

SURINAME 2014 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Suriname is a constitutional democracy with a president elected by the unicameral national assembly or by the larger United People's Assembly. After generally free and fair legislative elections in 2010, several political parties formed a coalition government within the national assembly and elected former military leader Desire Bouterse president in July of that year. Authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

The most serious human rights problem was perceived infringement of judicial independence as exemplified by the unresolved trial of former military dictator and current President Bouterse and 24 codefendants for the 1982 extrajudicial killings of 15 political opponents, the so-called "December Murders Trial."

Other human rights problems included self-censorship by some media organizations and journalists; widespread government corruption; societal discrimination and violence against women; trafficking in persons; continued lack of recognition of land rights of the Maroons (descendants of escaped slaves who fled to the interior of the country to avoid recapture) and Amerindians; discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons and other minorities; and child labor in the informal sector.

Although the government continued to take steps to prosecute abusers in the security forces, in certain cases there was a perception of impunity among the public.

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

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings. Authorities investigated all killings by police and security force members and brought charges where appropriate, but there was generally little information available about investigations into killings by police or other security force members.

In October a court convicted and sentenced two police officers charged in 2012 with the extortion, theft through use of force, abduction, voluntary manslaughter,

and murder of Haitian citizen Celius Molius. Both officers received a sentence of 15 years in prison.

In October a court found a police officer guilty of various violent and armed offenses, including kidnapping, theft through use of force, illegitimate use of police equipment, and abuse of police identification and sentenced him to 18 years in prison.

Following a police investigation, the Attorney General's Office started a judicial investigation in 2013 of nine police officers involved in the 2012 shooting and killing of four unarmed citizens suspected of multiple armed robberies. As of November no investigation results were released. In October the local human rights organization Allied Collective reported the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) agreed to hear the case.

The trial of former military dictator and current President Bouterse and 23 codefendants for the 1982 extrajudicial killing of 15 political opponents remained suspended as a consequence of the 2012 "Amnesty Law." In January an appellate court lifted the suspension of the case against one codefendant. In April the Court Martial met to discuss the case of the codefendant and allow the next of kin of the victims officially to submit their petition to become a party to the trial. In August, 59 surviving relatives of the victims filed a case against Suriname at the IACHR claiming that the continued suspension of the trial violated their human rights. The case against Bouterse et al remained suspended pending the establishment of a Constitutional Court, for which the 1987 constitution provides, to rule on the legality of the Amnesty Law, and no notable progress was made in the establishment of this court or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as mandated by the Amnesty Law.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

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

While the law prohibits such practices, human rights groups, defense attorneys, and the media continued to report various instances of mistreatment by police, including unnecessary use of gun violence at time of arrest, beatings while in detention, and isolated incidents of abuse of prisoners by prison officials.

In September a transgender commercial sex worker reported being forced to strip, beaten, kicked, and degraded while in custody of police at the Keizerstraat detention facility. The worker claimed that prior instances of abuse by police were not reported due to fear of retribution. Police leadership placed the perpetrating officers on suspension pending the outcome of an investigation.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

In general prisons were clean and well maintained. Conditions were poor, however, in the many small temporary detention facilities, which tended to be unhygienic and overcrowded.

Physical Conditions: The Department of Corrections operated three prisons and one temporary detention facility. As of November the smallest, Hazard Prison in Nickerie with a capacity of 106, held 96 prisoners. Santo Boma Prison in Wanica was the largest, with 334 prisoners and a capacity of 380. Duisburglaan Prison in Paramaribo had 217 prisoners, with a capacity of 228. Santo Boma was the only prison that held juveniles up to age 18 as well as women. Authorities held juvenile girls with adult women rather than with juvenile boys. A high stone wall separated women from the male population, while an open road separated juvenile boys from adult men. Guards stationed along the road kept the two populations from mixing. All three prisons were “open systems” in which authorities allowed prisoners to move around freely within the compound during specified hours. Prisoners reported that the food was generally good and medical care was sufficient, although onsite facilities were limited.

The IACHR rapporteur on prisoner rights visited the prisons and detention centers in 2011 and expressed concern over hygiene, sanitation, and access to clean drinking water. Prison security standards and the integrity and quality of the prison guard force came under scrutiny during the year after justice authorities reported continuing criminal activities in prisons ranging from drug dealing and extortion to sexual abuse and theft. Crimes were committed by prison guards or with assistance of prison guards.

There was one juvenile detention facility, Opa Doeli, with separate quarters for boys and girls under the age of 18. This facility, located in Paramaribo, provided educational and recreational facilities and operated at less than maximum capacity. Construction continued on a new prison facility for convicted juveniles in Wanica, next to the Santo Boma Prison.

The Huis van Bewaring facility near Santo Boma Prison was the only temporary detention center run by the Department of Corrections. It had a capacity of 550 inmates and held 296 in a combination of detainees and convicts in November. Although originally envisioned as a temporary detention facility for pretrial lockup, a large portion of its population consisted of convicted prisoners waiting for transfer to one of the three prison facilities. Some convicted prisoners waited months for a cell to open at one of the prisons. The detention center suffered from a shortage of prison staff, which affected its ability to allow prisoners out of the cells for recreation.

Prisoners continued to express concern over conditions in Santo Boma Prison, where they complained of inadequate food, mistreatment by prison guards, and limited ventilation.

While prison facilities generally were aging but well maintained, most temporary detention center facilities had serious deficiencies. The police operated approximately 26 temporary detention facilities attached to different police stations throughout the country. Despite some limited improvements to some temporary police facilities, they remained overcrowded. Older facilities lacked adequate ventilation and lighting with poor hygienic conditions. Unlike the prisons there was no dedicated guard force to watch prisoners in the police detention centers, and officers who also worked in other capacities handled this duty as well. Police officers did not receive specialized training to guard detainees and exercised little oversight of prison-cell activity. The detention center system lacked a core of standard operating procedures. Each compound had its own house rules, which were not routinely defined or conveyed to the staff.

Prisoners had access to potable water. Outside companies brought in food rather than preparing it in house. Detainees and human rights groups alleged that meals were inadequate. One detention facility temporarily stopped accepting detainees due to a lack of food. The facilities were unhygienic and plagued with lice and mice. Authorities did not provide mattresses due to the risk of lice. Illness spread quickly through the population, and mobile phones (although banned) and drug use reportedly were problems.

Administration: Prison record keeping was adequate. In some cases of traffic or economic violations, judges fined nonviolent offenders instead of giving them prison sentences. Prisoners continued to have reasonable access to visitors and could observe religious practices of their choice. No ombudsman served on behalf

of prisoners and detainees, and prisoners notified their defense lawyers and government officials of any problems. Authorities permitted prisoners and detainees to submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship. Government officials continued regular monitoring of prison and detention center conditions. As of November the IACHR continued to consider a petition by prisoners filed in 2008 claiming the government had denied their requests for higher appeal or early release.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring visits by independent human rights observers, and such visits occurred.

The Welzijns Institute Nickerie, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) operating in the western district of Nickerie, continued to visit and provide counseling for detainees in the Hazard Prison. The institute continued a program to train prison officers to counsel detainees.

Improvements: Several police stations and their attached detention facilities were either renovated or newly constructed, thereby improving the general conditions for detainees in these facilities.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The armed forces are responsible for national security and border control, with the military police having direct responsibility for immigration control at the country's ports of entry. All elements of the military are under the control of the Ministry of Defense. Civilian police bear primary responsibility for the maintenance of law and order and report to the Ministry of Justice and Police. A lack of equipment, training, and low salaries hampered police effectiveness. Police and military continued to conduct regular joint patrols as part of the government's overall response to combat crime, while both also served on special security teams.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the military and police. Although the government continued to take steps to prosecute abusers in the security forces, in certain cases there was a perception of impunity among the public.

The Personnel Investigation Department (OPZ), an office within the Police Department, investigated complaints filed by citizens against members of the police force. The Internal Affairs Unit (ITZ) investigated internal cases of misconduct by members of the police force. Military police and the judge advocate investigated offenses committed by soldiers.

Through October the OPZ received 140 complaints from private citizens against members of the police force, of which 71 involved abuse, including five cases of domestic abuse. By early October the ITZ had investigated internally 250 cases involving various forms of misconduct. Authorities imposed disciplinary sanctions in 129 cases, of which 10 included terminations from duty and another nine terminations were pending.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Police apprehended individuals openly with warrants based on sufficient evidence and brought them before an independent judiciary. The law provides detainees with the right to a prompt judicial determination of the legality of the detention, and authorities respected this right. Authorities promptly informed detainees of the charges against them. Police may detain a person suspected of committing a crime for up to 14 days if the sentence for that crime is longer than four years, and an assistant district attorney or a police inspector may authorize incommunicado detention. The police must bring the accused before a prosecutor to be charged formally within that period. If additional time is needed to investigate the charge, a prosecutor and, later, a judge may extend the detention period an additional 150 days. There is no bail system. Detainees received prompt access to counsel of their choosing, but the prosecutor may prohibit access if the prosecutor believes access could harm the investigation. Detainees were allowed weekly visits from family members.

Pretrial Detention: The average length of pretrial detention was 30 to 45 days for lesser crimes. Authorities held detainees in detention cells at 26 police stations that were at or near capacity. In accordance with the law, the courts freed most detainees who were not tried within the 164-day period. According to human rights monitors, factors such as a shortage of judges, large caseloads, and large numbers of detainees caused trial delays.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

While the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, the unresolved trial of former military dictator and current President Bouterse, and 24 codefendants suggested a lack of independence in practice (see section 1.a.).

The dependence of the courts on the Ministry of Justice and Police, an executive agency, for funds also called judicial independence into question. The minister of justice and police rejected proposals (formally included within his ministry's budget requests to the National Assembly in both 2013 and 2014) to fund the judiciary separately and stated, "We don't want an independent judiciary because it might become the agent of a foreign power."

Legal experts estimated the country had only 15 of the 45 judges the judicial system needed to function. Due to a shortage of judges, prisoners who appealed their cases often served their full sentences before completion of the lengthy appeals process. The Ministry of Justice and Police dismissed three participants after they successfully completed a five-year judges-in-training course in July without clearly articulating the basis for their dismissal; informed observers considered at least one of the dismissals politically motivated. The judiciary also lacked professional court managers and case management systems to oversee the courts' administrative functions and lacked adequate physical space--factors which contributed to a significant case backlog. The judiciary made some progress in the timely processing of criminal cases, although the processing of civil cases continued to lag.

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair, public trial in which defendants have the right to counsel, and the judiciary generally enforced this right. There were court-assigned attorneys for both the civil and penal systems. All trials are public except for indecency offenses and offenses involving children. There is no jury system. Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and have the right to appeal. Defendants have the right to be present and consult an attorney in a timely manner. Defendants and their attorneys have access to government-held evidence. Defendants' attorneys can question witnesses and present witnesses and evidence on the defendant's behalf. The courts assign private-sector lawyers to defend indigent detainees. The law extends the above rights to all citizens. The law protects the names of the accused, and authorities do not release them to the public or the media prior to conviction.

Military personnel generally are not subject to civilian criminal law, and there are parallel military and civilian court systems. Military police investigate crimes committed by members of the armed forces. An officer on the public prosecutor's staff directs military prosecutions before two military judges and one civilian judge. Due to a shortage of judges, the Court of Justice selects military and civilian judges from the same pool and assigns them to specific cases. A mechanism exists to prevent conflicts of interest. The military courts follow the same rules of procedure as the civil courts. There is no appeal from the military to the civil system.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There are separate procedures for civil processes, and a court considers lawsuits seeking damages for, or cessation of, a human rights violation. Despite the installation of new judges, the backlog of cases continued. Most civil cases were resolved approximately three to four years after the first hearing in court.

Regional Human Rights Court Decisions

Parties of the *Saramaka People v. Suriname* suit last appeared before the Inter-American Court in 2013 to discuss the lack of progress in the execution of the 2007 verdict. The court proposed the establishment of a joint commission, to include the court, to oversee the further implementation of the verdict. The verdict ordered the government to recognize collective land rights, draft legislation that complies with international treaties, establish a development fund, and provide the Saramaccan people with their own land. As of November only 560,000 Suriname dollars (SRD) (\$168,000) of the court-ordered SRD 1.68 million (\$504,000) had been paid. Additionally, the government continued to grant mineral concessions in Maroon territories without consulting the appropriate Maroon tribes. The Association of Saramaccan Authorities completed a draft map identifying the Saramaccan territories and held consultations with Maroon and Amerindian indigenous tribes to negotiate the borders.

Judgments remained outstanding in the case of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights verdict of 2005 that held the government accountable for the killing of 39 persons of the Maroon village of Moiwana in 1986. In addition to measures

already implemented, the court ordered the government to investigate, identify, prosecute, and punish those responsible and to give the villagers title to their traditional territories.

In February the IACHR decided to submit the case involving the Kalina and Lokono peoples to the Inter-American Court for a verdict. In this case, eight communities of the Kalina and Lokono indigenous peoples of the lower Marowijne River claimed the existing legal framework prevented them from protecting their right to collective property. Due to a lack of any substantive progress by the government on the IACHR's prior recommendations, the IACHR submitted the case to the court.

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

The law prohibits such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions. The law requires search warrants, which quasi-judicial officers who supervise criminal investigations issue.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech and press, and the government generally respected these rights. Multiple media outlets published material critical of the government.

Violence and Harassment: Although the government did not overtly censure the media, several journalists reported that after publishing reports critical of the government, the government temporarily blacklisted them from attending government press conferences or shut them out of events. This included journalists being physically pushed out of meeting rooms. Meeting organizers told journalists only that they were not invited.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: Media members continued to practice self-censorship in response to pressure applied and intimidation by senior government officials or community leaders on journalists who published negative stories about the administration. In addition many news outlets were affiliated with particular political parties, which discouraged journalists from reporting on some subjects.

International NGOs stated the country's criminal-defamation laws carry harsh penalties, with prison terms varying between three months and seven years. The harshest penalty is for expressing public enmity, hatred, or contempt towards the government. NGO reporting further noted the selective awarding of advertising by the government.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the internet, and the government asserted that it did not monitor private online communications without appropriate legal oversight, journalists. Nevertheless, members of the political opposition, their supporters, and other independent entities perceived government interference or oversight of e-mail and social media accounts. Internet access was common and widely available in the major cities but less common in remote areas with limited bandwidth and often limited or no access to electricity. According to the International Telecommunication Union, approximately 37 percent of citizens used the internet in 2013.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The law provides for the freedoms of 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 www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

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

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has not established a system for providing protection to refugees.

Stateless Persons

In September an amendment to the Citizenship and Residency Law went into effect that grants citizenship through place of birth to a child who is born in the country to non-Surinamese parents but does not automatically acquire citizenship of one of the parents. The amended law aims to eliminate the possibility that children are left stateless. The law does not apply retroactively, however, so a person born before September continues to be subject to the old citizenship rules. Children, such as those born before September in the undocumented Brazilian mining communities and to foreign women in prostitution, become eligible to apply for citizenship only at the age of 18.

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

The law provides citizens the ability to vote in free and fair elections, which they exercised through elections based on universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: The constitution provides for direct election by secret ballot of the 51-member National Assembly no later than five years after the prior election date. The National Assembly in turn elects the president by a two-thirds majority vote. If the National Assembly is unable to elect a president, the constitution stipulates the United People's Assembly must be convened to choose a president. After generally free and fair legislative elections in 2010, the National Assembly elected Desire Bouterse as president in July of that year.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Men continued to dominate political life. There were seven women among the 51 members of the National Assembly. There was one female minister in a 17-member cabinet. There were 12 women among the 20 sitting judges, and the head clerk, the highest administrative position, was a woman. The speaker and vice speaker of the National Assembly, as well as that body's head clerk, were women.

Several factors traditionally limited the participation of Maroons and indigenous Amerindians in the political process, including a population concentrated in remote areas removed from the country's centers of political activity. Two Amerindians and 11 Maroons were members of the National Assembly. Nine were members of the governing coalition, while two moved to the opposition during the year.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

Although the law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, the government did not implement the law effectively. Long delays often occurred before corruption cases came to trial. The World Bank's worldwide governance statistics continued to indicate corruption was a serious problem.

Corruption: There continued to be widespread allegations of corruption throughout all levels of government, particularly regarding land issuance, granting of mineral and timber concessions, misuse of government funding including sole-source contracting, and illegal payments for permits and government contracts. There was a continuing, widespread perception that officials used public power for private gain. Government institutions responsible for investigating and prosecuting acts of corruption continued to appear unwilling to tackle the numerous corruption allegations made through the years.

Various sections of the Ministry of Justice and Police, including the Fraud Police and the Attorney General's Office, are responsible for investigating and prosecuting government corruption. Civil society, the media, and other nongovernmental parties particularly scrutinized and criticized the Ministries of Natural Resources, Public Works, Social Affairs, and Physical Planning, alleging widespread corruption and favoritism.

In September the Organization of American States' Mechanism for follow-up on implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (MESICIC) released its report on government efforts to prevent, detect, punish, and eradicate corrupt acts. In its review the MESICIC analyzed the Court of Justice, the Prosecutors' Office, the Ministry of Justice and Police, and the Central Government Accounting Office (CLAD). The MESICIC found a lack of transparency and major flaws in reporting and accountability in all four institutions. The Court of Justice and the Public Prosecutor's Office lacked independence because they both were financially dependent on the Ministry of Justice and Police, an executive agency. CLAD, an ostensibly independent

auditing authority, was subordinate to the Ministry of Finance and had no authority to forward any suspect activities to prosecutors.

Financial Disclosure: Officials were not subject to financial disclosure laws.

Public Access to Information: No law requires public disclosure of information. Although occasionally granted, access remained very limited in certain areas. There is a centralized office for media and information requests under the Office of the President. Gaps in official government statistics and bureaucratic hurdles made obtaining information difficult. There were no administrative or criminal sanctions for nondisclosure and no appeals mechanism.

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

A number of independent domestic human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. NGOs reported generally positive relationships with government officials, although occasionally officials were not responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: A legislative commission on human rights continued operating throughout the year, but resource constraints hampered its effectiveness. The National Assembly also has a commission dealing with the rights of women and children.

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

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, but it does not address discrimination based on disability, language, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, or social status. Various sectors of the population--such as women, Maroons, Amerindians, persons with HIV/AIDS, and LGBT persons--suffered forms of discrimination.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, and prescribes penalties for rape or forcible sexual assault of between 12 and 15 years' imprisonment and fines up to SRD 100,000 (\$30,000). The government

enforced the law effectively. Police received 434 reports of sexual abuse as of September.

Violence against women remained a serious and pervasive problem. The law imposes sentences of four to eight years' imprisonment for domestic violence. Through September police received 1,286 reports of domestic abuse, an increase from 1,035 through November 2013. Nine of the 29 killings committed as of September were related to domestic abuse, and as of December, prosecutions remained pending.

The Ministry of Justice and Police's Victim Assistance Bureau provided resources for victims of domestic violence and continued to provide information on domestic violence through public television programs. There were four victims' rooms in police stations in Paramaribo and Nickerie. Authorities trained police units in dealing with survivors and perpetrators of sexual crimes and domestic violence. Through September the government's Victim Services Department provided shelter services to 18 women and 33 children. The length of stay depended upon the circumstances but averaged three months.

Authorities reported an average of 20 requests per week for restraining orders, primarily from women seeking protection from their abusive partners. If such requests are granted, partners are instructed not to have telephone contact with victims and not to go near the victims.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): While no law prohibits FGM/C, the practice was virtually nonexistent in the country.

Sexual Harassment: There is no specific legislation on sexual harassment, but prosecutors cited various penal code articles in filing sexual harassment cases. There were no reported court cases involving sexual harassment in the workplace.

Stalking is a criminal offense, and police may investigate possible cases of stalking without a formal complaint being filed. Pending investigation police may issue on behalf of the attorney general temporary restraining orders limiting the contact between victim and suspect for up to 30 days. If found guilty, offenders can receive prison sentences between four and 12 years and fines between SRD 50,000 (\$15,000) and SRD 150,000 (\$45,000), depending on the severity of the case.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children; to have the

information and means to do so; and to attain the highest standard of reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. Access to information on modern contraception was widely available and, according 2013 data from the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), 47.6 percent of women ages 15-49 used modern contraceptive methods. Although skilled attendance at birth was approximately 92.7 percent, the UN Population Fund estimated the maternal mortality ratio to be 130 deaths per 100,000 live births. Women had easier access to emergency services in the coastal area than in the interior, where regional clinics were remote and transportation to Paramaribo for medical services could be expensive and long.

Discrimination: Although the law does not specifically prohibit gender discrimination, it provides for protection of women's rights to equal access to education, employment, and property. Societal pressures and customs, especially in rural areas, inhibited the full exercise of these rights, particularly with respect to marriage and inheritance. Where local customs remain a strong influence on the family unit, inheritance rights pass to husbands.

Men and women generally enjoyed the same legal rights under property law and under the judicial system, but where citizens observed local customs, these rights were somewhat infringed. The Bureau for Women and Children under the Ministry of Justice and Police worked to protect the legal rights of women and children. Women experienced discrimination in access to employment and in rates of pay for the same or substantially similar work (see section 7.d.). The government did not undertake specific efforts to combat economic discrimination.

The September amendment of the law on Surinamese Citizenship and Residency enables women to convey Surinamese citizenship to their children. Prior to this amendment, citizenship was primarily passed on through paternal blood lineage and could be passed on by the mother only if the father was listed as unknown or was the citizen of a country that does not automatically transfer citizenship.

The National Women's Movement, the most active women's rights NGO, continued assisting women in launching small home-based businesses, such as sewing and vegetable growing, and provided general legal help. The Women's Business Group advocated for business opportunities for women, while the Women's Parliament Forum advocated for opportunities in the public sector. Another NGO, Stop Violence against Women, assisted victims of domestic violence, including offering legal help with dissolving an abusive marriage. Efforts by the speaker of the National Assembly elevated gender and women's equality problems to national topics for discussion.

Children

Birth Registration: The September amendment of the Citizenship and Residency Law provides that citizenship is derived when either father or mother has Surinamese citizenship at the time of birth, when the parent is Surinamese but has died before birth, or if the child is born in the country's territory and does not automatically acquire citizenship of another country. By law births must be registered with the Civil Registration Office within a week. Failure to do so within the mandated period does not automatically result in denial of services but results in a more cumbersome process of registration through the Attorney General's Office.

Child Abuse: Physical and sexual abuse of children continued to be problems. Police registered 102 cases of physical abuse and 191 cases of child sexual abuse as of September. The Youth Affairs Office further reported an upward trend of sexual abuse of children in day-care facilities and sports clubs. Children up to age 17 were victims of sexual abuse on a daily basis according to police. Observers believed the actual number of abuse cases was significantly higher than reported, since the office handled only those cases directly reported to police. The police youth affairs office conducted three visits per week to different schools in the capital and the surrounding areas on a rotating schedule to provide outreach, raise awareness about child abuse, and solicit and investigate complaints. To avoid intimidation by perpetrators, authorities made special arrangements for children to testify in special chambers at legal proceedings. The youth affairs office continued to raise awareness about sexual abuse, drugs, and alcohol through a weekly television program. The government operated a "1-2-3" telephone hotline for children and provided confidential advice and aid to children in need. The hotline reported an average of 80 calls per day.

UNICEF continued cooperating with the government in providing training to officials from various ministries dealing with children and children's rights. In a report released in September, UNICEF noted the widespread use of violent discipline in the home with 87 percent of children reporting psychological or physical abuse.

Authorities applied various laws to prosecute perpetrators of sexual abuse, and several cases of sexual abuse of minors came to trial. Sentences varied to up to 10 years in prison. In the capital several orphanages and one privately funded shelter could accept sexually abused children.

Early and Forced Marriage: The marriage law sets the age of marital consent at 15 years for girls and 17 years for boys, provided parents of the parties agree to the marriage. Parental permission to marry is required until the age of 21. The law also mandates the presence of a civil registry official to register all marriages. Where local customs remain a strong influence on the family unit, girls traditionally marry at or near the legal age of consent. According to UNICEF, 19 percent of women between the ages of 20 and 24 married before the age of 18.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): While no law prohibits FGM/C, the practice was virtually nonexistent in the country

Sexual Exploitation of Children: There were incidents of commercial sexual exploitation of minors. Although the legal age of sexual consent is 14, prohibitions against adults engaging in sexual activities with children under 14 remained difficult to enforce, particularly in rural areas. Criminal law penalizes child prostitution and provides sanctions of up to six years' imprisonment and a fine of SRD 100,000 (\$30,000) for pimping. The law also prohibits child pornography, which has a maximum penalty of six years' imprisonment and maximum fine of SRD 50,000 (\$15,000).

In its October 2013-August 2014 term, the court convicted 12 persons, (six women and six men) in four separate cases for trafficking in minors for sexual exploitation. The sentences varied between 12 months' and five years' imprisonment plus fines. In one case a court acquitted four defendants for insufficient evidence, while in a second case the court acquitted two persons for a procedural error.

Institutionalized Children: Government services deteriorated for the legal protection of children in foster care cases and cases concerning adoption and guardianship. The Office of Family Affairs of the Ministry of Justice and Police was unable to function adequately due to poor housing, shortages in office supplies and equipment, and continued salary problems.

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of Child Abduction. For country-specific information see <http://travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/english/country/Suriname.html>.

Anti-Semitism

There was a declared Jewish community of approximately 150 persons. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts or discrimination.

Trafficking in Persons

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

Persons with Disabilities

No laws prohibit discrimination against persons with physical or mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of government services. Persons with disabilities suffered from discrimination when applying for jobs and services. Authorities provided some training programs for persons with vision or other disabilities. No laws or programs provide that persons with disabilities have access to buildings. A judge may rule to deny a person with a cognitive disability the right to vote, take part in business transactions, or sign legal agreements. Primary education was available for persons with disabilities, and, depending on the disability, secondary and higher education could be available. There is secondary and technical education for the deaf but not the blind. No information was available regarding abuse in educational or institutional facilities for persons with disabilities. A working group in the Ministry of Social Affairs remained responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, but it made limited progress.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity, and no such discrimination complaints were filed. Maroons, who represented an estimated 21 percent of the population, generally continued to be disadvantaged in the areas of education, employment, and government services. Most Maroons lived in the interior, where limited infrastructure reduced their access to educational and professional opportunities and to health and social services. Some forms of discrimination that affected indigenous Amerindians also extended to Maroons.

Indigenous People

The law affords no special protection for, or recognition of, indigenous people. The IACHR identified the Maroons as tribal peoples and thus entitled to the same

rights as the indigenous Amerindian communities (approximately 2 percent of the population).

Most Maroons and Amerindians lived in the remote and undeveloped interior, where government services are largely unavailable. Geographic isolation generally limited the opportunities of these persons to participate in national and regional policymaking, including decisions affecting interior lands, cultures, traditions, and natural resources. Maroons and Amerindians were represented in the National Assembly and were part of the governing coalition.

Because authorities did not effectively demarcate or police Amerindian and Maroon lands, populations continued to face problems with illegal and uncontrolled logging and mining. No laws grant indigenous people rights to share in the revenues from the exploitation of resources on their traditional lands. Organizations representing Maroon and Amerindian communities complained that small-scale mining operations, mainly by illegal gold miners, some of whom were themselves indigenous or supported by indigenous groups, dug trenches that cut residents off from their agricultural land and threatened to drive them away from their traditional settlements. Mercury runoff from these operations also contaminated sources of drinking water and threatened traditional food sources, especially freshwater fish.

Many Maroon and Amerindian groups also complained about the government's granting land within their traditional territories to third parties, who sometimes prevented the villages from engaging in their traditional activities on those lands. Maroon and Amerindian groups continued to cooperate with each other to exercise their rights more effectively. The Moiwana Human Rights Association, the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders (an umbrella group that represents the many smaller associations of indigenous persons), and other NGOs continued to promote the rights of indigenous people.

In its response to the 2011 UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, the government rejected several recommendations concerning the indigenous and tribal peoples, arguing that the government was conducting its own process of consultations with the Maroon and indigenous peoples.

In 2009 the Kalina Indigenous Community of Maho filed a petition against the government at the IACHR for alleged violation of their human rights for the government's granting of concessions to third parties for the exploitation of the land and natural resources the Maho Community had occupied and used for

centuries. The Maho Community claimed the encroachment on their territory negatively affected the development of the community. In March 2013 the IACHR ruled the petition to be admissible. Despite the pending litigation, the government continued to grant concession rights to third parties in the area of the Maho Community, and in September the community reported issuance to a third party of a 49-acre concession.

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

No specific laws protect LGBT persons from discrimination or grant them any specific rights. The National Assembly and government openly discriminated against same-sex couples; they were not recognized and were specifically excluded from new social security legislation in August.

LGBT groups could associate freely, were very active, and advocated within society under the same laws that pertain to the assembly and association of other groups.

There were very few official reports of societal violence against LGBT persons, primarily due to fear of retribution, although there was a reported case of abuse by police. During the year popular local artists released a song perceived to incite hate and direct violence against LGBT persons, and local evangelical organizations spoke out against LGBT persons and their advocacy for rights. There were reports of societal discrimination of the LGBT community in areas of employment and housing (see section 7.d.).

HIV and AIDS Societal Stigma

Persons with HIV/AIDS continued to experience societal discrimination in employment and medical services. The police and military conducted mandatory HIV testing for new recruits. Medical treatment is free for HIV/AIDS patients covered under government insurance, but private insurers did not cover such treatment.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

Chinese shop owners continued to be primary targets of violent armed robberies. News reports also appeared to show an increasing trend in armed robberies of elderly. Violence in the gold-mining areas of the interior occurred primarily

among and within the Brazilian and Maroon communities, where the government exercised little authority.

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 unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements, the right to bargain collectively, and the right to strike. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination, requires that workers fired for union activity be reinstated, and prohibits employer interference in union activities. Labor laws do not cover undocumented foreign workers.

The government effectively enforced laws related to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. Penalties for violations of these rights ranged from six months' imprisonment, a fine of up to SRD 10,000 (\$3,000), or both and were generally sufficient to deter violations. There were no reports that procedures were subject to lengthy delays or appeals.

Workers formed and joined unions freely and exercised their right to strike. Some trade union leaders were represented at high levels in the coalition government. Another trade union was associated with the opposition Labor Party. There was occasional government interference in labor relations, especially in parastatal companies.

In isolated cases employers refused to bargain or recognize collective bargaining rights, but the unions usually pressured the employers to negotiate. There were some reports that companies exploited legislative gaps and hired more contract employees than direct-hire staff to perform core business functions, in order to cut costs. While there were some disputes reported in the private sector between employers and labor unions, the majority of reported labor disputes were between the government and various trade unions representing civil servants. For instance, the Ministry of Justice and Police continued to be in dispute with several unions for a lack of action on agreements concerning deplorable working conditions, promotion of staff, payment for overtime work performed, and payment of benefits as agreed upon in collective bargaining agreements.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor. By law administrative penalties for violations are up to six months' imprisonment, a fine of up to SRD 500,000 (\$150,000), or both. Criminal penalties for violations ranged from five to 20 years. Labor inspectors received training on detecting forced labor, but data on inspection efforts specific to forced labor were unavailable.

During the year authorities commenced investigation of at least four separate cases of forced labor within the Chinese community with one on trial and two still under investigation. In two of these cases, the forced labor offense was reportedly committed in the small-scale gold mining sector.

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

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law sets the minimum age for most types of employment at 14 and restricts working hours for minors to day shifts, but it does not limit the number of hours minors can work. The law permits children younger than 14 to work only in a family-owned business, small-scale agriculture, and special vocational work. It prohibits children younger than 18 from doing hazardous work, which is defined as work dangerous to life, health, and decency. The law does not permit children under the age of 15 to work on boats. Authorities may prosecute parents who permit their children to work in violation of labor laws. Employing a child under 14 is punishable by fines and up to 12 months' imprisonment. While such penalties generally were sufficient to deter violations, authorities rarely enforced them, typically only responding when a report was filed. The law requires employers to maintain a Register of Young Persons that includes each employee's information.

The Ministry of Labor's Department of Labor Inspection conducts inspections of the formal business sector and reported not to have identified any cases of child labor within this sector. The police are responsible for enforcement in the informal sector and enforced the minimum age law sporadically. Resources also remained inadequate. The Ministry of Labor leads the government's commission on eliminating child labor, which consists of 11 organizations (10 government institutions and one NGO) and conducted awareness activities.

Child labor remained a problem in the informal sector, especially in the districts of Nickerie, Saramacca, and Marowijne. Recent data were not available on the

number of children in child labor. The government lacked resources to carry out a survey quantifying child labor. Historically, child labor occurred in agriculture, logging, fisheries, and the construction sector, although there were no documented cases during the year. Isolated cases of child labor occurred in the informal gold-mining sector in the interior, in the urban informal sector, and in commercial sexual exploitation (see also section 6, Children).

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/findings/.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment or Occupation

The constitution prohibits discrimination regarding race, gender, age, nationality, religion, or political background, but enforcement was selective. No legislation protects against discrimination based on disability, language, sexual orientation or gender identity, or HIV status or other communicable diseases.

Discrimination in employment occurred with regard to disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV/AIDS status (see section 6). In addition there were reports that the government fired or removed persons from their jobs because of their political background.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

In August the National Assembly approved the Minimum Wage Law, which establishes a minimum wage for employees in the private sector and was scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2015. The lowest wage for civil servants was SRD 600 (\$180) per month, including a cost of living allowance. Government employees constituted approximately 40 percent of the estimated 125,000-member formal sector workforce and frequently supplemented their salaries with second or third jobs, often in the informal sector.

Work in excess of 45 hours per week on a regular basis requires special government permission, which was granted routinely. The law requires premium pay for such overtime work, prohibits excessive overtime, requires a 24-hour rest period per week, and stipulates paid annual holidays. Overtime is generally limited to four hours per day, for a maximum of a 12-hour workday. Employers wanting their staff to work more than eight hours need to obtain a special permit from the Ministry of Labor or Department of Labor Inspection. During the holiday season, the retail sector has a blanket permit allowing for work up to 15 hours a

day, including seven hours of overtime. The government sets occupational health and safety standards, which generally are current and appropriate for the main industries in the country.

Laws were effectively enforced only in the formal sectors. A 10- to-12-member inspectorate in the Occupational Health and Safety Division of the Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing occupational safety and health regulations, but it did not make regular inspections. The ministry's Department of Labor Inspection, with approximately 80 inspectors, is responsible for enforcing labor laws. Penalties for violating the labor laws vary from fines to suspension of licenses, depending on the severity of the case, and were sufficient to deter violations. According to the Ministry of Labor, the few violations encountered each year were usually in smaller businesses, and no violation was severe enough to warrant a license suspension. No violations were found in unionized companies. Inspectors visited private sector companies throughout the country, but no data were available regarding the number of inspections performed during the year.

A significant number of persons worked in the informal economy where there was limited enforcement of labor laws. Workers in the informal sector, particularly in the small-scale mining sector, were exposed to dangerous conditions and hazardous chemicals such as mercury.

No data were available on workplace accidents. The International Labor Organization, however, noted the increasing number of serious or fatal occupational accidents, as well as steps by labor inspectors to begin occupational safety and health training of contractors in mines, construction, and public service.

Workers in the formal sector can remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, and authorities effectively protected employees in this situation. Workers in the informal sector did not enjoy the same protection.