

CAMBODIA

Kingdom of Cambodia

Head of state: **King Norodom Sihamoni**

Head of government: **Hun Sen**

Crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly intensified ahead of elections in 2017/2018. The authorities' misuse of the justice system increased; the security forces continued to harass and punish civil society and silence critics. Human rights defenders were arrested and held in pre-trial detention; several were tried and sentenced, including for previous alleged offences, and others were given suspended sentences or had charges pending against them. Political opposition was targeted, with activists serving long sentences handed down in previous years and new legal action taken against opposition party leaders and others. A prominent political commentator was shot dead and impunity continued for past unlawful killings.

BACKGROUND

Tensions between the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and the main opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) remained high. The prospect of commune and national elections in 2017 and 2018 respectively created an unstable political environment threatening human rights. From May, CNRP MPs intermittently boycotted the National Assembly in protest at legal action taken against CNRP deputy leader Kem Sokha for failing to appear as a witness in a court case. CNRP leader Sam Rainsy remained in self-imposed exile in France; in October the government formally announced that he was banned from returning to Cambodia. He was targeted with a series of criminal charges against him during the year.

In September, 39 states issued a statement at the 33rd UN Human Rights Council meeting expressing concern about the political situation in Cambodia and calling

for a "safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and civil society".

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Legal action against the political opposition escalated in an apparent attempt to hamper activities ahead of commune elections in 2017. At least 16 activists and officials from the opposition remained in prison after unfair trials. They included 14 CNRP members who were convicted of leading and/or participating in an "insurrection" related to a demonstration in July 2014. At least two opposition party members were held in pre-trial detention and at least 13 had charges pending against them.

In December, Sam Rainsy and two assistants were sentenced to five years' imprisonment on charges of being "accomplices" in a 2015 forgery case against opposition party senator Hong Sok Hour, who was convicted in November 2016 on charges of fraud and incitement and given a seven-year prison sentence. Rainsy and the two assistants are in exile in France.

In September, Kem Sokha was sentenced in his absence to five months' imprisonment for refusing to appear as a witness in the prosecution of two CNRP MPs who were charged with "procurement of prostitution". He was pardoned by the King in December at the Prime Minister's request.

In October, CNRP MP Um Sam An was sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment for incitement related to the CNRP campaign alleging encroachment by Viet Nam into Cambodian territory.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders were threatened and arrested for peacefully carrying out their work. Intimidation, threats and heavy surveillance caused several to leave the country in fear for their safety.

In May, a landmark case was brought against Ny Sokha, Yi Soksan, Nay Vanda and Lem Mony, staff members from the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC) who were arrested on

28 April and charged with bribing a witness. Ny Chakrya, a former ADHOC staff member and deputy secretary-general of the National Election Committee (NEC), was also charged as an accomplice. The case was related to advice and material support provided by ADHOC to a woman alleged to have had an extra-marital relationship with Kem Sokha. In October, the investigating judge extended their pre-trial detention to one year. In December, Minister of Interior Sar Kheng announced that the five would be released but no action was taken. The alleged affair led to three separate criminal cases involving eight political and civil society actors, as well as one against the woman. The CPP filed a criminal defamation complaint against political commentator Ou Virak for commenting that the cases were politically motivated. Seang Chet, an opposition commune councillor, was convicted on charges of bribery in one of these cases in December. He received a five-year sentence but was pardoned and released two days later.

In a separate case, Ny Chakrya was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for defamation, malicious denunciation and publication of commentaries intended to unlawfully coerce judicial authorities after criticizing a court in Siem Reap for its handling of a land dispute case in May 2015. In April, NEC member and former union leader Rong Chhun was informed that he would be tried on criminal charges in relation to a 2014 demonstration at which a number of protesting factory workers were shot dead by security forces. Ny Chakrya and Rong Chhun both worked for the NEC and their cases were viewed as targeted attempts to exclude them from their appointed positions.

Try Sovikea, Sun Mala and Sim Samnang, environmental activists from the NGO Mother Nature who had been arrested in August 2015, were sentenced in June to 18 months' imprisonment for threatening to destroy property. They were released after the balance of their sentence after time served was suspended.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Peaceful protests continued to be hampered by the authorities. In May, civil society launched a peaceful "Black Monday" campaign to call for the release of four ADHOC staff and one former NEC staff member (see above). Protesters wearing black took part in weekly gatherings and vigils, and posted images on social media. The authorities attempted to ban the protests and threatened, arrested and detained participants who were generally released only after signing undertakings not to protest again. Housing rights activists from the capital, Phnom Penh, were among those routinely targeted.

Tep Vanny and Bov Sophea from Boeung Kak community were arrested on 15 August at a "Black Monday" vigil. They were tried on 22 August and sentenced to six days' imprisonment each for insulting a public official. Bov Sophea was released after time served, and Tep Vanny was held in prison for investigation on a revived charge relating to a 2013 protest. In another revived case, on 19 September, Tep Vanny, Bo Chhorvy, Heng Mom and Kong Chantha, also from the Boeung Kak community, were sentenced to six months' imprisonment for insulting and obstructing public officials in relation to a 2011 protest. Tep Vanny remained imprisoned and the three other women remained free pending an appeal against conviction at the end of the year.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

Political commentator Kem Ley was shot dead on the morning of 10 July at a service station where he regularly went to meet people. He was frequently interviewed on radio and news media for his views on political events in Cambodia, including criticism of the government. Oeuth Ang, a former soldier, was arrested shortly afterwards, but the authorities failed to conduct an independent and effective investigation or to inform the public adequately of any investigations into the killing. Prime Minister Hun Sen filed a

defamation suit against Sam Rainsy after the latter had posted on Facebook that the government may have been behind the killing. Opposition senator Thak Lany was convicted in her absence of defamation and incitement for allegedly accusing Hun Sen of ordering the killing.

No progress was made in holding anyone to account for the killings of at least six people and the enforced disappearance of Khem Saphath during a violent crackdown by security forces on freedom of peaceful assembly in 2013 and 2014. A renewed investigation ordered in 2013 into the fatal shooting of trade union leader Chea Vichea by unidentified perpetrators in January 2004 also appeared to be making no progress.

RIGHT TO ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING

Land grabbing, Economic Land Concessions granted to private stakeholders, and major development projects continued to impact the right to adequate housing for communities around the country. Work on the proposed Lower Sesan II hydropower dam in the northeast province of Stung Treng progressed, with estimates that around 5,000 members of Indigenous minorities faced relocation due to inundation. The UN Special Rapporteur on Cambodia called for adequate consultation, better understanding of cultural practices and consideration of alternatives proposed by the communities.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

In January the Ministry of Interior confirmed that more than 170 Montagnard asylum-seekers who had fled Viet Nam would have their claims assessed for refugee status, after initially refusing to do so. Thirteen who had earlier been granted refugee status were transferred to the Philippines pending resettlement to a third country. During the year, around 29 returned to Viet Nam voluntarily with assistance from UNHCR, the UN refugee agency.



CHILE

Republic of Chile

Head of state and government: **Michelle Bachelet Jeria**

Impunity for past and continuing human rights violations remained a concern. Legal proceedings relating to allegations of past crimes under international law and other human rights violations continued; in a few cases, those involved were imprisoned. For much of the year, cases of unnecessary and excessive use of force by the police continued to be dealt with by the military courts. However, a law passed in November excludes civilians from military jurisdiction. Abortion remained criminalized in all circumstances, although some steps were taken to decriminalize it in limited circumstances.

BACKGROUND

Between April and August, the government carried out a consultation process open to all citizens as the first step towards the adoption of a new Constitution. The current Constitution, adopted during the military government under General Pinochet,

contains several provisions that are not in line with international human rights law.

In January, a law entered into force establishing a new Undersecretariat on Human Rights under the Ministry of Justice. The first Undersecretary was appointed in September.

In April, the government announced that plans to reform the law on migration were postponed indefinitely. In December it was announced that the bill would be filed in January 2017.

POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES

Allegations of unnecessary or excessive use of force by the police, especially in the context of public protests, continued to be reported. Children, women, journalists and employees of the National Human Rights Institute acting as observers were among the victims.

Human rights violations involving members of the security forces continued to be dealt with by military courts. However, a new law entered into force in November that expressly stated that civilians, whether accused or the victims of crime, were excluded from military jurisdiction.

In January, the National Human Rights Institute filed a lawsuit to push for further investigation by the ordinary courts into the enforced disappearance of 16-year-old José Huenante; he was last seen being detained by policemen in September 2005. Following the lawsuit, a military court also reopened an investigation. However, at the end of the year, José Huenante's fate and whereabouts remained unclarified and neither investigation had established the facts of the case or identified those responsible.

IMPUNITY

During the year, several convictions for past crimes under international law and other human rights violations committed during the military regime were confirmed. In September, the Supreme Court confirmed the four-year sentences of two former military officials for the torture of General Alberto Bachelet in 1973.

Victims, their relatives and civil society organizations opposed several attempts to obtain the early release on parole of people convicted of human rights violations during the military government under Augusto Pinochet. At the end of the year, a bill was before Congress to deny the possibility of parole for those convicted of crimes against humanity.

A law establishing the crime of torture in Chilean law came into force in November. In September, Chile was one of the countries listed by the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture as having delayed complying with the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture, because of the absence of a national mechanism for the prevention of torture.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

In January, Congress established a commission to investigate violence in Araucanía, the region most affected by land conflicts involving the Mapuche. The commission focused on crimes allegedly committed by the Mapuche as a form of protest. However, continued allegations of excessive use of force and arbitrary detentions during police operations against Mapuche communities were not investigated as they did not fall within the commission's mandate. The Chamber of Deputies approved the commission's conclusions in September.

In May, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights extended the precautionary measures ordered in October 2015 in favour of Mapuche leader Juana Calfunao. These measures sought to protect additional members of her family living in the community of Juan Paillalef in the south of Chile from threats to their life and integrity related to a land dispute.

In August, photographer Felipe Durán and Mapuche community member Cristián Levinao were found not guilty of all charges. The two men had been accused of illegal possession of weapons and drug offences and held in preventive detention for over 300 days.

The Machi (Mapuche traditional spiritual authority) Francisca Linconao was detained in March and held pending trial. On four occasions a judge allowed her transfer to house arrest to address serious health concerns. On each occasion this was overturned on appeal and she was returned to prison shortly afterwards. In November she was transferred to hospital. In December she began a hunger strike, demanding to be held in her own home pre-trial, and her defence team filed a writ of *amparo* calling for the same measure. She remained on hunger strike at the end of the year.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Abortion remained a criminal offence in all circumstances. Several women seeking medical care for complications following unsafe abortions risked criminal charges after being reported to the authorities by health professionals.

In March, the Chamber of Deputies approved a bill decriminalizing abortion when the pregnancy poses a risk to a woman's life, when it is the result of rape and in cases of serious foetal impairment. However, provisions prohibiting health professionals from reporting women were removed from the bill following their rejection by the Chamber of Deputies. The amended bill was pending before the Senate by the end of the year.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

In September, the Senate Human Rights Commission approved the Gender Identity Bill, the first step towards its approval after three years of debate. Approval by the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies remained pending at the end of the year. The Bill proposed establishing the right of individuals over 18 to have their gender identity legally recognized by changing their name and gender on official documents through an administrative process and without the existing requirements of gender reassignment surgery or medical certification.

In July, Chile reached a friendly settlement before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on a complaint on behalf of three gay couples who were denied the right to marry. The settlement included the adoption of a series of measures and policies to promote the rights of LGBTI people. In August, as part of the settlement, the government announced a participatory process with civil society aimed at drafting a bill to establish marriage equality.





SUDAN

Republic of the Sudan

Head of state and government: **Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir**

The authorities refused to execute arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan states remained dire, with widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Evidence pointed to the use of chemical weapons by government forces in Darfur. The rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly were arbitrarily restricted and critics and suspected opponents of the government were subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention and other violations. Excessive use of force by the authorities in dispersing gatherings led to numerous casualties.

BACKGROUND

Armed conflicts persisted in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan, leading to civilian

casualties and widespread disruption and hardship.

In March, the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) proposed a Roadmap Agreement for peace and dialogue to end the conflicts. The Agreement commits parties to end conflicts in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan and ensure humanitarian access to all populations in these areas. It also commits parties to engage in an inclusive national dialogue process. The government signed the Agreement in March but opposition groups refused at first to sign.

On 8 August, the agreement was signed by four opposition groups: the National Umma Party; the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N); the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM); and the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM-MM) led by Minni Minnawi. The following day, negotiations resumed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, along two tracks: between the SPLM-N and the government; and on Darfur around cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access. However, on 14 August, the talks collapsed between the government and the armed opposition groups, the SPLM-N, JEM and SLM-MM. The AUHIP announced an indefinite suspension of the peace talks. Both sides blamed each other for the collapse of the talks.

When Sudan's human rights record was examined under the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in May, Sudan accepted a number of recommendations including ratification of the UN Convention against Torture and efforts to prevent torture and inhuman treatment. However, Sudan rejected recommendations to remove impunity provisions from the National Security Act 2010 and ensure independent investigation and prosecution of crimes under international law and human rights violations committed by the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), the armed forces and the police.¹

In January, Parliament passed an amendment that increased the maximum penalty for rioting from two to five years' imprisonment.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

The authorities continued to refuse to execute five arrest warrants issued by the ICC for Sudanese nationals, including two warrants for President al-Bashir on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes allegedly committed in Darfur.

ARMED CONFLICT

Darfur

The security and humanitarian situation in Darfur remained dire, as the armed conflict entered its thirteenth year in 2016.

In January, government forces launched a large-scale military campaign in the Jebel Marra area of Darfur. Co-ordinated ground and air attacks targeted locations throughout Jebel Marra until May. After that, the seasonal rains intensified, making ground attacks impractical throughout most of the area; air operations continued, however, through to mid-September.

A large number of crimes under international law and human rights violations committed by Sudanese government forces were documented, including the bombing of civilians and civilian property, the unlawful killing of men, women and children, the abduction and rape of women, the forced displacement of civilians and the looting and destruction of civilian property, including the destruction of entire villages.

Evidence was also documented that suggested the Sudanese government forces repeatedly used chemical weapons during attacks in Jebel Marra.² Satellite imagery, more than 200 in-depth interviews with survivors and expert analysis of dozens of images of injuries indicated that at least 30 probable chemical attacks took place in Jebel Marra between January and September 2016. An estimated 200 to 250 people may have died as a result of exposure to chemical weapons agents, with many – or most – being children. Most survivors of the suspected chemical weapons attacks had no access to adequate medical care.

South Kordofan and Blue Nile

On 24 April, the Sudan Revolutionary Front, a coalition of four armed opposition groups, announced a unilateral ceasefire of six months, extending a previous ceasefire announced in October 2015. On 17 June, President al-Bashir declared a four-month unilateral cessation of hostilities in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. In October, he extended the cessation of hostilities in these areas to the end of year.

Despite the declared cessation of hostilities, government forces and the SPLM-N engaged in sporadic military attacks in Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (SPLA-N) controlled areas. The armed conflict was characterized by aerial and ground attacks by government forces, many directed at civilian objects – that is, objects which are not military objectives – as well as denial of humanitarian access to civilians.³

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Civil society activists were subjected to arbitrary arrests and arbitrary restrictions on their activities.

On 28 January, the NISS stopped a seminar organized at Al Mahas Club in the capital Khartoum by a committee opposed to the building of the Kajbar and Dal dams in Northern Sudan state. The committee claimed the dams would have a damaging social and environmental impact. The NISS detained 12 people before releasing them later that day.

The NISS raided the office of the NGO TRACKS (Khartoum Centre for Training and Human Development) on 29 February and confiscated mobile phones and laptops, as well as documents, the passports of those present and two vehicles. They detained the Director of TRACKS, Khalafalla Mukhtar, for six hours, along with another TRACKS employee and Mustafa Adam, a visitor and Director of Al Zarqaa, another civil society organization.⁴ On 22 May, the NISS arrested eight TRACKS employees and affiliates. Five were released on bail in June, but three were detained without charge for nearly three

months by the Office of the Prosecutor for State Security before being transferred to Al Huda Prison to await trial.⁵ In August, a total of six TRACKS employees and affiliates were charged with various offences including crimes against the state that carry the death penalty. The trial had not concluded by the end of the year.⁶

Between 23 and 28 March, four civil society representatives were intercepted by security officials at Khartoum International Airport while on their way to a high-level meeting with diplomats in Geneva, Switzerland, in preparation for Sudan's examination under the UPR process.⁷

The authorities continued to prevent opposition political parties from organizing peaceful public activities. The NISS prevented the Republican Party from marking the anniversary of the execution of its founder, Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, on 18 January. In February, NISS agents prevented two opposition political parties – the Sudanese Communist Party and Sudanese Congress Party – from holding a public event in Khartoum.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression continued. The authorities regularly confiscated newspaper print runs. During 2016, 12 newspapers had their issues confiscated on 44 different occasions. Dozens of journalists were arrested and interrogated by the NISS Media Office and the Press and the Publications Prosecution Office in Khartoum.

In April, the NISS confiscated the daily newspapers *Akhir Lahzah*, *Al Sihaa* and *Al-Tagheer*, without giving reasons. In May, *Alwan*, *Al-Mustagilla* and *Al-Jareeda* newspapers were confiscated by the NISS from the printers. In October, *Al Sihaa* and *Al-Jareeda* newspapers were confiscated.

On 14 August, the National Council for Press and Publications suspended indefinitely the publication of four newspapers: *Elaf*, *Al-Mustagilla*, *Al Watan* and *Awal Al Nahar*. The Council said it had suspended the newspapers because of their

continued violation of the regulations in the Press and Publications Act.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Across Sudan, NISS officials and members of other security forces targeted opposition political party members, human rights defenders, students and political activists for arbitrary arrest, detention and other violations.

On 1 February, NISS officials arrested four students from Darfur in Khartoum after a protest organized by the United Popular Front, affiliated with the Sudan Liberation Movement-Abdul Wahid Al Nour, against the conflict in Jebel Marra.

In April, violent confrontations between students and security agents went on for three weeks at the University of Khartoum. The protests erupted because of reports that the government was planning to sell some of the university's buildings. Dozens of students were arrested during these protests, including five who were detained without charge in Khartoum.⁸ They were released in late April, but some were rearrested in May.

NISS agents raided the office of a prominent human rights lawyer, Nabil Adib, in Khartoum on 5 May and arrested 11 people, including eight students who had been expelled or suspended from the University of Khartoum. All were released by late June.

In Central Darfur state, on 31 July, NISS agents arrested 10 people who had attended a meeting with the US Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan during his visit to the region. Of the 10, seven were internally displaced persons. They were all released in September.⁹

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

The authorities arbitrarily restricted freedom of assembly and, on many occasions, used excessive force to disperse gatherings, resulting in several deaths and numerous injuries. No investigations were conducted into the deaths.

In February, NISS officials and students affiliated to the ruling National Congress Party

violently disrupted a public seminar organized by a political opposition party at the University of El Geneina. A number of students were seriously injured, and one, Salah al Din Qamar Ibrahim, died as a result of his injuries.

On 19 April, Abubakar Hassan Mohamed Taha, an 18-year-old student at the University of Kordofan, was shot in the head by NISS agents in Al Obied, capital of North Kordofan state. The students had been marching peacefully when heavily armed NISS agents intercepted them, reportedly shooting into the crowd, in an attempt to prevent them from taking part in student union elections. Another 27 students were injured, five of them seriously. The killing of Abubakar Hassan Mohamed Taha provoked nationwide student protests.¹⁰

On 27 April, 20-year-old Mohamad Al Sadiq Yoyo, a second-year student at the Omdurman Al Ahlia University in Khartoum state, was shot dead by NISS agents.

On 8 May, police forces in Kosti city in White Nile state violently dispersed a peaceful sit-in organized by the Faculty of Engineering Students' Association of the University of Al-Imam Al-Mahdi. The police reportedly used tear gas and batons, injuring about seven students, four of them seriously.

10. Sudan: Government must investigate brutal killing of 18-year-old university student by intelligence agents (*News story*, 20 April)

EGYPT

Arab Republic of Egypt

Head of state: **Abdel Fattah al-Sisi**

Head of government: **Sherif Ismail**

The authorities used mass arbitrary arrests to suppress demonstrations and dissent, detaining journalists, human rights defenders and protesters, and restricted the activities of human rights organizations. The National Security Agency (NSA) subjected hundreds of detainees to enforced disappearance; officers of the NSA and other security forces tortured and otherwise ill-treated detainees. Security forces used excessive lethal force during regular policing and in incidents that may have amounted to extrajudicial executions. Mass unfair trials continued before civilian and military courts. The authorities failed to adequately investigate human rights violations and bring perpetrators to justice. Women continued to face sexual and gender-based violence. The government continued to restrict religious minorities and prosecuted people for defamation of religion. Individuals faced imprisonment for “debauchery” on the basis of their perceived sexual orientation. Hundreds of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants were detained while seeking to cross the

1. Sudan: Amnesty International public statement at the 33rd session of the UN Human Rights Council (AFR 54/4875/2016)
2. Sudan: Scorched earth, poisoned air – Sudanese government forces ravage Jebel Marra, Darfur (AFR 54/4877/2016)
3. Sudan: Five years and counting – Intensified aerial bombardment, ground offensive and humanitarian crisis in South Kordofan state (AFR 54/4913/2016)
4. Sudan: Ten civil society activists harassed by NISS (AFR 54/3634/2016)
5. Sudan: Further information – three human rights defenders still detained (AFR 54/4267/2016)
6. Sudan: Drop all charges and release activists detained for exercising their rights (*News story*, 29 August)
7. Sudan blocks civil society participation in UN-led human rights review (AFR 54/4310/2016)
8. Sudan: Student activists detained without charge (AFR 54/3861/2016)
9. Sudan: Eight arrested, whereabouts unknown (AFR 54/4617/2016)



Mediterranean Sea. Courts continued to hand down death sentences; executions were carried out.

BACKGROUND

The newly elected House of Representatives convened on 10 January and had 15 days to review and approve legislative decrees issued by President al-Sisi in the absence of a parliament. It approved almost all such laws, including the Counter-Terrorism Law (Law 94 of 2015) that eroded fair trial safeguards and wrote emergency-style powers into domestic law.

Egypt remained part of the Saudi Arabia-led military coalition engaged in the armed conflict in Yemen (see Yemen entry). In January, President al-Sisi approved legislation authorizing the armed forces to operate outside Egypt for a further year.

Relations between Egypt and Italy deteriorated after Italian PhD student Giulio Regeni died in mysterious circumstances when conducting research into Egyptian trade unions. When his body was found on 3 February, a police official told Egyptian media that Giulio Regeni had died in a traffic accident, but autopsies concluded that he had been tortured. On 24 March, two weeks after the European Parliament expressed its concern over the killing, Egypt's Ministry of the Interior said the security forces had killed members of a criminal gang responsible for Giulio Regeni's death. On 8 April, Italy recalled its ambassador from Egypt. On 9 September, Egypt's Public Prosecutor said the security forces had briefly investigated Giulio Regeni before his disappearance and murder.

Several states continued to supply Egypt with arms and military and security equipment, including jet fighters and armoured vehicles.

The government kept the Rafah crossing to the Gaza Strip closed for all but 46 days of the year, according to the available figures from the UN Relief and Works Agency.

COUNTER-TERROR AND SECURITY

The armed forces continued operations against armed groups active in North Sinai, using armoured vehicles, artillery and air strikes. The Ministry of Defence said each of these operations killed dozens of "terrorists". Much of the area remained under a state of emergency and effectively off-limits to independent human rights monitors and journalists.

Armed groups launched repeated and deadly attacks targeting the security forces as well as government and judicial officials and other civilians. Most such attacks occurred in North Sinai, although bombings and shootings by armed groups were reported in other parts of the country. The armed group calling itself Sinai Province, which had declared allegiance to the armed group Islamic State (IS), said it carried out many of the attacks. During the year, Sinai Province said it executed several men it claimed were spies for the security forces.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

The authorities severely restricted the rights to freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly in law and practice.

Journalists, activists and others faced arrest, prosecution and imprisonment on charges that included inciting or participating in protests, disseminating "false rumours", defaming officials and damaging morality.

Photojournalist Mahmoud Abou Zeid, known as Shawkan, and more than 730 other people, continued to face hearings in a mass, unfair trial that began in December 2015. Mahmoud Abou Zeid faced trumped-up charges that included "joining a criminal gang" and murder for documenting a sit-in protest in the capital, Cairo, on 14 August 2013. The court tried many in their absence.

On 1 May, security forces raided the Press Syndicate in Cairo and arrested journalists Amro Badr and Mahmoud al-Saqqa on charges that included inciting protests and publishing "false rumours". The Syndicate condemned the raid and the arrests. A court

bailed Amro Badr on 28 August and Mahmoud al-Saqqa on 1 October. On 19 November, a court sentenced Syndicate head Yahia Galash and board members Khaled Elbalshy and Gamal Abd el-Reheem to two years in prison on charges that included "harbouring suspects". The court set a fee of 10,000 Egyptian Pounds (US\$630) to suspend the sentences.

Investigative judges stepped up a criminal investigation into the activities and funding of NGOs, questioning staff, banning 12 defenders from travelling and freezing the assets of seven defenders and six groups. The authorities ordered the closure of one human rights organization. Parliament approved new legislation to replace the Law on Associations (Law 84 of 2002) which would severely restrict NGOs' activities and their right to obtain legal registration and access to funding from abroad. The draft law had not been enacted by the end of the year.

On 17 February, officials from the Ministry of Health served El Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence with a closure order. The organization continued to operate and challenged the government's decision before the courts, but the authorities briefly froze its assets in November.

On 17 September, a court in Cairo upheld an asset freeze against five human rights defenders and three organizations – the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, the Hisham Mubarak Law Center and the Egyptian Center for the Right to Education – which had been ordered by judges investigating their activities and funding.

The security forces used tear gas to disperse peaceful protests in Cairo on 15 and 25 April and arrested around 1,300 people on charges of breaching the Protest Law (Law 107 of 2013) and the Law on Assembly (Law 10 of 1914). On 8 June the government announced that it planned to amend the Protest Law; it had not submitted any drafts to parliament by the end of the year.

On 3 December the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that an article of the Protest Law was unconstitutional. The

article gave the Ministry of the Interior powers to ban protests arbitrarily.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

Police officers continued to use excessive lethal force following verbal altercations, shooting and killing at least 11 people and injuring more than 40 others. Courts jailed two police officers for 25 years in separate cases of fatal shootings which had led to neighbourhood protests.

The Ministry of the Interior repeatedly announced that security forces had shot dead suspects during raids on residences, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood and alleged members of armed groups. No police officers were formally investigated, raising concern that security forces may have used excessive force or in some cases carried out extrajudicial executions.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Critics and opponents of the government continued to face arbitrary arrest and detention on charges that included inciting protests, "terrorism" and belonging to banned groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood or the 6 April Youth Movement. The authorities also arbitrarily detained several human rights defenders.

The security forces arrested around 1,300 people across Egypt between mid-April and early May in attempts to quell protests, according to estimates by a coalition of Egyptian human rights lawyers. Most were released, but some subsequently faced trial (see below, "Unfair trials").

More than 1,400 individuals were held beyond the two-year legal limit for pre-trial detention without being referred to trial.

Mahmoud Mohamed Ahmed Hussein was released on bail on 25 March by court order after more than two years' detention without trial for wearing a T-shirt with the slogan "Nation without Torture" and a scarf bearing the "25 January Revolution" logo.

Malek Adly, a director at the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, was arrested by security forces on 5 May on

charges of spreading “false rumours” and attempting to overthrow the government. He had helped to file a lawsuit challenging the government’s decision to cede the islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia. A court ordered his release on 28 August.

Security forces arrested the chair of the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, Ahmed Abdallah, on 25 April and the group’s minorities’ director, Mina Thabet, on 19 May. The organization had documented enforced disappearances in Egypt. Both men were remanded in custody but were not formally charged and were released on bail on 18 June and 10 September respectively.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

The NSA abducted hundreds of people without judicial order and held them incommunicado for prolonged periods, outside of judicial oversight and without access to family members or legal representation.¹ The authorities continued to deny that such enforced disappearances occurred. The security forces targeted suspected supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and activists with other political affiliations. Some enforced disappearances were carried out by Military Intelligence officials.

The NSA detained 14-year-old Aser Mohamed on 12 January and subjected him to enforced disappearance for 34 days. He said NSA interrogators forced him to “confess” under torture to “terrorism”-related charges, and that a prosecutor threatened him with further torture if he retracted his confession. His trial was ongoing at the end of the year.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Security officials subjected detainees to beatings and ill-treatment upon arrest. NSA interrogators tortured and otherwise ill-treated many victims of enforced disappearance to extract “confessions” for use against them at trial. Methods included severe beatings, electric shocks and being forced to adopt stress positions. Egyptian human rights

groups documented dozens of reports of deaths in custody due to torture and other ill-treatment and inadequate access to medical care.

On 20 September, a court sentenced nine police officers to three-year prison sentences for assaulting doctors at a hospital in the Cairo district of Matariya in January. The court released the officers on bail pending an appeal.

UNFAIR TRIALS

Criminal courts continued to conduct mass unfair trials involving dozens – sometimes hundreds – of defendants on charges of participating in protests and political violence following the ousting of Mohamed Morsi as president in July 2013.

In some trials involving defendants who had been subjected to enforced disappearance, courts accepted “confessions” obtained through torture as evidence.

In addition to dedicated “circuits” (special courts) for terrorism-related trials, military courts unfairly tried hundreds of civilians, including in mass trials. In August the authorities extended a law vastly expanding the jurisdiction of military courts to include crimes committed against “public installations” for a further five years.

Courts tried more than 200 people on charges of taking part in protests against the government’s decision to cede the islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia, sentencing many to prison terms of between two to five years and heavy fines. Appeals courts subsequently overturned most prison sentences.

More than 490 people, including Irish national Ibrahim Halawa, faced charges of participating in violence during a protest in August 2013, in a mass trial which opened in 2014. The charges against Ibrahim Halawa were considered by Amnesty International to be trumped up.

On 18 June, a court sentenced ousted president Mohamed Morsi to 25 years in prison for leading a “banned group” and a further 15 years for stealing classified

information. The court sentenced six other men to death in the case, including three journalists in their absence.

IMPUNITY

The authorities failed to adequately investigate the vast majority of alleged human rights violations, including torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, deaths in custody and the widespread use of excessive force by security forces since 2011, and to bring perpetrators to justice.

Prosecutors regularly refused to investigate detainees' complaints of torture and other ill-treatment, as well as evidence that security forces had falsified dates of arrest in cases of enforced disappearances.

On 15 August, President al-Sisi signed amendments to the Police Authority Law which prohibited security forces from "ill-treating citizens" and prohibited officers from making unauthorized statements to the media and unionizing.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women continued to face inadequate protection from sexual and gender-based violence, as well as gender discrimination in law and practice, particularly under personal status laws regulating divorce.

A 17-year-old girl died on 29 May, reportedly from haemorrhaging, following female genital mutilation (FGM) at a private hospital in Suez Governorate. Four people faced trial on charges of causing lethal injury and FGM, including the girl's mother and medical staff.

On 25 September, President al-Sisi signed a law increasing the prison sentence for any individual who carries out FGM, from a minimum of three months and maximum of two years, to a minimum of five years and a maximum of 15 years, also punishing those who force girls to undergo FGM.

DISCRIMINATION – RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Religious minorities, including Coptic Christians, Shi'a Muslims and Baha'is, continued to face discriminatory restrictions

in law and practice and inadequate protection from violence.

There were repeated attacks targeting Coptic Christians. On 11 December a bomb attack on a church in Cairo killed 27 people. The armed group IS claimed responsibility, while the authorities blamed a "terrorism cell" linked to the Muslim Brotherhood.

A new law regulating churches, signed by President al-Sisi on 28 September, arbitrarily restricted their construction, repair and expansion.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

Individuals continued to face arrest, detention and trial on "debauchery" charges under Law 10 of 1961, on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Egyptian security forces arrested more than 4,600 refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants as they attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, according to figures published by UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, in September.

On 8 November, President al-Sisi signed a law which would punish those who illegally transfer people from one country to another with a fine of up to 500,000 Egyptian Pounds (US\$32,130) and prison terms of up to 25 years. The law did not distinguish between human smuggling and trafficking. While the law exempted victims of trafficking and irregular migrants from prison sentences and fines, it provided that the government should return them to their countries of origin – potentially against their will. The law did not specify how the authorities should treat victims of trafficking and refugees and asylum-seekers and whether they would be protected from *refoulement*.

On 22 September, a boat carrying refugees, asylum-seekers and irregular migrants capsized off the Egyptian coast, resulting in the deaths of more than 200 people. Security forces arrested the crew.

FINLAND

Republic of Finland

Head of state: **Sauli Niinistö**

Head of government: **Juha Sipilä**



REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

In September, the right to free legal representation in the asylum interview during the asylum procedure was restricted, limiting it to applicants with exceptional grounds for assistance. Deadlines for appeals were reduced from 30 days to 21 days in the second instance, and to 14 days in the third instance. The changes increased the likelihood of asylum-seekers being forcibly returned to countries where they might be at risk of human rights violations (*refoulement*).

Family reunification was restricted to those who had a secure income, set at an unreasonably high threshold. Further administrative restrictions and practical difficulties with the application procedure adversely affected the ability of refugees and other recipients of international protection – including unaccompanied children – to enjoy their right to family life.

The authorities continued to detain unaccompanied children, and families with children based on their migration status. There was no time limit on detaining families with children.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

Legislation on legal gender recognition continued to violate the rights of transgender individuals. Under the Act on Legal Recognition of the Gender of Transsexuals (Trans Act), transgender people could obtain legal gender recognition only if they agreed to be sterilized, were diagnosed with a mental disorder, and were aged over 18.

In April, the National Advisory Board on Social Welfare and Health Care Ethics raised concerns that intersex children were subjected to unnecessary medical procedures, without full informed consent.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Services for women who had experienced violence remained inadequate and under-resourced and varied significantly between municipalities. The number of shelters and their accessibility for women with disabilities remained inadequate. Neither adequate walk-in services nor long-term support services for survivors of violence were in place. No co-ordinated national network of support services for survivors of sexual violence had been set up.

The definition of rape in the Criminal Code failed to incorporate a lack of consent. Mediation continued to be used widely in cases of intimate partner violence.

In September, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health prepared a second draft decree to create a body to co-ordinate work combating violence against women.

RIGHT TO PRIVACY

In October, a draft constitutional amendment limiting the right to privacy was published. Its aim was to enable the acquisition of information on threats to national security, by giving military and civilian intelligence agencies permission to conduct communications surveillance without any requirement for a link to a specific criminal offence.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Conscientious objectors to military service continued to be punished for refusing to undertake alternative civilian service, which remained punitive and discriminatory in length. The duration of alternative civilian service was 347 days, more than double the shortest military service period of 165 days.