex persons.

The government took steps to investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who committed human rights abuses. There were no reports of security force impunity.

specifically on seasonal and migrant workers.

Occupational Safety and Health: The law defines strict and extensive minimum conditions to protect worker health and safety. Inspections for occupational safety and health were conducted by the same inspectors under the same authorities as for wages and hours. Resources were inadequate and the government did not effectively enforce occupational health and safety in the formal or informal sectors. Penalties for violations were commensurate with those of similar laws.

During the year the NLI continued a three-year information and education campaign which began in 2019 to improve work-related health and safety standards in meat-processing companies and continued in programs targeting construction companies, professional drivers, forestry companies, small businesses, and agricultural employers.

Employers routinely exceeded exposure standards for limits on chemicals, dust, and noise. According to the Central Statistical Office's 2020 report, the majority of work-related accidents occurred in mining and quarrying, water supply, sewage and waste management, and ecological reclamation. According to the NLI's 2020 report, which investigated 1,775 work-related accidents that happened in 2020, most accidents occurred in industrial companies and at construction sites. The report noted some of the leading causes of workplace accidents were poor organization of work processes, inadequate supervision of employees, inadequate training of employees in work-related health and safety standards, and inadequate measures by employers to prevent accidents. The Central Statistical Office reported 62,740 victims of workplace accidents, including 189 fatal accidents, during 2020.

Informal Sector: The Main Statistical Office's definition of the informal economy included unregistered employment performed without a formal contract or agreement and where wages do not count as contributions to social security or have income taxes deducted. There is no minimum wage for informal work agreements. There were reports of employers withholding wages or underpaying laborers under informal work agreements, particularly Ukrainian migrant workers in the construction and agriculture industries. Workers in the informal sector are not covered by wage, hour, and occupational safety and health laws and

