

# SWEDEN 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kingdom of Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a freely elected, multiparty, parliamentary form of government. Legislative authority rests in the unicameral parliament (Riksdag). Observers considered the general elections on September 11 to be free and fair. On October 18, a center-right coalition led by Ulf Kristersson of the Moderate Party assumed office leading a minority government consisting of the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats, and the Liberal Party, with tacit support from the Sweden Democrats. The king is largely a symbolic head of state. The prime minister is the head of government and exercises executive authority.

The national police are responsible for law enforcement and general order within the country. The Security Service is responsible for national security related to terrorism, extremism, and espionage. The Ministry of Justice provides funding and letters of instruction for both branches of the police's activities, but it does not control how police perform them. According to the constitution, all branches of police are independent authorities. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. There were no reports that members of security forces committed abuses.

Significant issues included credible reports of the worst forms of child labor as defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) involving forced labor.

The government had mechanisms in place to identify and punish officials who may commit human rights abuses or engage in corruption.

## **Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person**

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

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

## **b. Disappearance**

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

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

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

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

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

**Abusive Physical Conditions:** In its most recent report on prison conditions released in September 2021, the Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) observed COVID-19 protocols “lack of systematic testing of both the detained persons (and patients) and staff, and...most of the staff did not wear masks even when in close contact with persons deprived of their liberty.” It stated that these practices “exposed persons deprived of their liberty (including psychiatric patients), many of whom had health conditions making them more vulnerable, to the avoidable degree of risk of getting very ill and maybe even dying of COVID-19.” Prisoners had “an only limited choice between exposure or lack of exposure to the infection risk.” On February 25, the government stated the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (SPPS) initially had an inadequate supply of tests but later remedied the shortage. On June 2, the Parliamentary Ombudsman criticized the SPPS for not providing soundproofed cells in detention, which prevented detainees from sleeping and made it possible to subject detainees to threats from neighboring cells. Following a visit to a detention center in Uppsala in September 2021, the Parliamentary Ombudsman criticized the SPPS for lacking

a national strategy for planning and evaluation, which led to long term isolation among detainees.

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

**Independent Monitoring:** The government permitted monitoring by independent, nongovernmental observers. In September 2021, the CPT published the report of its delegation's visit to the country in January 2021. The Red Cross conducted weekly visits to prisons and detention centers, including visits with individuals held in custody by the Swedish Migration Agency.

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

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

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

The law requires a warrant based on evidence and issued by duly authorized officials for arrests. Police must file charges within six hours against persons who are detained for disturbing public order or who are considered dangerous, and within 12 hours against individuals detained on other grounds. Police may hold a person six hours for questioning, or as up to 12 hours without a court order if it is deemed necessary for the investigation. Police may hold a person under the age of 15 for three hours for questioning, or up to six hours without a court order if it is deemed necessary for the investigation. After questioning, authorities must either arrest or release an individual, based on the level of suspicion. If a suspect is arrested, the prosecutor has 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances) to request continued detention. Authorities must arraign an arrested suspect within

48 hours and begin initial prosecution within two weeks unless there are extenuating circumstances. Authorities generally respected these requirements. In its September 2021 report, the CPT expressed concern that, despite authorities' assurances to the contrary, notification of custody of detainees was frequently delayed, often until the first court hearing and sometimes up to the full four days in police custody. Police officers with whom the CPT delegation spoke confirmed this was routine practice and expressed their belief that the matter lay with the senior investigators or prosecutors in charge of a case.

Although there is no system of bail, courts routinely released defendants pending trial unless authorities considered them dangerous, had reason to believe they would tamper with witnesses or evidence, or believed the suspects might leave the country. The law limits pretrial detention to a maximum of three months for minors and nine months for adults. The law affords detainees prompt access to lawyers. The CPT report noted that access to legal counsel at times was delayed and little changed since the last report in 2015. A suspect has a right to legal representation when the prosecutor requests his or her detention beyond 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances). Detainees may retain a lawyer of their choice. In criminal cases the government is obligated to provide an attorney, regardless of the defendant's financial situation.

**Pretrial Detention:** Lengthy pretrial detention remained a problem. Out of 9,918 pretrial detentions concluded during 2021, 4 percent were detained longer than the legal limit of nine months. Out of 160 pretrial detentions for detainees under 18 concluded during 2021, 17 percent were detained longer than the legal limit of three months. Representatives from the Swedish Prosecution Authority cited lack of judicial resources as the main reason for lengthy pretrial detentions. There were no reports of it being common for the length of pretrial detentions to equal or exceed the maximum sentence for the alleged crime.

Restrictive conditions for prisoners held in pretrial custody remained a problem, although the law includes the possibility of appealing a decision to impose specific restrictions to the court of appeals and ultimately to the Supreme Court.

Restrictions can be imposed on a detainee's rights to be held with other detainees, interact with others, follow events in the outside world, be in the possession of newspapers and magazines, see visitors, communicate with others by electronic means, and send or receive mail. Such restrictions may only be applied if there is a risk that a suspect will tamper with evidence or otherwise impede the investigation of the matter at issue. By law, a detainee not under restriction has the right to be with others during daytime hours. According to the SPPS's latest reporting from July 2020, 72 percent of those who ended a pretrial custody sometime during 2020 had been under some restriction at the beginning of their custody. The SPPS failed to provide 32 percent of persons held in pretrial custody in 2020 with at least two hours per day of meaningful social interaction, which is the UN minimum.

Ordinary visiting routines apply to inmates who are considered to have sufficient protection against COVID-19. According to the CPT, the percentage of remand prisoners on restriction was between 55 percent and 65 percent, essentially unchanged since 2015. The government reimbursed defendants found not guilty for damages suffered during pretrial detention.

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

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

#### **Trial Procedures**

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

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence, have a right to be informed

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

### **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

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

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

### **Property Seizure and Restitution**

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

The Department of State's Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today (JUST)

Act report to Congress, released publicly in July 2020, can be found on the Department's website: <https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/>.

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

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

## **Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties**

### **a. Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media**

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

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

**Libel/Slander Laws:** Defamation is a criminal offense punishable by fines or a maximum of two years in prison in the case of gross defamation. There were no reports of criminal prosecutions for defamation.

**Nongovernmental Impact:** Journalists were subjected to harassment and intimidation, mostly online and on social media. On March 18, a journalist who criticized the Turkish government’s leadership was attacked outside his house and required intensive medical care for several days. On October 17, media reported that Turkish authorities surveilled another Turkish journalist in Sweden, published secretly taken photos of him, and revealed his home address. During October and November, media reported additional cases of Turkish authorities tracking and intimidating Turkish journalists in Sweden.

In its 2022 Freedom of the World Report, Freedom House described media ownership in Sweden as “extremely concentrated in the hands of a small group of individuals.” A survey conducted in late 2021 and early 2022 showed that in the previous three years, 70 percent of journalists had experienced insults, 40 percent experienced slander, and 23 percent had been exposed to harassment and unlawful threats. The study indicated that 50 percent of journalist have confidence in the judiciary’s capability to protect them.

### **Internet Freedom**

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports that the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. Companies that acquire a publisher’s license are exempt from data protection laws and may publish residents’ personally identifiable information, including addresses and financial information.

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

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



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

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

### **d. Freedom of Movement and the Right to Leave the Country**

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

The government assisted in the return of a few Swedish citizens in camps in northeastern Syria. In May 2021, Human Rights Watch criticized the government for not repatriating 65 to 75 Swedish citizens held in camps in northeastern Syria and during the autumn of 2021 the UN called on Sweden to repatriate its citizens. Between September 2021 and May 2022, 10 women and 19 children were repatriated from camps in Syria according to media sources. On July 3, a woman was sentenced to six years in prison for letting her son fight for ISIS in Syria.

### **e. Protection of Refugees**

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers as well as other persons of concern. On March 3, EU member states activated the Temporary Protection Directive granting refugees from Ukraine temporary residence permits in the EU for at least one year. As of July 1, municipalities had responsibility for arranging housing for those with protection under the Temporary Protection Directive. From February 24 through August 30, approximately 45,000 Ukrainians sought refuge in Sweden.

**Access to Asylum:** The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status,

and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. Applicants may now appeal unfavorable asylum decisions.

**Temporary Protection:** The government provided various forms of temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees.

## **f. Stateless Persons**

According to the UNHCR's 2021 global trends report, 46,933 stateless persons were in the country. The large number of stateless persons was due to the influx of migrants and refugees and the birth of children to stateless parents who remained stateless until either one parent acquired citizenship or a special application for citizenship (available for stateless children under the age of five) was made. The UNHCR recommended the country "introduce a definition of a stateless person in Swedish law, establish a statelessness determination procedure, and ensure that children born stateless in Sweden will acquire citizenship automatically or as soon as possible after birth."

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

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

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

### **Elections and Political Participation**

**Recent Elections:** Observers considered the general elections to parliament,

county boards, and municipalities held during the year to be free and fair.

**Participation of Women and Members of Minority Groups:** No law limits participation of women or members of minority groups in the political process, and they did participate.

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

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

## **Section 5. Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights**

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

**Government Human Rights Bodies:** The country had nine national ombudspersons: four justice ombudspersons; the chancellor of justice; the children's ombudspersons; the consumer ombudsperson; the child and school student ombudsperson; and the equality ombudsperson with responsibility for ethnicity, gender, transsexual identity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disabilities. There were normally ombudspersons at the municipal level as well. The ombudspersons enjoyed the government's cooperation and operated without government or party interference. They had adequate resources, and observers

considered them generally effective.

## **Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses**

### **Women**

**Rape and Domestic Violence:** Rape of a person, regardless of gender, including spousal rape and domestic or intimate partner violence, are illegal and the government enforced the law effectively. Penalties for violations range from two to 10 years in prison.

The National Council for Crime Prevention (NCCP) reported 9,962 cases of rape in 2021, an increase of approximately 4 percent from 2020. Ninety-four percent of the cases were against women and girls. Domestic or intimate partner violence remained a problem, and approximately 36,500 cases between adults who knew one another were reported during 2021, a 120 percent increase from 2020. Of these, approximately 23,500 (64 percent) were cases against women.

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

**Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C):** The law prohibits FGM/C for women and girls and the government enforced the law efficiently. Penalties for violation range from two to six years in prison. A report from the National Board of Health and Welfare stated that approximately 5,000 women with the diagnosis FGM/C sought treatment between 2012 and 2018. Ninety-seven percent came from one country in Africa and 87 percent were between the ages of 18 and 39. The government has had an action plan against FGM/C since 2018 and several government agencies actively work to eradicate the practice.

**Other Forms of Gender-based Violence:** Honor-related violence often involved immigrants from the Middle East, Africa, or South Asia. The national support line for those who need advice in situations concerning so-called honor-related violence reported an increase of reported cases from 784 cases involving 907 suspected survivors in 2020 to 817 cases involving 884 suspected survivors in 2021. The calls mostly concerned child or forced marriage, abduction or being held abroad, or FGM/C.

**Sexual Harassment:** The law prohibits sexual harassment and provides for criminal penalties ranging from a fine to up to two years in prison. The government generally enforced this law. On January 7, the Coalition for Women in Journalism reported that a local journalist was fired from Expressen, one of the country's largest newspapers, because she spoke out about sexism and harassment in the workplace.

**Reproductive Rights:** There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

The government provided access to safe, effective, and equal reproductive healthcare regardless of gender or sexual orientation, as well as access to contraception of choice. Emergency contraception was also available.

NGOs known as the Association for Sexuality Education and Never Forget Pela and Fadime reported on virginity testing and hymenoplasty done by private medical practitioners. The government condemned these practices and stated they were not compatible with health and medical care legislation.

The government provided access to sexual and reproductive health services for survivors of sexual violence. Emergency contraception was available as part of clinical management of rape.

**Discrimination:** Women have the same legal status and rights as men, including under family, religious, personal status, labor, property, nationality, and inheritance law. The government enforced the laws effectively.

## **Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination**

The constitution charges public institutions with promoting equality in society and combating discrimination. The constitution prohibits unfavorable treatment of anyone based on ethnic origin, color, or other similar characteristics, and the government generally respected these rights.

Police registered reports of xenophobic crimes, some of which were linked to neo-Nazi or white supremacy ideology. Police investigated and the district attorney's office prosecuted race-related crimes. The Security Service concluded that right-wing extremism was on the rise in the country; right-wing propaganda spread more widely and more individuals were interested in it. Neo-Nazi groups operated legally (see section 2.a.). The Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) and Nordic Strength (NS) are the largest white supremacy groups with approximately 200 active members in total. The NRM is registered as a political party and participated in the parliamentary and local elections in 2022 but did not win any seats.

There were problems involving vulnerable EU citizens, the vast majority of whom were Roma from Romania and Bulgaria who resided in the country. Roma were subjected to discrimination in healthcare, education, and employment, as well as perceived exclusion from societal functions due to stereotypes. Roma were often denied the right to rent apartments and the right to home language teaching. As EU citizens they are allowed to stay in the country without permission for no more than three months, but authorities did not enforce this limit.

The country's official minority languages are all varieties of Finnish, Yiddish,

Meankieli, Romani Chib, and Sami. Swedish sign language has a legal status similar to the official minority languages. On April 28 the government allocated approximately 40 million kronor (\$3.72 million) per year between 2022 and 2024 to preserve and promote the official minority languages.

Basic training for police officers included training to identify and investigate hate crimes. Emergency call responders were continuously trained to identify hate crime motives in crime reports. Police cooperated with the NGO Victim Support Sweden that helps and supports survivors, witnesses, and others affected by crime.

Police in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmo have democracy and anti-hate crime groups. The National Center for Preventing Violent Extremism, under the auspices of the NCCP, serves as a clearinghouse for information, best practices, and support of municipalities, agencies, and other actors.

## **Indigenous Peoples**

The constitution charges public institutions with promoting opportunities for the Sami people, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, to preserve and develop cultural and social lives of their own. The approximately 20,000 Sami in the country are citizens who have the right to vote in elections and participate in the government, including membership in the country's parliament. They are not represented as a group in parliament, however. A 31-member elected administrative authority called the Sametinget (Sami parliament) represents the Sami people. The Sami parliament acts as an advisory body to the government and has limited decision-making powers in matters related to preserving the Sami culture, language, and schooling. The national parliament and government regulations govern the Sami parliament's operations.

On March 1, the national parliament adopted the Sami Parliament Consultation Order requiring that the government, government agencies, and municipalities

consult with the Sami Parliament or other Sami representatives on issues of special significance to the Sami people. Sami and human rights groups welcomed the increased consultation but criticized the law for not specifying how much influence Sami representatives would have over the decision-making process after the consultation has been carried out.

Longstanding tensions between the Sami and the government over land and natural resources persisted, as did tensions between the Sami and private landowners over reindeer grazing rights. Certain Sami have grazing and fishing rights, depending on their history. The Church of Sweden presented a second official apology to the Sami during an October 21-23 public gathering in Lulea for past abuse committed in the name of the Church.

On March 28, the government gave Beowulf Mining a concession to mine in an area located on traditional Sami grazing land. UNESCO and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern about the mine's impact on the environment and reindeer husbandry. Several additional approvals will be required before mining can begin.

## **Children**

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

**Child Abuse:** The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically. Penalties range from a fine up to 10 years in prison. Cases of child abuse were reported. Authorities may remove abused children from their homes and place them in foster care. Rape of a child carries a penalty of two to 10 years in prison. During 2021 there were 24,310 child abuse cases reported.



**Child, Early, and Forced Marriage:** The minimum age of marriage is 18, and it is illegal for anyone under 18 to marry. The government legally recognizes as valid the marriage of anyone who comes to the country after the age of 18, even if they were married abroad before the age of 18. The government does not recognize a foreign child marriage if either of the parties was a Swedish citizen or resident in Sweden at the time of marriage. Compelling or allowing a child to marry is punishable by up to two years in prison. Municipalities' social welfare services can petition administrative courts to issue travel restrictions to protect at-risk children from being taken out of the country for marriage. Such children are not to be issued passports and passports that were issued are to be rescinded. The law makes it a crime to take a child who is subject to travel restrictions out of the country with punishment of up to two years in prison for violations.

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

## **Antisemitism**

Leaders of the Jewish community estimated there were 15,000 Jews and approximately 6,000 registered members of Jewish congregations in the country. In its report on hate crime from December 2021, the NCCP registered 170 cases of antisemitic hate crimes in 2020 that constituted five percent of all hate crimes. Most antisemitic hate crimes took place on social media. In 8 percent of cases the hate crime took place near a Jewish place of worship.

Antisemitic hate crimes included threats, verbal abuse, vandalism, graffiti, harassment in schools, and Holocaust denial. Antisemitic incidents were often

perpetrated by groups associated with neo-Nazi movements or corresponded with events in the Middle East. Local Jews were often targeted for antisemitic attacks based on the actions of the Israeli government.

The most reported incidents of antisemitism were hate speech (52 percent of complaints), unlawful threats or harassment (15 percent), vandalism or graffiti (11 percent), and defamation (10 percent).

On January 19, the Expo Foundation reported protesters against COVID-19 restrictions compared themselves to Jewish victims during the Holocaust and wore yellow Stars of David. The messaging was echoed by a local politician. Demonstrators also linked COVID-19 restrictions, vaccinations, and COVID-19 certificates to conspiracy theories of “Jewish World Domination” and the Rothschild family, common antisemitic tropes.

On January 31, the Expo Foundation reported that antisemitic organizations spread their messaging via 15 podcasts on the streaming site Spotify.

On March 2, the Expo Foundation reported a Stockholm politician shared several antisemitic statements on social media that trivialized the Holocaust and alluded to conspiracy theories about a Zionist world order.

On June 20, a report from Malmo University stated antisemitism in Stockholm schools was prevalent and teachers often lacked the tools to address it. On August 11, media reported the new political party Nuance spread antisemitic conspiracy messages via social media, referring to “crushing the heads of Jews.” Nuance received 0.4 percent of the vote in the 2022 general elections but in several suburbs of Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmo, and Orebro, Nuance received between 17 and 30 percent of the vote in municipal elections.

On August 31, the Swedish Labor Court determined that the 2021 firing of a

Jewish neurosurgeon at Nya Karolinska University Hospital (NKS) had no valid grounds.

Police, politicians, media, and Jewish groups stated that antisemitism has been especially prevalent in Malmo. On June 15, the media reported that an imam in Malmo was charged with incitement to racial hatred for spreading antisemitic messages calling Jews “offspring of monkeys and pigs.” Between 2019 and 2023 the municipality is scheduled to allocate 20 million kronor (\$1.9 million) to combat antisemitism in collaboration with the Jewish congregation.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center because Jews in Malmo could be “subject to antisemitic taunts and harassment.”

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

## **Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

## **Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics**

**Criminalization:** There are no laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults or so-called cross-dressing, including de facto

discrimination, such as laws covering “debauchery.”

**Violence against LGBTQI+ Persons:** LGBTQI+ persons were at higher risk of being subjected to physical violence than the general population. According to the most recent statistics released by NCCP, there were 429 reports of hate crimes against LGBTQI+ persons in 2020.

**Discrimination:** The law prohibits discrimination by state and nonstate actors against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons. The government generally enforced such laws.

**Availability of Legal Gender Recognition:** There is a legal gender recognition law, but legal gender recognition procedures are not based on self-determination. The right to change one’s legal gender requires a psychiatric or psychological evaluation, but it does not require surgery.

**Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological Practices Specifically Targeting LGBTQI+ Individuals:** According to a March 1 study, one out of five LGBTQI+ persons between 16 and 25 had experienced someone trying to have that person change, permanently hide, or refrain from living in accordance with their sexual orientation or gender identity or express their gender in the way the person wanted. Five percent had experienced more serious forms of so-called conversion therapy. The most severe cases included physical abuse, lack of access to food, and sexual violence. So-called conversion therapy practices are not banned.

**Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly:** There were no restrictions on those speaking out about LGBTQI+ issues.

## **Persons with Disabilities**

Persons with disabilities were able to access health services, public buildings, and

transportation on an equal basis with others. Government regulations require new buildings and public facilities to be fully accessible. The government enforced these provisions. Observers reported cases of insufficient access to privately owned buildings used by the public, such as apartments, restaurants, and bars. Some means of public transportation remained inaccessible.

In 2021 the Equality Ombudsman received 1,212 reports on discrimination related to disability, of which 437 reported accessibility deficiencies. The complaints were mainly about perceived discrimination in working life, education, social services, and trade in goods and services. A large proportion of the complaints concerned the lack of reasonable accommodations in the workplace. In the education system, many cases concerned children and young persons with reading and writing difficulties not receiving sufficient support at school. With respect to trade in goods and services, many of the cases concerned access to premises or services and inadequate communication tools.

On January 27, the Agency for Participation reported persons with disabilities were encountering difficulties obtaining employment due to lack of coordination between the Swedish Public Employment Agency and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, lack of clear information, and the time-consuming transfer of cases between different officers. The agency also reported the level of education was lower among persons with disabilities than among others in the population. Agency reports revealed two reasons for this report: special support was provided too late and students with disabilities felt more insecure than other students. Among persons ages 30 to 64 with disabilities, 33 percent had postsecondary education compared with 47 percent for the rest of the population. Within the group of persons with disabilities between the ages of 20 and 36, 9 percent had dropped out of upper secondary school compared with 3 percent in the rest of the population. In 2020 almost 13,500 students with disabilities enrolled in compulsory special school, constituting about 1.2 percent of all students in this age

group. Of this group, approximately 5,130 students attended upper secondary special school and 1,250 students with disabilities attended special resource school. On April 19, media reported that a municipality had to pay compensation to a child with a disability due to a lack of wheelchair access that led to isolation and the inability to maintain personal hygiene.

The Agency for Participation noted that some polling stations in the general elections of 2018 were inaccessible for persons with disabilities. In the 2018 elections, 84 percent of persons with disabilities voted, compared with 91 percent of the rest of the population. On September 9, the Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired reported that the Election Authority had distributed faulty braille ballot papers to those visually impaired and, as a result, many visually impaired voters may have voted for the wrong party. The Association urged its members to re-vote, but it is unclear how many successfully did so on such short notice.

## **Other Societal Violence or Discrimination**

Societal discrimination and violence against immigrants continued to be a problem.

Several districts where most of the population was of immigrant origin or parentage suffered social segregation from the rest of the country. The result was lower levels of education, higher levels of unemployment, and separation from the country's mainstream culture. This was mainly due to poor Swedish-language skills.

In 2021 the NCCP identified 3,398 police reports from 2020 with hate-crime or xenophobic motives. Of the reports, 15 percent were Afrophobic and 9 percent were Islamophobic.

According to two 2022 Stockholm County Board research reports conducted by Uppsala University and Lund University, discrimination against immigrants from

Africa is widespread in the labor market. The reports found the probability of a person with one or two parents from Africa attaining a managerial position was five times lower than for the rest of the population, regardless of educational background. The average salary for individuals who did not have one or two parents from Africa was 50 percent higher than for persons with one or two parents from Africa, despite having an equivalent level of education.

On September 20 media reported that a school in Upplands Väsby was accused of discrimination after moving newly arrived migrant students from the school to nearby barracks where they were instructed separately from the other students.

## **Section 7. Worker Rights**

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

The law provides for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and provides for protection of workers from being fired because of union activity. If a court finds a dismissal to be unlawful, the employee has the right to reinstatement. Foreign companies may be exempt from collective bargaining provided they meet minimum working conditions and levels of pay. Public sector employees enjoy the right to strike, subject to limitations in the collective agreements protecting the public's immediate health and security. The government mediation service may also intervene to postpone a strike for up to 14 days for mediation. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) claims the law restricts the rights of the country's trade unions to take industrial action on behalf of foreign workers in foreign companies operating in the country. The law allows unions to conduct their activities largely without interference.

The government effectively enforces laws protecting freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right for workers to strike. The Labor Court settles

any dispute that affects the relationship between employers and employees. An employer organization, an employee organization, or an employer who has entered into a collective agreement on an individual basis may lodge claims. The Labor Court may impose penalties for violations commensurate with those under other laws involving denials of civil rights. Penalties are regularly applied against violators. Administrative and judicial procedures are not subject to lengthy delays and appeals.

Workers and employer exercise all legal collective bargaining rights that are protected by the government. The government and employers respect freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. ITUC reported no serious violations of worker rights in 2021 and from January to September in 2022.

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

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, including child labor, and the government effectively enforced the law. Penalties of imprisonment were generally commensurate with those for similar serious crimes. Forced labor involving adult trafficking victims occurred in the agriculture sector and included companies that provided foreign labor for berry picking, construction, hospitality, and domestic work (see section 7.c.). In some cases, employers or contractors providing labor seized the passports of workers and withheld their pay. There were reports of cases where foreign workers were tricked into coming to the country to work in the restaurant or construction sectors only to be paid less than was promised when they arrived. Resources and inspections were adequate. In May 2022, the law on labor exploitation was used for the first time since its implementation in 2018 to convict a restaurant owner for exploiting two foreign workers from Bangladesh. There were reports of cases when undocumented migrants were forced to work when they were sick and were subjected to verbal abuse.



Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

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

The law prohibits all the worst forms of child labor. It permits full-time employment from the age of 16 under the supervision of local authorities. Employees younger than 18 may work only during daytime and under adult supervision. Children as young as 13 may work part-time or perform light work with parental permission. The law limits the types of work in which children may or may not engage. For example, a child may not work with dangerous machinery or chemicals. A child may also not work alone or be responsible for handling cash transactions. The law considers a violation of these limits a civil rather than a criminal violation.

According to the law, forcing a child to work may be treated as coercion, deprivation of liberty, or child abuse, and it carries a wide range of penalties, including fines and imprisonment. The government effectively enforced these laws and regulations. Criminal penalties are commensurate with those for other serious crimes, such as kidnapping, and inspection was sufficient to enforce compliance. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

On August 10, media reported that 10 children from Bulgaria were exploited as berry pickers in Alvsbyn. According to the most recent government statistics from the NCCP, 196 suspected human trafficking cases were reported to police in 2020. There were 15 cases of child sex trafficking, five cases of child forced labor, one case of child forced begging, one case of forced child war service, and 25 cases of other forms of child trafficking.

Boys were mainly subjected to forced begging and forced petty theft. Girls were mainly subjected to sexual exploitation, forced begging, and child marriage.

Police and social services reportedly acted promptly when these prohibited cases were reported.

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

The law prohibits discrimination with respect to employment and occupation based on religion, sex, ethnicity (including race, national origin, color, and in some cases refugee status), disability (including HIV and AIDS status), age, and sexual orientation or gender identity. The government effectively enforced applicable law and penalties were commensurate with similar violations. Penalties were regularly applied against violators. The law requires equal pay for equal work. The government effectively enforced the law prohibiting gender discrimination by investigating and prosecuting complaints.

The equality ombudsperson investigated complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. In 2021 the ombudsperson received 849 complaints of discrimination in the labor market, of which 263 were related to gender, 68 to sexual harassment, 187 to disability and 331 to ethnicity. The World Economic Forum estimated that earned income for women was less than that for men. Complaints may also be filed with the courts or with the employer. Labor unions generally mediated in cases filed with the employer.

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

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

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

**Occupational Safety and Health:** Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were appropriate for the main industries. The responsibility for identifying unsafe situations remains with OSH experts and not the worker.

If an employee finds that the work involves an immediate and serious danger to life or health, the employee must immediately notify the employer or safety ombudsperson. Workers have the right to remove themselves from unsafe conditions without jeopardy to their employment. Safety ombudspersons have authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and to call in an inspector. An employer may be fined for violating OSH regulations.

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

On September 1, the Swedish Construction Workers' Union criticized the normalization of using cheap labor for major construction projects, such as in the city of Linköping. The union argued that working conditions for foreign workers in the construction sector had deteriorated over time. There were reports of 20 to

30 workers living in the same apartment and sleeping in shifts.

The Work Environment Authority reported industrial accidents caused the deaths of 48 workers in 2021. The construction, transport, and manufacturing sectors had the greatest number of deaths caused by industrial accidents between 2011 and 2021. Vehicles were often involved in the accidents.

**Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement:** The Work Environment Authority effectively enforced wage, overtime, and OSH laws. Penalties were commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud or negligence. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

In 2021 the Work Environment Authority conducted approximately 17,877 inspections. Inspectors had the authority to conduct unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions. In 2021 the authority started a cooperation with seven other government agencies and carried out 2,007 cross-agency visits to check on work permits, taxes, and working environment regulations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Work Environment Authority conducted approximately half of its inspections at a distance using video meetings or telephone. The Work Environment Authority conducted most inspections in construction, retail, education, production, transport, and healthcare.

The Work Environment Authority issued occupational health and safety regulations and trained union stewards and safety ombudsperson whom government inspectors monitored. The number of labor inspectors was not sufficient to enforce compliance. In 2021, there were 267 labor inspectors for approximately 5.1 million workers. ILO standards call for one inspector per 10,000 workers, while the country only had one inspector per 18,726 workers. Inspections by the union Byggnads, presented in January, claimed serious shortcomings, such as lacking safety standards and economic corruption. There was a partial moratorium on physical inspections during 2021 as a result of the

COVID-19 pandemic.