

ISRAEL 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Israel is a multiparty parliamentary democracy. Although it has no constitution, its parliament, the unicameral 120-member Knesset, has enacted a series of “Basic Laws” that enumerate fundamental rights. Certain fundamental laws, orders, and regulations legally depend on the existence of a “state of emergency,” which has been in effect since 1948. In 2018 the Knesset passed the “Nation-State Law,” which recognized the right to national self-determination as “unique to the Jewish people.” Under the Basic Laws, the Knesset has the power to dissolve itself and mandate elections. On March 23, the country held legislative elections after the coalition government failed to pass a budget in December 2020. It was the fourth election in two years. On June 2, Yair Lapid (Yesh Atid) and Naftali Bennett (Yamina) announced the formation of a rotational coalition government, which the Knesset approved June 13. The elections were considered free and fair.

Under the authority of the prime minister, the Israeli Security Agency is charged with combatting terrorism and espionage in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The national police, including the border police and the immigration police, are under the authority of the Ministry of Public Security. The Israel Defense Forces are responsible for external security but also have some domestic security responsibilities and report to the Ministry of Defense. Israeli Security Agency forces operating in the West Bank fall under the Israel Defense Forces for operations and operational debriefing. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security services. There were credible reports that members of the security forces committed abuses.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings; arbitrary detention, often extraterritorial detention of Palestinians from the occupied territories in Israel; restrictions on Palestinians residing in Jerusalem including arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy, family, and home; substantial interference with the freedom of association; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; harassment of nongovernmental organizations; significant restrictions on freedom of movement within the country; violence

against asylum seekers and irregular migrants; violence or threats of violence against national, racial, or ethnic minority groups; and labor rights abuses against foreign workers and Palestinians from the West Bank.

The Israeli military and civilian justice systems have on occasion found members of the security forces to have committed abuses. The government took some steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who committed human rights abuses, engaged in corruption, or both within Israel.

This section of the report covers Israel within the 1949 Armistice Agreement lines as well as Golan Heights and East Jerusalem territories that Israel occupied during the June 1967 war and where it later extended its domestic law, jurisdiction, and administration. The United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in 2017 and Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights in 2019. Language in this report is not meant to convey a position on any final status issues to be negotiated between the parties to the conflict, including the specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem or the borders between Israel and any future Palestinian state.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person

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

There were several reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings. The Ministry of Justice's Department for Investigations of Police Officers (DIPO) is responsible for investigating alleged unlawful actions involving police, while the Ministry of Justice's State Attorney's Office is responsible for investigating alleged unlawful actions involving the prosecution service. The Military Police Criminal Investigation Division is responsible for investigating alleged unlawful actions involving the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in conjunction with the Military Advocate General's Corps.

According to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, during the Israeli military campaign from May 10 to 21, Palestinian militants in Gaza launched 4,360 rockets and mortars at Israeli cities and towns targeting civilians.

During the operation, 12 Israelis, two of them children, were killed by rocket fire, and one IDF soldier was killed by an antitank missile.

According to the government, 15 Israelis were killed in terror attacks during the year, including two soldiers; in addition, three foreign nationals (two Thai citizens and one Indian) were killed from mortar and rockets from Gaza. According to the Shin Bet, 195 Israelis were injured in attacks from Gaza, in the West Bank, and in Jerusalem. There was a total of 4,575 terror attacks, including rockets and mortars, of which 2,805 were registered in May, according to the Shin Bet.

In April the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Yesh Din released a report on the Military Advocate General's Corps (MAG's) Fact Finding Assessment (FFA) Mechanism that was implemented to investigate incidents, including injuries and fatalities, during the "March of Return" protests which started in March 2018 and continued through late 2019. Yesh Din found that of 231 incidents forwarded to the FFA, 59 percent, covering 140 fatalities, remained under FFA review. Most of these fatalities were still undergoing the FFA Mechanism's "quick" assessment three years later, according to Yesh Din. The FFA examines the details of a case and provides all relevant information to the MAG, who determines whether a criminal investigation is warranted. Yesh Din stated it was skeptical of the Israeli military's ability to conduct thorough and effective investigations of these incidents so long after they occurred.

A November 30 report by the B'Tselem information center for human rights concluded that the Israeli government had not seriously investigated killings of Palestinians or held IDF members accountable, despite announcing in 2018 that it would open investigations of its use of lethal force, in part to deflect international criticism and investigation at the International Criminal Court.

A study published by a group of academic researchers in September concluded citizens with mental disabilities were at greater risk of being subjected to violence when interacting with police. The study examined media publications in the years 2019-20 and found that four of the five cases that ended in civilian deaths due to a confrontation with police officers involved victims with mental disabilities. All four of these individuals belonged to a minority group.

On January 8, DIPO closed the case against the police officer who shot and killed Shirel Habura, a mentally ill man, in the central Israeli city of Rosh Ha'ayin in April 2020. Investigators found the officer had not committed a crime but had acted in self-defense because his life was in concrete danger when Habura attacked him with a knife.

On May 23, DIPO announced it was closing the criminal case against the police officer who on March 29, killed a mentally ill Haifa resident named Munir Anabtawi. DIPO determined that the officer acted in self-defense after finding himself in a life-threatening situation when the victim wielded a knife while chasing him.

On May 19, 17-year-old Muhammad Mahamid Kiwan died after police reportedly shot him on May 12 at the Mei Ami junction on Route 65. His family claimed police used unnecessary force in shooting Kiwan. Media outlets reported a police statement confirming two officers fired at a car that ran into them near the city of Umm al-Fahm on the day Kiwan was fatally wounded. Police did not clarify who fired the shots that killed Kiwan, or whether Kiwan was in the car that struck the police officers. DIPO concluded an investigation, and the case was pending a final ruling by authorities.

In June 2020, police in Jerusalem's Old City fatally shot Iyad Halak, a Palestinian resident with autism, after he allegedly failed to follow police orders to stop. Police stated they believed Halak was carrying a "suspicious object." On June 17, DIPO filed an indictment with the Jerusalem District Court against the border police officer who shot and killed Halak. DIPO charged him with reckless homicide, an offense punishable by up to 12 years' imprisonment. According to media reports, the officer accused of shooting Halak was not charged with first-degree murder because the officer believed he was pursuing a terrorist, following an alert of a potential terrorist in the area.

In 2020 the NGOs the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (Adalah) and the Public Committee against Torture in Israel (PCATI) submitted a request to the Supreme Court demanding the reversal of a decision by the then state attorney to close the investigation into the 2017 police killing of Yaqoub Abu al-Qian in Umm al-Hiran and the criminal indictment of the officers responsible for the death

of Abu al-Qian. On October 21, the court denied the petition stating that the then state attorney's decision and the preliminary examination conducted by DIPO was sufficient to substantiate the decision not to press charges against the officers involved, and that it seemed unlikely that launching an investigation would lead to indictments.

In 2019 the Supreme Court granted a petition filed by the family of citizen Kheir al-Din Hamdan, ordering the attorney general and DIPO to indict police officer Yizhak Begin, who shot and killed Hamdan in 2014, after DIPO closed its investigation into the killing in 2015. On April 27, the Supreme Court president ordered an expanded panel of justices to review whether an indictment could be ordered against police officers who were questioned without a warning during the DIPO investigation. The review continued at year's end.

b. Disappearance

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

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

Israeli law does not include a specific prohibition on torture, although Israel signed the UN Convention against Torture in 1986 and signed it in 1991. Israeli domestic law prohibits the application of physical force, assault, or pressure by a public official. The state's attorney has argued that Israeli law exempts from prosecution Israeli Security Agency (ISA) interrogators who use what are termed "exceptional methods" in cases that are determined by the Ministry of Justice after the fact to have involved an imminent threat. The government determined in 2018 that the rules, procedures, and methods of interrogation were confidential for security reasons.

Authorities continued to state the ISA held detainees in isolation only in extreme cases and when there was no alternative, and that the ISA did not use isolation as a means of augmenting interrogation, forcing a confession, or punishment. An independent Office of the Inspector for Complaints against ISA Interrogators in the Ministry of Justice handled complaints of misconduct and abuse in interrogations.

The decision to open an investigation against an ISA employee is at the discretion of the attorney general. In criminal cases investigated by police involving crimes with a maximum imprisonment for conviction of 10 years or more, regulations require recording the interrogations; however, an extended temporary law exempts the ISA from the audio and video recording requirement for interrogations of suspects related to “security offenses.” In nonsecurity-related cases, ISA interrogation rooms are equipped with closed-circuit cameras, and only supervisors appointed by the Ministry of Justice have access to real-time audiovisual feeds. Supervisors are required to report to the comptroller any irregularities they observe during interrogations. The NGO Public Committee against Torture in Israel (PCATI) criticized this mechanism as insufficient to prevent and identify abuses, arguing that the absence of a recording of an interrogation impedes later accountability and judicial review.

According to PCATI, the government acknowledged that it used “exceptional measures” during interrogation in some cases, that if confirmed might constitute torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, but the Ministry of Justice refused to provide information regarding the number of such “necessity” interrogations or which “exceptional measures” were used. According to PCATI, these matters included beatings, forcing an individual to hold a stress position for long periods, incommunicado detention, sexual harassment, threats of rape and physical harm, painful pressure from shackles or restraints applied to the forearms, religion-based humiliation, sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme heat and cold, and threats against families of detainees.

PCATI also argued that torture is not enumerated as a specific offense under the criminal code, despite the government’s commitments to the relevant UN treaty bodies that it would introduce such a law criminalizing torture. PCATI reported a continuous upward trend in the number of cases of ISA using “special means,” with 60 cases of alleged physical torture during interrogations, based on data compiled by PCATI through interviews and examination of Palestinians incarcerated or formerly held in detention for suspected security offenses, some of which were filed during the year and some in previous years. PCATI stated the government’s system for investigating allegations of mistreatment of detainees showed persistent and systemic shortcomings. According to PCATI, the average

time it takes authorities to address complaints increased from 44 months in 2020 to 56 months during the year. The Ministry of Justice stated that its internal reviews led to the opening of two investigations since 2018. PCATI claimed that more than 1,300 complaints of ISA torture were submitted to the Ministry of Justice since 2001 but resulted in only one criminal investigation and no indictments.

On January 24, the attorney general announced “no sufficient evidence was found to justify an indictment” of security officials in the case of Samer al-Arbid, a Palestinian suspect in the 2019 killing of Rina Shnerb near the settlement of Dolev in the West Bank. PCATI alleged the ISA used “exceptional measures” in interrogating al-Arbid, who was admitted to a hospital unconscious and with serious injuries following an interrogation.

The government stated that requests from prisoners for independent medical examination at the prisoner’s expense are reviewed by an Israel Prison Service (IPS) medical team. According to PCATI and Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI), IPS medics and doctors ignored bruises and injuries resulting from violent arrests and interrogations. In its 2016 review of the country’s compliance with the UN Convention against Torture, the UN Committee against Torture recommended (among 50 other recommendations) that the government provide for independent medical examinations for all detainees.

On June 12, Haaretz released footage taken from Ketziot prison in 2019 showing IPS officers gathering approximately 55 Palestinian prisoners in restraints, throwing them to the floor, beating them with batons, and kicking them while they were bent over with their hands cuffed. According to a report documenting the incident, the prisoners were ordered not to move or speak for hours. The IPS responded that prisoners at Ketziot prison were planning a terror attack and that a prisoner had tried to kill two prison officers and was subsequently indicted for attempted murder.

On April 7, the State Attorney’s Office decided to close the investigation into the alleged severe sexual assault by the Shin Bet and IDF of a young Palestinian woman in 2015 for lack of evidence. The victim alleged officers carried out a nonconsensual and intrusive vaginal and anal search. According to an April 22 Haaretz report, all individuals involved in the incident were promoted except for

the female soldier who carried out the search (along with a female military doctor). PCATI claimed the search was carried out in violation of the Criminal Procedure Law, which regulates the exceptional circumstances in which an invasive search may be conducted. The law requires the consent of the suspect, a court order, and an appropriate place to conduct the search. According to PCATI, because the suspect objected to the search, the incident constituted a serious sexual assault. PCATI called on authorities to reconsider the decision not to prosecute the officials involved and urged their immediate dismissal from public service.

On June 7, the Adalah (“Justice” in Arabic) human rights and legal center filed a complaint with the attorney general and DIPO demanding a criminal investigation against Nazareth police station officers for allegedly attacking and beating detainees including minors, bystanders, and lawyers in the city’s police station. Adalah asserted that the testimonies from detainees, attorneys, and paramedics revealed systemic police brutality and physical, verbal, and psychological abuse of Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel. These testimonies indicated what Adalah described as a “torture room” inside the Nazareth police station after police officers led detainees to a room forcing them to sit on the floor handcuffed, to lower their heads towards the floor, and began to beat them.

In 2020 a district court convicted Amiram Ben Uliel on three murder charges, two attempted murder charges, arson, and conspiracy to commit a crime motivated by racism, for his role in an arson attack in Duma in 2015 that killed a Palestinian couple and their infant. On September 14, the court sentenced Ben Uliel to three life sentences plus 20 years and ordered him to pay a monetary fine. Ben Uliel appealed the conviction to the Supreme Court, which was pending at year’s end.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

The law provides that prisoners and detainees have the right to conditions that do not harm their health or dignity.

Physical Conditions: Local human rights organizations reported Palestinian security prisoners (those convicted or suspected of nationalistically motivated violence) often faced more restrictive conditions than prisoners characterized as criminals. Restrictive conditions included increased incidences of administrative

detention, restricted family visits, ineligibility for temporary furloughs, and solitary confinement. The IPS held the former leader of the banned Northern Islamic Movement, Sheikh Raed Salah, in solitary confinement during half of his 28-month prison sentence, according to Salah's statement upon his release on December 13.

The NGO Ma'avarim – Israeli Trans Community, noted that in January a 26-year-old trans woman was held in Abu Kabir detention center in solitary confinement due to her status as transgender.

On November 22, the Association for Civil Rights (ACRI) and PCATI petitioned the High Court, demanding police immediately install cameras in all police entry checkpoint posts at the Damascus Gate following publicly released social media footage of alleged severe police violence against Palestinian detainees.

The Public Defender's Office publishes a detailed annual report reviewing the conditions of detention and imprisonment in the country, based on official visits made by representatives of the Public Defender's Office to the various detention centers and facilities under the responsibility of the IPS, Israel Police, and the courts. In its 2021 report, the Public Defender's Office continued to warn of severe overcrowding in Israeli detention facilities, violating the inmates' rights, including their right to "respect, privacy, and health."

The Public Defender's Office annual report detailed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on conditions of imprisonment, including limitations on lawyers' and family visits, conjugal visits and inmate vacations, rehabilitation, work performed both inside and outside of prisons, as well as on the physical presence of detainees and inmates in their legal hearings. The in-person participation of detainees and inmates in their legal hearings was restricted and limited to secure video conference alternatives, which caused "severe damage" to their basic legal rights, according to the Public Defender's Office.

The Public Defender's Office found deficiencies in eight detention facilities regarding the holding of adult inmates in isolation or separation, with some of the facilities' holding wings in poor condition. The Public Defender's Office assessed that despite efforts to expand rehabilitation programs offered to prisoners in 2019-

20, many inmates in detention facilities still did not enjoy access to such programs. The report also detailed shortcomings in providing medical care, appropriate living conditions, hygiene and sanitation, and food quality and quantity. The Public Defender's Office further found the prison system did not always honor the right for attorney-client meetings, issued excessive punishment for discipline problems, failed to treat prisoners appropriately, and violated prisoners' privacy.

In 2017 the Supreme Court ruled that the state must provide living space no smaller than 48 square feet (including toilet and shower) per prisoner and mandated a timeline by which the state must comply with the requirements in two phases a year and a half from the day of the ruling. Despite several time extensions provided by the court, the state had yet to comply with the mandate and notified the Supreme Court that for the time being, only approximately 40 percent of detention facilities provide the required minimum living space. In 2018 the Knesset passed a temporary law, which has since been extended, granting early release of prisoners (excluding Palestinian security prisoners) to facilitate the implementation of the verdict. According to the Public Defender's Office, to comply with the Supreme Court's mandate, the state must investigate possible alternative approaches to arrests and imprisonments for minor infractions. On February 14, the High Court postponed the implementation date of the section of the ruling requiring 48 square feet per prisoner, extending the original deadline of June 2017 to December 31. On June 29, the court ruled that the deadline applied to Shin Bet security facilities as well.

As of December, the government had not applied a 2015 law authorizing force-feeding under specific conditions of prisoners on hunger strikes. The Israel Medical Association declared the law unethical and urged doctors to refuse to implement it. Regulations stipulate that medical treatment must be provided in reasonable quality and time, based on medical considerations, and within the resources and funding available for the IPS. Regulations also allow the IPS to deny medical treatment if there are budgetary concerns, according to the PHRI.

A report published by the PHRI in 2019 pointed to significant failures in the IPS medical system. The report assessed that the separate health-care system for prisoners was unable to provide services equivalent to those provided to the general population through enrollment in government-sponsored health

maintenance organizations (HMOs). According to the PHRI's findings, the services did not meet the accepted HMO standards, and in half of the incidents examined, there was a risk posed to the health of the inmates due to substandard treatment or denial of treatment. PHRI recommendations included applying national HMO standards to medical care provided in IPS facilities, establishing a professional and efficient supervision mechanism to govern medical services provided by IPS, and increasing the opportunities for outside medical practitioners to provide care in prisons.

Data received by PHRI from the IPS following a Freedom of Information request highlighted that between August 2020 and March, of the 2,758 prisoners who were considered in risk groups for Hepatitis C, only 654 were tested. The IPS reported that in 2020, only 54 prisoners who tested positive for Hepatitis C received treatment, compared with 53 in 2019, demonstrating insufficient medical testing and treatment of those needing it, PHRI argued.

On July 8, a prisoner filed a lawsuit against the IPS for denying him access to appropriate medical services for two days after he was subjected to electric shocks in his cell. The prisoner claimed a warden teased him for being overweight while the prison medic only gave him a pain killer.

Administration: Authorities conducted proper investigations of credible allegations of mistreatment, except as noted above. The government granted visitation permits to family members of prisoners from the West Bank only on a limited basis and restricted those entering from Gaza more severely.

Independent Monitoring: Despite COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in the country, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) maintained its visits to detention facilities (including interrogation centers) with adapted visiting procedures to monitor conditions of detention, detainee treatment, and detainee access to family contacts. The ICRC also monitored humanitarian consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures on Palestinian detainees and their families and continued engaging relevant authorities in this regard. The ICRC's family visit program – through which families of Palestinian detainees may visit their relatives in Israeli custody – remained suspended for families from Gaza due to COVID-19 pandemic movement restrictions on both sides of the Gaza

border.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

Israeli civil law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court.

The government generally observed these requirements, although NGOs identified cases where the requirements were not followed, and Israeli authorities also did not always apply the same laws to all residents of Jerusalem, regardless of their Israeli citizenship status.

NGOs and Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem alleged that Israeli security forces disproportionately devoted enforcement actions to Palestinian neighborhoods, particularly Issawiya and Sheikh Jarrah, with higher numbers of temporary checkpoints and raids than in West Jerusalem. For example, on August 10, the IDF detained Sheikh Jarrah resident and activist Murad Ateah and subsequently extended his detention multiple times without charge before charging him with organizing activities that disturbed the peace in the neighborhood. His first hearing was scheduled for September 30 and his detention was subsequently extended 12 times to January 12, 2022.

Israeli press also reported on “serious violent behavior” by Israeli police towards Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. Among complaints reportedly filed with the Police Internal Investigations Department, the report quoted a 16-year-old boy’s allegations that he was stripped and beaten in a public washroom; alleged that a 60-year-old Palestinian woman was handcuffed and dragged across the floor; cited a female journalist’s complaint she was subjected to sexist comments during an interrogation; reported that a youth was attacked in Jerusalem’s city center; and stated that another child was dragged out of bed in the middle of the night, falsely identified as someone else, and his family members were beaten. Jerusalem police force described the report as “distorted and one-sided” but did not dispute any of the details reported. Palestinians also criticized police for devoting fewer resources per capita to regular crime and community policing in Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem. According to NGOs, police did not maintain a permanent presence in areas of Jerusalem outside the barrier, dividing the majority of the West Bank from Israel and some communities in Jerusalem, and only

entered to conduct raids. Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza detained on security grounds fell under military jurisdiction, even if detained inside Israel (see West Bank and Gaza section).

The government may detain without trial and for an indefinite period irregular migrants who were “implicated in criminal proceedings.” According to the NGO Hotline for Refugees and Migrants (HRM), this policy enabled indefinite detention either without a trial or following the completion of time served.

During the 11-day Israeli military operation against terrorist organizations in Gaza and contemporaneous civil unrest within Israel from May 6 to 21, civil rights groups claimed police blocked main highways and limited the movement of Bedouin residents following demonstrations in Rahat, Laqiya, and Shaqib al-Salam.

On May 24, police launched an operation deploying thousands of police and border police forces to arrest suspected rioters, criminals, and others instigating unrest in several predominantly mixed Jewish-Arab cities, as defined by the government, in Israel during the month of May. According to police, the goal of the operation was to prosecute those involved in the unrest by filing charges of possession and trade in weapons, arson, property offenses, membership in crime organizations, and economic offenses. In addition, police stated the operation would restore deterrence, increase governance, and maintain the personal security of Israeli citizens. The High Follow-up Committee (HFUC), an organization of Arab/Palestinian citizen leaders, asserted the goal of the operation was to intimidate Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel. The HFUC cautioned that the operation could rekindle strife within Israel’s mixed communities after a relative calm following the mutual cessation of hostilities following the May escalation in violence.

On June 3, police announced the end of the operation after it had resulted in 2,142 arrests and 184 indictments against 285 defendants. According to police, 322 officers were injured during the operation. *Haaretz* reported that Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel constituted 91 percent of the arrests for suspicion of involvement in riots across the country from the day before commencement of the country’s May military campaign until June 3.

On May 11, Arab/Palestinian Israeli citizen students from Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva organized a protest government practices in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem and violence against Arab/Palestinian citizens. Shortly before the protest concluded, far-right counterdemonstrators confronted the Arab/Palestinian Israeli citizen students, leading police to intervene and arrest several of the students. Police did not arrest counterdemonstrators, according to media reports and civil rights groups. After the demonstration concluded, a special police unit joined by the university's security forces reportedly violently attacked and arrested eight additional Arab/Palestinian citizen students near the dormitories, five of whom were later released and three of whom were charged with assaulting police officers, disruption, and causing disorder and violence.

On February 22, the Human Rights Defenders Fund (HRDF) and the NGO Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF) reported that police arbitrarily arrested 15 Arab Bedouin citizens who were protesting government efforts to plough approximately 690 acres of land in the villages of al-Garrah, al-Ruays, and Sawah, which resulted in accidental damage to a pipe that provided clean drinking water for residents. The HRDF and NCF alleged police conduct was "unacceptable."

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Police must have a warrant based on sufficient evidence and issued by an authorized official to arrest a suspect. Excluding those in administrative detention, authorities generally informed defendants promptly of charges against them. The law allows authorities to detain suspects without charge for 24 hours prior to appearing before a judge, with limited exceptions allowing for up to 48 hours. Authorities generally respected these rights for persons arrested in the country; the judge then has the authority to extend the detention for a period of up to 15 days at a time to a total of 30 days. There is a functioning bail system, and detainees may appeal decisions denying bail. Authorities allow detainees to consult with an attorney in a timely manner, including one provided by the government for the indigent, and to contact family members promptly.

According to a May 2020 *State Comptroller's Report*, police data on the number of criminal arrests were incomplete. For example, in the years 2016-18, the data did

not include records of approximately 123,000 arrests. Police do not document in an orderly manner all the actions they must take to ensure detainees exercise their right to consult a lawyer, including data on the time of submission of a request for the appointment of a defense attorney, according to the state comptroller. The Court Administration and the Public Defender have claimed during the past decade that police underutilized their authority to release detainees on parole and instead detained them unnecessarily until they were brought to court. In addition, according to the comptroller's report, large sums of money deposited as bail bonds accumulated and nearly half the funds, totaling approximately 148 million Israel new shekels (\$47 million), were not returned to those entitled to them as of 2019.

Authorities detained most Palestinian prisoners within Israel. Authorities prosecuted under Israeli military law Palestinians held in Israel who were not citizens, a practice the government has applied since 1967. Israel does not prosecute Israeli citizens who commit similar crimes in the West Bank under Israeli law. The government has asserted in domestic court proceedings that this practice is consistent with international obligations related to military occupation. Some human rights groups, including Military Court Watch, claimed that the country's detention of the majority of convicted Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza in prisons inside Israel was a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. According to the circumstances of each case, such as the severity of the alleged offense, status as a minor, risk of escape, or other factors, authorities either granted or denied bail to Palestinians detained for security violations.

Authorities may prosecute persons detained on security grounds criminally or hold them as administrative detainees or illegal combatants, according to one of three legal regimes.

First, under a temporary law on criminal procedures, repeatedly renewed since 2006, the IPS may hold persons suspected of a security offense for 48 hours and, with limited exceptions, detain a suspect for up to 96 hours prior to bringing them before a judge. In security-related cases, authorities may hold a person for up to 35 days without an indictment (versus 30 days for nonsecurity cases). The law allows the court to extend detentions on security grounds for an initial period of up to 20 days for interrogation without an indictment (versus 15 days for nonsecurity cases). Authorities may deny security detainees access to an attorney for up to 21

days under civilian procedures.

Second, the Emergency Powers Law allows the Ministry of Defense to detain persons administratively without charge for up to six months, renewable indefinitely.

Third, the Illegal Combatant Law permits authorities to hold detainees for 14 days before review by a district court judge, deny them access to counsel for up to 21 days with the attorney general's approval, and allow indefinite detention, subject to semiannual district court reviews and appeals to the Supreme Court.

The government stated it used solitary confinement only when a detainee threatened himself or others and authorities had exhausted other options or, in some cases during interrogation, to prevent disclosure of information. In such cases, authorities maintained the detainee had the right to meet with International Committee of the Red Cross representatives, IPS personnel, and medical personnel, if necessary. According to the government, the IPS did not hold Palestinian detainees in separate detention punitively or to induce confessions. NGOs, including Military Court Watch, HaMoked, and B'Tselem, accused authorities of using isolation to punish or silence politically prominent Palestinian detainees.

Palestinian sources reported the IPS placed in isolation, without a full medical evaluation, Palestinian detainees with mental disabilities or who were a threat to themselves or others. According to the PHRI, isolation of Palestinian prisoners with mental disabilities was common.

Arbitrary Arrest: There were allegations that authorities arbitrarily arrested Israeli citizens and Palestinians who participated in protests.

On January 14, during a protest in Nazareth against the visit of then prime minister Netanyahu, police arrested 19 Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel. According to Adalah, officers hindered evacuation of two wounded protesters who required urgent medical attention, including a young man who underwent surgery to treat a head wound and another who suffered a severe leg wound. Joint List Knesset members who participated in the demonstration protested police actions to forcefully remove them, which they claim violated their parliamentary immunity.

According to the Human Rights Defenders Fund, police forces employed disproportionate crowd dispersal measures, including water cannons.

Pretrial Detention: Administrative detention continued to result in lengthy pretrial detention for security detainees (see above). According to the government, as of December 13, the country held 501 detainees under administrative detention, including two Arab/Palestinian citizens, nine Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, and 490 Palestinians from the West Bank.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality.

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair and public trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. Exceptions to the right for a public trial include national security concerns, protection of the interest of a minor or an individual requiring special protection, and protection of the identity of an accuser or defendant in a sex-offense case. The law permits publishing the identity of a survivor of a sex offense, provided the survivor gives written consent for publication.

Defendants enjoy the rights to a presumption of innocence, to be informed in detail of the charges against them within 30 days of arrest, to a fair and public trial without undue delay, and to be present at their trial. Defendants may consult with an attorney or, if indigent, have one provided at public expense. They have the right to adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense. Defendants who cannot understand or speak the language used in court have the right to free interpretation as necessary from the moment charges are filed through all appeals. Defendants have the right to confront witnesses against them and to present witnesses and evidence on their own behalf. They may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt and may appeal to the Supreme Court.

The state comptroller examined and found in a May 18 report that the appointment of a state attorney during the preliminary stages of an investigation blurs the

delineation between the responsibilities of investigative units and the prosecution. The report noted the powers of state attorneys are not anchored in legislation and guidelines and there is no uniformity in the way state attorneys are assigned. According to the state comptroller, a basic rule of criminal procedure is to maintain a separation between the investigating body and the prosecuting body and to maintain the independence of the prosecutor's legal discretion.

The prosecution is under a general obligation following an indictment to provide all evidence to the defense. The government may on security grounds withhold from defense lawyers evidence it has gathered that is not for use in its case against the accused. The Supreme Court may scrutinize the decision to withhold such evidence in civilian courts, while the Court of Appeals has jurisdiction for military courts. The rules of evidence in espionage cases tried in criminal court do not differ from the normal rules of evidence, and no use of secret evidence is permissible, although trials and hearings may be held behind closed doors under gag order restrictions.

In August 2020 the Knesset passed a law, extended on August 11 to the end of the year, that permitted virtual hearings with prisoners and detainees during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. While authorities usually allowed visits from lawyers and stated that every inmate who requested to meet with an attorney was able to do so, this was not always the case. Inmates protested the lack of attorney access with hunger strikes, and their families demonstrated in front of the house of the minister of public security. NGOs monitoring prison conditions reported that adult and juvenile Palestinian detainees were denied access to a lawyer during their initial arrests.

The government tried Palestinian residents of the West Bank accused of security offenses in Israeli military courts.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

Some human rights organizations claimed that Palestinian security prisoners held in Israel should be considered political prisoners. The government described security prisoners as those convicted or suspected of nationalistically motivated violence.

Israeli legal scholars argued that Israel holds Palestinian prisoners in Israeli facilities in violation of international law. The practice of holding Palestinian prisoners in Israel has been challenged twice in the Supreme Court, and in both cases the court ruled that the practice was permitted based on the country's emergency defense regulations.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

An independent and impartial judiciary adjudicates lawsuits seeking damages for, or cessation of, human rights violations. Administrative remedies exist, and court orders usually were enforced. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem may file suit against the government of Israel under the same rules that govern access to judicial and administrative remedies by Israeli citizens. By law nonresident Palestinians may file suit in civil courts to obtain compensation in some cases, even when a criminal suit is unsuccessful and the actions against them are considered legal.

Property Seizure and Restitution

In May significant protests broke out against several eviction proceedings in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. Jewish landowners and their descendants, land trusts representing the families, or Jewish organizations that had purchased their titles have advanced claims under Israeli law to reclaim property they had abandoned in East Jerusalem during fighting prior to 1949, but Palestinian landowners who abandoned property in Israel in the same period have no reciprocal right under Israeli law to stake their legal claim to the property (see section 1.e.). In some cases, private Jewish organizations acquired legal ownership of reclaimed Jewish property in East Jerusalem, including in the Old City, and through protracted judicial action sought to evict Palestinian families living there, particularly in the neighborhoods of Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah. The eviction cases brought by a pro-settler organization, Nahalat Shimon, before the Supreme Court against four families in Sheikh Jarrah was one of the reasons Hamas claimed as pretext for the May 10-21 military conflict. According to the government, all land ownership cases are assessed individually by an administrative committee and are subject to judicial review.

According to Ir Amim and B'Tselem, ethnic discrimination was a factor in

resolving disputes regarding land titles acquired before 1948. The law facilitates the resolution of claims by Jewish owners to land owned in East Jerusalem prior to 1948 but does not provide an equal opportunity for Palestinian claimants to land they owned in West Jerusalem or elsewhere in the British Mandate. Additionally, some Jewish and Palestinian landowners in Jerusalem were offered compensation by Israel for property lost prior to 1948. Civil society reports noted that many Palestinian landowners were deemed ineligible for compensation because they were not residents of Jerusalem as of 1973. Other Palestinian landowners refused to accept compensation because they deemed it to be inadequate or in principle due to their rejection of Israeli administration. Jordanian authorities between 1948 and 1967 housed Palestinians in some property that Jewish owners reclaimed after Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967. Legal disputes continue regarding many of these properties involving Palestinian residents, who have limited protection as tenants under Israeli law. Landlords may request permission to evict tenants, demolish their homes, or both if they receive permission to rezone the property.

The Israeli government and settler organizations in Jerusalem continued to make efforts to increase property ownership in the municipality by Jewish Israelis. Some civil society organizations and representatives of the Palestinian Authority stated these efforts sought to emphasize Jewish history in Palestinian neighborhoods through increased numbers of Jewish residents. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and NGOs such as Bimkom and Ir Amim alleged that the goal of Jerusalem municipal and Israeli national policies was to decrease the total number of Palestinians residing in Jerusalem and claimed that Israeli authorities aimed to designate approximately 30 percent of East Jerusalem for Israeli neighborhoods/settlements.

Palestinians were able in some cases to rent or purchase Israeli-owned property – including private property on government-owned land – but faced significant barriers to both. NGOs stated that after accounting for Israeli neighborhoods/settlements, government property, and declared national parks, only 13 percent of all land in East Jerusalem was available for home construction by Palestinians. In addition, NGOs asserted that there was a continued policy intended to limit construction to prevent the creation or maintenance of contiguous neighborhoods between the West Bank and Jerusalem. Israeli official policy

remained aimed at maintaining an ethnic balance between Jews and non-Jews in Jerusalem, according to civil society reports. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the Jerusalem Municipality did not have any such policy. Israeli law no longer prevents non-Jews from purchasing housing units, although cultural, religious, and economic barriers to integrated neighborhoods remained, according to civil society representatives.

In 2016 the state comptroller recommended the government quickly act to settle land claims, plan resettlement of Bedouin citizens in cooperation with the Bedouin community, develop infrastructure in recognized Bedouin communities, and formulate an enforcement policy regarding illegal construction. A 2017 law increased the government's authority to demolish unpermitted structures. Construction remained illegal in towns that did not have an authorized plan for development. Arab/Palestinian members of the Knesset and human rights organizations condemned the law for increasing enforcement and demolitions without addressing the systemic housing shortages in Arab communities that led to unpermitted construction. According to human rights organizations, approximately 50,000 Arab families lived in unpermitted houses.

Some NGOs criticized the lack of Arab/Palestinian representation on regional planning and zoning approval committees and stated that planning for Arab/Palestinian areas was much slower than for Jewish municipalities, leading Arab/Palestinian citizens to build or expand their homes without legal authorization, thus risking a government-issued demolition order. Authorities issued approximately 1,770 administrative and judicial demolition orders during the year, overwhelmingly against Arab/Palestinian-owned structures. In cases of demolitions with no agreement from the residents to relocate, the government levied monetary fines against residents to cover the costs of demolitions.

A development plan for the Bedouin village of al-Fura'a was not completed as of the end of the year, despite government recognition of the village in 2006. As a result the village lacked basic electricity and water infrastructure, and NGOs reported frequent house demolitions. The government stated that a team from the Ministry of Agriculture Authority for the Development and Settlement of Bedouin in the Negev began working on the matter in the second half of 2018 after completing a survey of 180 Bedouin residential clusters.

The government stated it used a “carrot and stick” approach to attempt to compel Bedouin Israeli citizens to move from 35 unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev inhabited by approximately 90,000 persons into government-recognized villages. Tactics included demolishing unpermitted structures and offering incentives to move to Bedouin towns. According to a state comptroller report and information from NGOs, Bedouins often refused to participate because they asserted they either owned the land or that the government had given them prior permission to settle in their existing locations. Bedouins also feared losing their traditional livelihoods and way of life as well as moving onto land claimed by a rival Bedouin clan. The seven Bedouin townships in the Negev were all crowded, especially in comparison with the Jewish towns and cities in the area, and had low-quality infrastructure and inadequate access to services for health, education, welfare, public transportation, mail, and garbage disposal, according to the state comptroller. According to the NGO Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF), Bedouins accounted for 34 percent of the population of the Negev, but only 12.5 percent of the residential-zoned land was designated for the Bedouin population.

As of 2019, approximately 31 percent of the 191,965 acres of Arab Bedouin land in the south of the country that was previously under disputed ownership was no longer in dispute as a result of either settlement agreements or following legal proceedings, according to the government. In addition, the government stated that an additional 25,240 acres of disputed land were registered as state lands while the process to determine ownership remained open.

The NCF reported there were 2,568 demolitions of Bedouin citizen structures in 2020, citing information gained through freedom of information requests to the government. The NCF asserted the demolition policy violated Bedouin citizens access to adequate housing, despite the instruction of the attorney general to reduce demolition warrants and police presence after civil society organizations sent a request to halt demolitions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The NCF noted that house demolitions negatively impacted thousands of children from the Arab Bedouin communities, harmed their mental health, and hindered socio-emotional growth, especially considering the COVID-19 global pandemic. Other civil society contacts stated the demolitions ignored traditional Bedouin seminomadic

lifestyles predating the modern state of Israel.

In addition to the Negev, authorities ordered demolition of private property elsewhere, including in Arab towns and villages and in East Jerusalem, stating some structures were built without permits. B'Tselem reported that authorities demolished 121 housing units in East Jerusalem, and owners had demolished 81 units to avoid additional government-imposed fines as of year's end. This represented a decrease of 28 percent and an increase of 92 percent, respectively, with the number of owner-initiated demolitions the highest since B'Tselem began compiling data in 2008. The number of home demolitions in 2020 was nearly 75 percent higher than the annual average prior to the enactment of the Kaminitz Law and almost 40 percent higher than in 2019, which was the first year the law was fully applied, according to NGOs tracking the matter. Legal experts pointed to the Kaminitz Law, which reduced administrative processing times for demolitions, blocked courts from intervening in many cases, and increased administrative fines for those failing to demolish their own buildings, as a key factor in the increased number of demolitions in East Jerusalem. There were credible claims that municipal authorities in Jerusalem often placed insurmountable obstacles against Palestinian residents who applied for construction permits, including failure to incorporate community needs into zoning decisions, the requirement that they document land ownership despite the absence of a uniform post-1967 land registration process, the imposition of high application fees, and requirements to connect housing to municipal infrastructure that was often unavailable.

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

The law prohibits such actions, and the government generally respected those prohibitions for Israeli citizens.

The 2003 Law of Citizenship and Entry, which was renewed annually until July because the Knesset did not extend it, prohibited Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza, Iranians, Iraqis, Syrians, and Lebanese, including those who are Palestinian spouses of Israeli residents or citizens, from obtaining resident status unless the Ministry of the Interior made a special determination, usually on humanitarian grounds. The government extended the law annually due to

government reports that Palestinian family reunification allowed entry to a disproportionate number of persons who were later involved in acts of terrorism. HaMoked asserted that statistics from government documents obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests contradicted the terrorism allegations and that the denial of residency to Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza for the purposes of family reunification led to cases of family separation. In 2020 the Population and Immigration Authority received 1,354 family unification requests. As of year's end, the Population and Immigration Authority had received 1,680 family unification requests.

HaMoked reported that, of the more than 2,000 requests filed in the previous two years, most were for West Bank Palestinians married to Israelis or East Jerusalemites. On September 14, HaMoked, ACRI, and PHRI filed a petition demanding the Ministry of Interior respect the law and process the requests. On October 6, the head of the Population and Immigration Authority, Tomer Moskowitz, stated that the Ministry of Interior was continuing to implement the prior law as if it had not expired. The government's response on November 11 supported Shaked's continued handling of Palestinians' requests in accordance with the now-expired regulations, claiming that Shaked could continue to implement "interim procedures and regulations" until an amendment was passed. On November 15, the court rejected the request for an injunction by the petitioners prohibiting the handling of requests based on the expired law. As a result, on November 17, the petitioners appealed to the Supreme Court. The petitions were pending at the year's end. Israeli authorities confirmed at the end of the year that in accordance with the government's decision from 2008 regarding the extension of the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Order), the minister of the interior was instructed not to approve any requests for family reunification received from Gaza. This decision was made due to Israeli security authorities' assessment of the security threats emanating from Gaza which put the security of Israel and its citizens at risk, according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials.

According to press reports, as of 2020 there were approximately 13,000 Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza living in Israel, including Jerusalem, on temporary stay permits because of the Citizenship and Entry law, with no legal provision that they would be able to continue living with their families. There

were also cases of Palestinian spouses living in East Jerusalem without legal status. Authorities did not permit Palestinians who were abroad during the 1967 war or whose residency permits the government subsequently withdrew to reside permanently in Jerusalem. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations called on the government to repeal the law and resume processing family unification applications. The law allows for the entry of spouses of Israelis on a “staying permit” if the male spouse is age 35 or older and the female spouse is age 25 or older, for children up to age 14, and for a special permit for children ages 14-18, but they may not receive residency and have no path to citizenship. According to the government, as of July the Population and Immigration Authority (PIBA) had received 774 family unification requests for the calendar year, compared with 1,354 requests received in 2020.

The government continued to renew an emergency regulation allowing Shin Bet to track mobile phones to identify individuals in close contact with confirmed COVID-19 patients for quarantining purposes. Beginning on March 14, following a Supreme Court ruling, Shin Bet tracking was limited only to cases where a patient did not cooperate with an epidemiological investigation. On March 30, a Knesset Committee did not vote to approve the extension of the emergency regulations. In July the law allowing Shin Bet’s tracking expired. On November 28, the government approved by emergency regulation the use of Shin Bet tracking for those carrying the Omicron variant. Despite the Supreme Court’s rejection of a petition against the tracking on December 2, the government did not renew the regulation after its expiration on December 2.

On June 7, ACRI sent a letter to the attorney general arguing there are constitutional defects in Shin Bet’s compilation of data from all mobile phone users in Israel, which was exposed in 2020. According to ACRI, the database and its use violated the right to privacy, minimized individual freedoms, including freedom of expression, by creating a chilling effect, and the database risked being abused by Shin Bet, the prime minister, or by other forces in case of leaks. ACRI demanded the creation of legal protections to provide for external supervision to balance the country’s security needs and individual rights.

On July 20, ACRI submitted a petition to the Supreme Court demanding the cancelation of government resolutions which allowed the government to expand

the Shin Bet's role without amending the Shin Bet law. The petition stated that since 2004, the government added four roles to Shin Bet's functions and authorities, the last of which was the tracking of mobile phones in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The petition was pending at the year's end. On March 4, the Movement for Quality Government in Israel filed a freedom of information petition with the Jerusalem District Court for information regarding the police request to internet providers to provide data on police suspects and individuals visiting specific websites or internet protocol addresses to a police-controlled system. The petition was pending at the year's end.

The law allows police access to telecommunications data, including incoming calls, location data, and online activity, when investigating crimes, based on a court order or without one in urgent cases. According to police information obtained by Privacy Israel through a freedom of information request, police filed 40,677 requests for access to such data, 16,644 of the requests were without a court order. The courts granted police access in 40,502 cases. The number of requests has risen steadily in previous years, increasing 64 percent since 2016. Approximately 20 percent of the offenses investigated were minor offenses, such as bicycle theft or traffic offenses.

g. Conflict-related Abuses

Killings: During the 11-day conflict from May 10 to 21, Palestinian militants in Gaza launched 4,400 rockets and mortar shells toward Israel. According to the IDF, 680 of these rockets misfired and landed in Gaza, causing Palestinian casualties. The IDF launched 1,500 airstrikes against targets in Gaza during the conflict. According to the Israeli government, NGOs, and media outlets, Gaza-based militants fired rockets from civilian locations toward civilian targets in Israel, including large salvos towards dense population centers. Israeli airstrikes destroyed 1,800 homes, including five residential towers. According to UNOCHA, during the May escalation, 261 Palestinians were killed, including 67 children. At least 241 of the fatalities were by Israeli forces, and the rest due to rockets falling short of their intended targets and other circumstances. An estimated 130 Palestinian fatalities were civilians and 77 were members of armed groups, while the status of the remaining 54 has not been determined. More than 2,200 Palestinians were injured, including 685 children and 480 women, some of

whom may suffer a long-term disability requiring rehabilitation. In Israel, 13 individuals, including two children, were killed, and 710 others were injured. Palestinian rocket fire killed 20 Palestinians, including seven minors. A member of the Israeli security forces was killed by an antitank missile fired by a Palestinian organization. At the height of the fighting, 113,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) sought shelter and protection at UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools or with hosting families. According to the UN's Shelter Cluster, which is responsible for tracking and assisting with provision of housing and shelter, there remain approximately 8,250 IDPs, primarily those whose houses were destroyed or severely damaged.

Human rights groups condemned Hamas's and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's targeting of civilians as well as Israel's targeting of civilian infrastructure. The Israeli government stated that Hamas and others were using this civilian infrastructure for cover, including offices within the buildings and tunnel infrastructure beneath them. A Hamas tunnel was found, for example, under an UNRWA school in Gaza, and Hamas temporarily turned away bomb disposal experts brought in by the UN Mine Action Service and UNRWA to ensure the school was safe to open, delaying the work being undertaken to remove two deeply buried bombs that had struck the school during the airstrikes. The IDF also destroyed a building that contained the headquarters for several international media organizations, such as the Associated Press (AP) and al-Jazeera. The IDF stated that its intelligence showed that Hamas used the building for its operations. AP and others including journalists and civil society organizations, continued to call for an investigation, and the government has not made public the intelligence that led to the strike. Prior to and following the May conflict, Gaza-based militants routinely launched rockets, released incendiary balloons, and organized protests at the Gaza fence, drawing airstrikes from the IDF. These exchanges resulted in the deaths of three Palestinians and one Israeli border police officer since the end of the May conflict.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and

Other Media

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

Freedom of Expression: The law prohibits hate speech and content liable to incite to violence or discrimination on grounds of race, origin, religion, nationality, and gender. In cases of speech that are defined as incitement to violence or hate speech, the law empowers police to limit freedom of expression.

The law also restricts freedom of expression by imposing tort liability on any person who knowingly issues a public call for an economic, cultural, or academic boycott of the State of Israel or of institutions or entities in Israel or areas under its control in the West Bank. Plaintiffs must prove direct economic harm to claim damages under the law. The law also permits the finance minister to impose administrative sanctions on those calling for such a boycott, including restrictions on participating in tenders for contracts with the government and denial of government benefits.

On March 30, the Israel Prize Judges Committee for Math and Science petitioned to the Supreme Court against then minister of education Yoav Galant's decision to deny its recommendation to grant the 2021 Israel Prize to Professor Oded Goldreich. Galant denied the recommendation due to statements Goldreich made and the signing of a petition calling for the EU not to cooperate with the Ariel University, which is in an Israeli settlement in the West Bank. On July 22, the attorney general, in his response to the court, stated the decision not to grant the award to Goldreich exceeded "the range of reasonableness and could not stand legally," as Goldreich stated he is not a boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) supporter, and his actions did not amount to an up-to-date, significant BDS activity. On August 12, the Supreme Court cancelled the minister's decision and returned the committee's recommendation to the education minister for adjudication. On November 18, Minister of Education Yifat Shasha-Biton decided not to grant Goldreich the prize for the same reasons. The Judges Committee again

submitted a petition to the Supreme Court, which was pending at the year's end. The law bars entry to the country of visitors who are actively, consistently, and persistently calling for boycotts.

Conviction of desecrating the Israeli flag carries a maximum penalty of three years in prison and a fine. Waving a Palestinian flag is a criminal offense, but according to a 2014 attorney general legal opinion it should only be enforced in cases of a credible suspicion that the flag waving represents support for a terrorist organization or when there is a high likelihood that flag waving will lead to a serious disturbance of the peace. During the year police confiscated Palestinian flags and arrested activists waving flags during demonstrations. In September *Haaretz* published a report that Minister of Public Security Omer Bar-Lev instructed police to take such measures only under exceptional circumstances. According to the government, no action should be taken to remove Palestinian flags unless there is a high probability that waving the flag could lead to a serious violation of public order and security, and prosecution based on charges of waving a Palestinian flag are examined on a case-by-case basis (see the West Bank and Gaza report). According to the Human Rights Defenders Fund (HRDF), on September 24, police arrested four protesters who waved Palestinian flags in East Jerusalem on the suspicion of participating in a riot and disturbing the peace by undertaking such activity. One of the four protesters was hospitalized due to a head injury sustained during the arrest. All four were released without an indictment. A judge in one of the cases stated the waving of the Palestinian flag did not constitute a criminal offense.

The law prohibits individuals or organizations that initiate political or legal action abroad against IDF soldiers or the State of Israel from holding activities in schools, but the Ministry of Education had not issued regulations necessary to implement the law as of year's end. Both supporters and opponents of the law stated it was intended to target the NGO Breaking the Silence (BTS), a group of military veterans whose goal is to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. BTS criticized the law as a violation of freedom of political expression.

HRDF reported that the ISA summoned and intimidated some individuals, mainly Arab/Palestinian Israelis, for their political activism. According to HRDF, on June 27, an Arab/Palestinian Israeli woman was arrested in her home by the Shin Bet,

and taken for interrogation, while denied access to an attorney. She was questioned regarding her activism against forced evictions in Sheikh Jarrah and stated the interrogators intimidated her and threatened her family.

On January 17, following an invitation for the NGO B'Tselem's director to speak at a Haifa school, then minister of education Yoav Galant sent a letter to the ministry's director general and district managers ordering the banning from schools of NGOs that "contradict the goals of the education system, including calling Israel false and derogatory names, opposing Israel as a Jewish, Zionist, and democratic state, discouraging meaningful service in the IDF, or acting to harm or degrade IDF soldiers during or after their service." On January 18, the event took place virtually and on January 20, the school principal was summoned to a hearing at the Ministry of Education. Adalah and ACRI called the attorney general to direct the minister to rescind the order, which they stated was illegal. On July 4, the Ministry of Education's director general determined there was insufficient evidence that the principal had had "a harmful influence" on students.

On May 13, during the period of civil unrest and Israel's May military campaign, the Civil Service Commission summoned mainly Arab/Palestinian citizen public servants from the Ministry of Health to pretermination hearings to explain their political posts on social media (see section 7.d.).

Freedom of Expression for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media: Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction, with a few exceptions (see section 4).

Police regulations grant broad authorities to prevent journalists' access to violent incidents but also require authorities to minimize the violation of press freedom in efforts to cover those incidents.

Violence and Harassment: Palestinian journalists who were able to obtain entry permits as well as Jerusalem-based Arab journalists reported incidents of harassment, racism, and occasional violence when they sought to cover news in Jerusalem, especially in the Old City and its vicinity. In June the Journalists' Support Committee, a nonprofit journalist advocacy organization, stated security forces committed more than 50 human rights violations against Palestinian

journalists working in Jerusalem in the first half of the year, including arrests and expulsions from the city. In May the then public security minister Gilad Erdan extended for an additional six months the 2019 closure order against Palestine TV's East Jerusalem office, according to media reports.

During the year, 62 incidents of physical attacks against journalists, including by security forces and civilians, were reported to the Union of Journalists in the country. Israeli police officers detained, used violence against, and confiscated equipment of journalists during demonstrations in Jerusalem. On May 7, during a protest at Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, police beat Ahmad Gharabli, a Palestinian journalist with Agence France-Presse, with a baton, according to press reports. Several other journalists reported being attacked by police officers while covering events surrounding the May escalation and events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. On June 5, al-Jazeera journalist Givari Budeiri said she was beaten and arrested by police and her cameraman's equipment destroyed while she was in Sheikh Jarrah covering the 54th anniversary of the *Naksa* (or "setback"), which marks Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza in 1967. Police claimed Budeiri kicked a female Israeli soldier, which Budeiri denied. Budeiri was released after being detained by police for several hours and was banned from going to the East Jerusalem neighborhood for 15 days.

The Associated Press stated police beat photographer Mahmoud Illean on December 17 while he was covering a protest in Sheikh Jarrah. Illean was admitted to a hospital for head injuries. Police did not provide an explanation for the incident, responding that relevant authorities would investigate.

According to the Union of Journalists in Israel, at least 20 incidents occurred during the period of civil unrest in May. For example, on May 6, a police officer physically attacked Channel 12 News reporter Moshe Nussbaum after the reporter raised the problem of police violence towards protesters. On May 12, Jewish individuals in Lod attacked Channel 13 News anchorwoman Ayala Hasson and her crew with stones and tried to break their camera. At the height of the civil unrest, Channel 12 News assigned a security detail to five of its journalists following threats against them, including death threats, due to their coverage of events. On May 18, police arrested a suspect who stated he intended to harm Channel 12

News journalist Dana Weiss and her family due to her commentary on the civil unrest. The suspect later was released after expressing remorse for his comments.

On June 3, unknown suspects shot several rounds at the home and car of Ynet reporter Hassan Shaalan, who covered crime and violence matters in Arab communities in the city of Tayibe. No injuries were reported. On the night of June 18, a device detonated in the home to which Shaalan planned to relocate to in Baqa al-Gharbiyye for his safety. Police opened an investigation into the incidents.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: All media organizations must submit to the Israeli Military Censor, a unit within the IDF's Directorate of Military Intelligence, any material relating to specific security matters or strategic infrastructure matters such as oil and water supplies. Organizations may appeal the censor's decisions to the Supreme Court, and the censor may not appeal a court judgment.

News printed or broadcast abroad is subject to security censorship. The government regularly enacted restrictive orders on what it deemed to constitute sensitive security information and continuing investigations, and it required foreign correspondents and local media to abide by these orders. According to data provided by the IDF in response to a Freedom of Information Act request by *+972 Magazine*, in 2020 the censor acted on 1,403 articles of 6,421 articles submitted to it and banned 116 articles.

According to the media watchdog Seventh Eye, police continued a policy of automatically requesting gag orders during investigations of certain crimes and complex cases to prevent public discourse of active investigations. Police stated in 2020 that police only request gag orders after serious consideration based on the needs of an investigation.

While the government retained the authority to censor publications for security concerns, anecdotal evidence suggested authorities did not actively review the Jerusalem-based *al-Quds* newspaper or other Jerusalem-based Arabic publications. Editors and journalists from those publications, however, reported they engaged in self-censorship.

Libel/Slander Laws: State authorities, some NGOs, and individuals continued to

file defamation lawsuits to discourage public criticism of authorities' actions, according to HRDF. For example, according to independent media outlet HaMakom, 64 police officers filed lawsuits against 210 civilians between March 2020 and February for posting comments on social media critical of police behavior during police enforcement of COVID-19 pandemic regulations. On January 14, ACRI submitted amicus briefs in 16 such lawsuits, arguing the lawsuits were having a chilling effect on speaking out against police violence and stating that civilians' social media comments are protected speech under freedom of expression laws.

A defamation lawsuit to discourage public criticism of Israel's occupation of the West Bank filed in 2020 by the settler regional council of "Samaria" against former member of the Knesset and head of the Zulat Institute Zehava Galon for her criticism of two settlers who allegedly shot and killed a Palestinian attacker, was pending as of the year's end.

National Security: The law criminalizes as "terrorist acts" speech supporting terrorism, including public praise of a terrorist organization, the display of symbols, expression of slogans, and "incitement." The law authorizes restrictions on the release of bodies of terrorists and their funerals to prevent "incitement to terror or identification with a terrorist organization or an act of terror."

Internet Freedom

The government monitored electronic communications for security purposes and censored online content suspected as illegal according to domestic law. The law authorizes district court judges to restrict access to internet sites to prevent the commission of crimes. The Cyber Unit of the State Attorney's Office further requested that content intermediary companies remove or restrict access to, on a voluntary basis, content and accounts suspected of violating domestic law.

The number of requests for content removal submitted to the Cyber Unit by law enforcement and security services decreased from 19,606 in 2019 to 4,830 in 2020; 92 percent of the cases resulted in a Cyber Unit request to content providers for voluntary removal or limitation. Most of the requests, according to the Cyber Unit, involved publications of terror organizations, praising terror acts, and incitement to

violence and terror. The Cyber Unit reported a significant increase in content removal submissions from security agencies during the period of civil unrest and Israel's May military campaign. Between May 10 and May 19, the unit reported 1,340 such submissions, 1,010 of which contained content that violated the law. On April 12, the Supreme Court rejected a petition by ACRI and Adalah against the voluntary track program, which argued the program violates freedom of expression and the right to due process. The Supreme Court verdict deemed the voluntary track lawful but recommended adoption of a new law to standardize it as well as to establish a review mechanism for its decisions.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were few government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

The law prohibits institutions that receive government funding from engaging in commemoration of the *Nakba*, or "catastrophe," referring to the displacement of Palestinians during Israel's 1948 War of Independence. Activities forbidden by the law include rejection of the existence of Israel as a "Jewish and democratic state" or commemorating "Israel's Independence Day or the day on which the State was established as a day of mourning."

On May 13, the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage's Director General announced he intends to halt government financial support for the Bezalel Academy public college after dozens of professors there expressed support for Arab/Palestinian citizen students' protesting government policies in Sheikh Jarrah and Damascus Gate. On September 30, in response to an ACRI letter, the attorney general stated the ministry did not intend to withhold funding to Bezalel Academy and on October 12, his office had sent guidelines to the ministry, which included the need to ensure the independence of higher education institutions.

Authorities continued to provide an edited version of the Palestinian Authority (PA) curriculum that deleted certain information on Palestinian history and culture for schools in neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. Authorities sought to tie funding for schools to the use of the Israeli curriculum (see the *West Bank and Gaza Report* for concerns regarding incitement and anti-Semitism in PA textbooks). Some Palestinians expressed concern with what they perceived as Israeli efforts to

impose Israeli views on these students. Others welcomed the Israeli curriculum, and the additional resources associated with it, as better preparing students in Jerusalem to work in the Israeli workforce, compared to lower-paying employment in PA-controlled areas in the West Bank or in manual labor and low-wage sectors in Israel.

The government maintained prohibitions on some prominent Jerusalem-based Palestinian institutions, such as the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce and the Orient House, which had been the de facto Palestinian Liberation Organization office. The government renewed a closure order for these and other institutions under a 1994 law which requires the PA to obtain Israeli permission to open a representative office or hold a meeting in areas Israel recognizes as under its sovereignty. The government likewise continued to shut down Palestinian institutions and cultural events in Jerusalem that the government stated had PA participation or support, incited violence against Israel, or had anti-Israel or other objectionable content. Israeli authorities stated they would also detain and ban PA-affiliated officials in Jerusalem from conducting PA-related activities. According to *Haaretz*, the Ministry of Public Security approved dozens of such orders during the year. PA officials publicly pointed to the 1993 letter sent by then Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres to his Norwegian counterpart, Johan Holst, as proof of an agreement to allow Palestinian institutions and activities in East Jerusalem.

On January 19, Israeli police summoned for questioning the Fatah secretary in Jerusalem, Shadi Mtour. Police subsequently released Mtour after renewing an order banning any contact between him and 21 PA and Fatah officials, including Fatah deputy head Mahmoud al-Aloul, Jerusalem governor Adnan Gheith, and the head of the Jerusalem unit at the PA Presidency, Mu'tasem Tayem.

Throughout the year, Israeli authorities issued or extended various orders and charges against Gheith. On March 29, authorities banned Gheith from entering the West Bank or going to his office in al-Ram, a village northeast of Jerusalem. On August 2, Israeli authorities extended an order banning Gheith from holding contacts with President Abbas and other PA officials. Gheith was already denied movement outside his place of residence in Silwan neighborhood in Jerusalem.

On November 22-23, Palestinian press reported that Israeli forces raided Gheith's

home, assaulted him, his sons, and cousins present at the house, threw sound bombs, and damaged household belongings before interrogating him regarding posts on social media his wife had shared. Israeli authorities charged Gheith with violating the ban on communicating with Palestinian officials and threatening the security of Israel. Authorities released Gheith on bail after several hours, after renewing his house arrest for four more months and other movement and communications bans. On December 26, press outlets reported that Israeli forces again raided Gheith's home during a larger arrest campaign in the Silwan neighborhood.

On March 8, Israeli authorities banned a women's activity and an exhibit on the occasion of International Women's Day organized at the Mount of Olives Club in al-Tur neighborhood, saying the event was funded by the PA. Local sources stated Israeli security forces including Shin Bet officers raided the club and seized the identification cards of the participants. They also detained the director of the club, Ikhlas al-Sayyad, and the fashion designer Manal Abu Sbitan for questioning. Israeli security forces also confiscated Palestinian traditional clothing and embroidery and other contents of the exhibition.

On March 29, Israeli authorities issued an order to the PA governor of Jerusalem, Adnan Gheith, banning him from entering the West Bank or going to his office in al-Ram, a village northeast of Jerusalem. This was the fifth time Israeli authorities restricted the movement of Gheith in the West Bank. Gheith has been arrested 28 times since assuming his position in 2018. On April 17, the INP banned an election press conference in East Jerusalem and detained three Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) candidates, two from Fatah (Nasser Qous and Ashraf al A'war), and one Palestinian Democratic Union candidate (Ratibah al-Natsheh). The press conference was scheduled to take place at the St. George hotel in East Jerusalem. Local media outlets stated the conference was intended to affirm the right of Palestinians in Jerusalem to cast their votes in the upcoming elections and to explain how they should do so. The three PLC candidates were released later that day and were warned not to hold any activity related to elections in Jerusalem City. On April 18, Israeli authorities banned the Fatah Jerusalemite district committee member Ahed Risheq from entering Haram al-Sharif / Temple Mount for one week while notifying him that the ban order would be extended for six

months, according to press reports.

On June 20, the IDF banned Shadi Mtour, the Fatah secretary in Jerusalem, from entering the West Bank for six months after rejecting an appeal submitted by Mtour's lawyer. The order, issued by IDF central commander Tamir Yadai, indicated that Mtour participated in PA and Fatah-affiliated activities in Jerusalem and described this as a threat to the security of the region. The ban order was valid until December 17.

According to press reports, on September 1, Israeli forces arrested the principal of a secondary school in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Wadi al-Joz, alleging that the principal had met personnel from the PA's Ministry of Education and that PA Ministry of Education officials used one of the school's classrooms as an office. According to *Haaretz*, the Ministry of Public Security approved dozens of such orders during the year. PA officials publicly point to a 1993 letter sent by then Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres to his Norwegian counterpart Johan Holst as proof of an agreement to allow Palestinian institutions and activities in East Jerusalem.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

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

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

The law provides for this right, and the government generally respected it.

On April 4, the Supreme Court struck down the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic emergency regulation that allowed for a temporary limitation of the right to demonstrate to less than a mile from one's home. The verdict determined the regulation constituted a disproportionate limit on the freedom of assembly because the location of a demonstration is critical to its message, particularly when it relates to public officials. The verdict also canceled nearly 11,000 monetary fines police issued for related violations. The verdict determined a separate regulation limiting the number of demonstrators to groups of 20 and requiring compliance with social distancing measures was lawful.

There were reports that police used excessive force in response to protests. For example, on February 26, police used riot control measures, including rubber-coated bullets, tear gas canisters, and stun grenades, during an Umm al-Fahm demonstration against crime and violence, leading to the injury of dozens of protesters, including Knesset member Yousef Jabareen and Umm al-Fahem mayor Samir Sobhi. According to Adalah, police ordered the use of force before the demonstration began and used unreasonable and life-threatening measures against demonstrators who were acting in accordance with the law. According to police, the demonstration escalated to a violation of public order when demonstrators attempted to block a road and threw stones, which led to the injury of eight police officers. On November 23, DIPO announced that it decided not to open a criminal investigation into police conduct during the demonstration.

On April 12, ACRI and the Movement for Freedom of Information in Israel demanded that police make public its standard policies, procedures, and methods for dispersing protesters, such as water cannon, soft bullets, and chemical irritants, that police had withheld when replying to a 2020 freedom of information petition.

On January 14, the prosecution filed an indictment against a leading anti-Netanyahu activist for organizing an illegal gathering, punishable by up to one year's imprisonment, after the activist led two "illegal" marches. A deputy state attorney had previously issued a 2020 directive to limit such indictments on grounds they potentially violate freedom of assembly and expression.

The trial against Israel National Police chief superintendent Niso Guetta, indicted in 2020 for assault during demonstrations against former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, continued at the year's end.

On May 12, ACRI stated many Arab citizens and Palestinian residents of Jerusalem received text messages to their cellphones in Arabic, signed by Shin Bet, with the message, "You have been identified as a person who participated in violent acts in the al-Aqsa mosque. You will be held accountable." ACRI and Adalah appealed to authorities to stop sending these text messages and act against the officials who initiated and approved the action, asserting it was illegal and done absent approval from competent authorities.

There were reports that Israeli authorities used excessive force against protesters in East Jerusalem. Between April and June, hundreds of Palestinian and Jewish Israeli protesters from across Israel and East Jerusalem came to Sheikh Jarrah to show their support for families at risk of eviction and to protest the dispossession of Palestinians from their homes, according to HRDF. Police and media characterized the protest as violent. HRDF reported that Israeli police used aggressive and disproportionate force to disperse the demonstrations, injuring hundreds of protesters. Security forces deployed stun grenades and tear gas canisters, sprayed “skunk water,” and fired sponge grenades, according to HRDF. Between April 29 and May 21, HRDF provided legal aid to 42 Palestinian and Israeli peaceful protesters arrested in Sheikh Jarrah, some of whom HRDF claimed were hospitalized after being attacked by police. Most of the protesters were released after one or two court hearings on bail with 30- to 60-day bans from Sheikh Jarrah, and others were released at the police station with 15-day bans from Sheikh Jarrah.

On May 3, HRDF alleged that Israeli police pepper sprayed and attacked Sheikh Jarrah human rights activist Salah Diab, injuring his leg. On May 6, HRDF reported that 21 Israeli Jewish attackers arrived from the newly established “office” of extreme-right member of the Knesset Itamar Ben-Gvir across the street to pepper spray Palestinians congregating in front of Diab’s house. The incident escalated as the two groups threw plastic chairs and stools at each other. Following the attack, four Palestinians, including Salah Diab, were arrested for “racially motivated” attacks, while one of the Jewish attackers was detained and released the same evening, according to HRDF. On July 11, Diab was summoned to a termination-of-employment hearing from his work at an Israeli supermarket for violating company values and policies and harming its reputation due to his activism and participation in the Sheikh Jarrah protest. According to HRDF, the campaign for his dismissal reportedly was led by the right-wing NGO Honenu and politicians such as Ben-Gvir and Jerusalem deputy mayor Arie King,

On September 24, during the weekly protest in Sheikh Jarrah, four protesters were violently arrested by police for waving Palestinian flags. According to HRDF, Jerusalem police forces regularly confiscated, attacked, and arrested peaceful protesters who waved the Palestinian flag, despite Public Security Minister Omer

Bar-Lev's explicit order to the police commissioner and high-ranking officers that the Palestinian flag may only be confiscated during demonstrations under exceptional circumstances (see section 2.a.).

Freedom of Association

The law provides for this right, and the government generally respected it.

The law prohibits registration of an association or a party if its goals include denial of the existence of the State of Israel or of the democratic character of the state.

The law requires NGOs receiving more than one-half of their funding from foreign governments to state this fact in their official publications, applications to attend Knesset meetings, websites, public campaigns, and any communication with the public. The law allows a fine for NGOs that violate these rules. The government had not taken legal action against any NGO for failing to comply with the law as of year's end. Local NGOs critical of the government asserted the law sought to intimidate them, delegitimize them in the public eye, and prevent them from receiving foreign government funding (see section 5).

Human rights NGOs alleged that Israeli authorities cited laws against terrorism or protecting national security to arrest or punish critics of the government or deter criticism of government policies or officials. On October 22, Minister of Defense Benny Gantz announced that Israel was designating six Palestinian NGOs (al-Haq, Addameer, Defense for Children International-Palestine, the Bisan Center for Research and Development, the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees) as terrorist organizations, alleging connections to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine terrorist organization. Local and international human rights groups strongly criticized the designation, alleging overly broad use of terrorism laws that created a chilling effect on civil society groups conducting legitimate human rights work. The designated groups are based in the West Bank, but the designation applies both within the West Bank under IDF military order and in Israel under the 2016 counterterrorism legislation.

The UN special rapporteur on counterterrorism and human rights criticized the designation as a blatant misuse of counterterrorism legislation designed to ban

human rights activities and to silence speech advocating for respect for human rights. On October 25, 22 Israeli NGOs released a joint statement of support and solidarity with the designated NGOs calling on the Israeli government and international community to oppose the decision and alleging the designation was done to criminalize and prevent documentation of human rights abuses and prevent legal advocacy and aid for human rights work.

c. Freedom of Religion

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

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

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

The government imposed restrictions on freedom of movement to curb the spread of COVID-19 through emergency regulations.

In-country Movement: The barrier that divided the majority of the West Bank from Israel also divided some communities in Jerusalem, affecting residents' access to places of worship, employment, agricultural lands, schools, and hospitals as well as the conduct of commerce, journalism, and humanitarian and NGO activities. For example, restrictions on access in Jerusalem had negative effects, including delays at checkpoints lasting up to two hours, on Palestinian patients and medical staff trying to reach the six Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem that offered specialized care. According to HaMoked, the IDF denied 73 percent of farmer permits in 2020, compared with 63 percent in 2019. Only 1 percent of these permits were denied for security reasons, according to the IDF. Most permits were denied due to difficulties navigating the military bureaucracy and failure to meet the ever-more restrictive criteria, according to HaMoked. Authorities sometimes restricted internal movement in Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem and Jerusalem's Old City and periodically blocked entrances to the East Jerusalem neighborhoods of Issawiya, Silwan, and Jabal Mukabber. The government stated that the barrier was needed for security reasons and that restrictions on movement

in Jerusalem were temporary and implemented only when necessary for investigative operations, public safety, or public order, and when there was no viable alternative.

On May 12, during the period of civil unrest, Minister of Defense Benny Gantz declared a temporary state of emergency in Lod due to the serious harm to public safety caused by interethnic clashes, transferring control over the city to police. On the same day, police announced a night curfew in Lod. Police also prohibited access to the city during evening hours due to calls for Jews and Arabs from outside of the city to participate in the riots. Both the curfew and the ban were not fully enforced. On May 13, ACRI asserted the civil state of emergency and the curfew were unlawful and demanded their cessation. ACRI stated the law allowing such declarations does not include incidents of civil unrest. The civil state of emergency and curfew lasted until May 20.

In July and August, several municipalities blocked access to their beaches or parks for nonresidents who were not vaccinated for COVID-19. For example, on August 4, the Acre City Council decided to permit access to its beaches only to those with a “green pass” indicating an individual is vaccinated or recovered. The Acre mayor stated that day that buses arriving from West Bank Palestinian cities posed a public health problem due to low rates of vaccination in those cities. According to Adalah, the Acre City Council did not have the authority to take such measures and that the measures were intended to prevent Palestinian access to Acre’s beaches under the guise of protecting public health. On September 12, in response to a letter from Adalah, the attorney general sent a letter to the Acre municipality stating there was no legal basis for the municipality’s actions.

Foreign Travel: Citizens generally were free to travel abroad, provided they had no outstanding military obligations and no administrative restrictions. The government may bar citizens from leaving the country based on security considerations, unpaid debts, or unresolved divorce proceedings. Authorities do not permit any citizen to travel to any state officially at war with Israel without government permission. This restriction includes travel to Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen.

The government enacted a series of limitations and restrictions on foreign travel

due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Beginning on January 25, the government did not allow inbound or outbound foreign travel at its airports, and on January 28, it closed its land borders. Beginning in February, Israeli citizens were allowed to return to Israel with the approval of an exceptions committee from a limited number of destinations under an increasing quota of up to 3,000 individuals per day. On February 22, the government opened its land border with Jordan for Israelis having approval from an exception committee. Beginning on March 7, the approval of an exceptions committee was no longer necessary for Israeli citizens to return to the country. On March 16, the government canceled limitations on flight destinations. On March 17, the Supreme Court ruled the quota system violated the Basic Law granting citizens the right to enter the country. The court ordered the regulation not be renewed past its expiration date on March 20 and determined the limitation would only be based on effective capacity. During the remainder of the year, the government allowed the unlimited entry of citizens and a limited category of visitors. Beginning on November 28, citizens could not travel to an expanding list of countries as a part of the government's effort to curb the spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. The list remained in effect at year's end.

The government requires all citizens to have a special permit to enter "Area A" in the West Bank (the area, according to the Interim Agreement, in which the PA exercises civil and security responsibility). The government allowed Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel access to Area A without permits, however. The government continued selective revocations of residency permits of some Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. This meant those residents could no longer return to reside in Jerusalem. Reasons for revocation included holding residency or citizenship of another country; living in another country, the West Bank, or Gaza for more than seven years; or, most commonly, being unable to prove a "center of life" (interpreted as full-time residency) in Jerusalem as adjudicated by the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that as of October 22, the government had revoked 22 residency permits in Jerusalem for individuals who had stayed outside of the country for more than seven years or acquired citizenship or permanent residence status in another country. Some Palestinians who were born in Jerusalem but studied abroad reported losing their Jerusalem residency status. The government, however, denied revoking residency status of anyone who left for the sole purpose of studying abroad. The government

added that the residency of individuals who maintained an “affinity to Israel” would not be revoked and that former residents who wished to return to Israel could receive renewed residency status under certain conditions.

Palestinians possessing residency permits issued by the Israeli government, but not PA or Jordanian identity documents, needed special travel documents to leave the country.

Citizenship: The law allows administrative courts to approve the minister of interior’s request for revocation of citizenship of a person on grounds of “breach of trust to the State of Israel” or following a conviction for an act of terror. The law grants the minister the authority to revoke permanent residency based on similar grounds. Legal appeals to the Supreme Court by Adalah and ACRI against the revocation of the citizenships of two individuals convicted for an act of terror, which also questioned the constitutionality of the law itself, were pending as of the year’s end. On June 29, the interior minister signed the revocation of one citizenship and one permanent residence permit; the revocations were pending approval by the attorney general and the administrative court.

e. Status and Treatment of Internally Displaced Persons

Not applicable.

f. Protection of Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers as well as to other persons of concern, except as noted below. The government did not allow UNHCR regular access to monitor the detention facility at Ben Gurion Airport.

Access to Asylum: The law provides for granting asylum or refugee status. The government has established a system for providing protection to refugees, but it has rarely granted a refugee status, and the government often kept asylum applications pending for years. NGOs alleged that the government did this purposely. According to the government, as of November, PIBA rejected a total of 3,260 asylum applications and accepted a total of seven. Most asylum seekers

received a “conditional release visa” that requires frequent renewal and is only available in two locations in the country. The government provided these individuals with a limited form of group protection regarding freedom of movement, protection against refoulement, and limited access to the labor market. Advocacy groups asserted that most government policies were geared toward deterring the arrival of future asylum seekers by pressuring those already in the country to depart, either by restricting their access to social and medical services or by not examining their asylum requests.

As of September 30, there were 31,012 adult irregular migrants and asylum seekers in the country, of whom 28,175 were from Eritrea or Sudan, according to PIBA. According to the Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel, and UNHCR estimates, 8,000 to 10,000 children of asylum seekers resided in the country.

Irregular migrants subject to deportation, including those claiming but unable to prove citizenship in countries included in Israel’s nonrefoulement policy, were subjected to indefinite detention if they refused to depart after receiving a deportation order. According to the most recent HRM estimate, at the end of 2020, there were several dozen migrants with undetermined or disputed citizenship in detention, compared with 165 in 2018 and 5,000 in 2015.

According to HRM and *Haaretz*, as of June 21, PIBA had examined only 103 asylum requests of Eritrean citizens, of which it had decided 19 requests and approved only one that involved four individuals. This occurred despite a 2019 government announcement that it would reexamine all requests from Eritrean asylum seekers, including 3,000 that were previously denied. Since the 2019 announcement, PIBA examined 706 cases and recognized 15 individuals as refugees. On April 25, the Supreme Court ruled on petitions from 2017 demanding the examination of asylum claims of Sudanese citizens from Darfur, Nuba Mountains, and Blue Nile. The court gave the government until December 30 to either set a policy for deciding on asylum applications, process asylum requests on an individual basis, grant humanitarian status to asylum seekers, or develop a solution that would allow for the departure of the asylum seekers. If the government failed to do so, the court ordered the issuance of temporary residency status to the 2,445 asylum seekers who submitted their requests prior to June 2017,

until a decision was taken regarding their application. On December 26, PIBA published a list of 2,426 individuals to which it would grant temporary residency for six months, to be renewed on an individual basis. This would grant asylum seekers the right to social benefits, but the temporary status could be revoked if an asylum request were denied. In November PIBA stated Ethiopians from the Tigray region who applied for asylum due to the civil war, including those whose asylum requests were rejected in the past, would receive a temporary stay permit like that held by Eritreans and Sudanese.

Palestinian residents of the West Bank who claimed to be in a life-threatening situation due to their sexual orientation or for other reasons, such as domestic violence, did not have access to the asylum system due to Israel's claim that the 1951 Refugee Convention does not apply to Palestinians because they received assistance from UNRWA. Many Palestinians in life-threatening situations therefore resided in Israel without legal status. NGOs stated this situation left persons who claimed they could not return to the West Bank due to fear of persecution vulnerable to human trafficking, violence, and exploitation. Some lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) Palestinians were able to obtain from the coordinator of government activities in the territories (COGAT) a temporary permit allowing them to stay in Israel without authorization to work or to access social services. According to UNHCR, prior to the issuance of permits, COGAT requested proof of efforts to resettle in a third country.

On July 22, in response to a petition to the Supreme Court demanding the right to work and access to the health-care system for Palestinians with the appropriate permits in Israel, the government stated it viewed a fundamental difference between Palestinians threatened due to cooperation with Israel and Palestinians who fled due to their sexual orientation or domestic violence. The government committed to begin issuing work permits for the first group, but not for members of the second group, who could only apply for a permit in demanded fields such as construction and industry, mirroring requirements for Palestinian workers from the West Bank. On July 26, the Supreme Court ruled on the petition, validating the government's position but also demanding that the government update the court regarding the possibility of accepting requests for work permits from the second group, separate from an employer. The case was continued at the year's end.

The government did not accept initial asylum claims at airports. UNHCR did not have access to the detention facility at Ben Gurion Airport. In August the minister of interior refused entry to group of Afghan refugee women rescued by the Israeli aid organization IsraAID, despite the organization's commitment to relocate the group to Canada within a month. The group was eventually admitted to and provided asylum in Switzerland, with the assistance and advocacy of IsraAID.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: According to Ministry of Interior data obtained by HRM, no person who entered Israel through Ben Gurion Airport applied for asylum during the year. PIBA applied a fast-track procedure to reject asylum applications from applicants from Georgia, Ukraine, and Russia, which the Ministry of the Interior determined were "safe" countries, and whose citizens sought work in Israel until their asylum applications were examined. According to HRM, the fast-track procedure prevented the examination of cases in which there was a legitimate claim for asylum.

Refoulement: The government provided some protection against expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom could be threatened and stated its commitment to the principle of nonrefoulement.

The government offered incentives to irregular migrants to depart the country for Uganda, including a paid ticket and a stipend. The government claimed Uganda provided for full rights under agreements with Israel, but NGOs and UNHCR confirmed that migrants who arrived at the destination did not receive residency or employment rights. From January 1 to September 30, a total of 663 irregular migrants departed the country under pressure, compared with 2,024 in 2019. NGOs claimed many of those who departed to other countries faced abuses at their destination and that this transfer could amount to refoulement.

Abuse of Migrants and Refugees: Communities with large concentrations of African migrants were occasionally targets of violence. Additionally, government policies on the legality of work forced many refugees to work in "unofficial" positions, making them more susceptible to poor treatment and questionable work practices by their employers. PIBA, unlike police or the IPS, did not have an external body to which migrants could file complaints if subjected to violence, according to HRM.

On November 9, Yigal Ben Ami, a PIBA employee responsible for irregular migrants' visa renewal applications, was arrested under the suspicion that he offered women renewal of their stay permits in exchange for sex, according to *Haaretz*. At year's end, his case was with the prosecution, pending an indictment.

Freedom of Movement: In force until December 12, the citizenship law allowed the government to detain asylum seekers from countries to which government policy prohibits deportation upon entry for a period of three months. No such arrivals were recorded during the year, however. With the expiration of the law, the government may only detain asylum seekers for two months. The government may detain without trial and for an indefinite period, irregular migrants who were "implicated in criminal proceedings" (see section 1.d.).

Authorities prohibited asylum seekers released from detention after arrival in the country from residing in Eilat, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Petah Tikva, Netanya, Ashdod, and Bnei Brak – cities that already had a high concentration of asylum seekers. While a September 30 Supreme Court ruling upheld these prohibitions, the court instructed the government to reconsider the policy as well as the criteria for adjudicating requests to remove such restrictions. The court's verdict became moot once the restrictions expired.

Employment: While conditional release visas for Eritrean and Sudanese refugees do not include a work permit, making their employment an offense, the government continued its practice of not enforcing this offense against employers following a 2011 commitment to the Supreme Court. According to UNHCR, asylum seekers from countries not listed under Israel's nonrefoulement policy were restricted from working for three to six months after submitting their requests if they did not have a visa before applying. Asylum seekers are prohibited from working on government contracts, including local government contracts for cleaning and maintenance, which often employed irregular migrants.

According to the Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel, 48 percent of asylum seekers in Israel were unemployed in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic and were ineligible for unemployment insurance or other social services.

Up to December 12, the law barred migrants from sending remittances abroad, limited the amount they may take with them when they leave to minimum-wage earnings for the number of months they resided in the country, and defined taking additional money outside the country as a money-laundering crime.

Access to Basic Services: Legally recognized refugees received social services, including access to the national health-care system, but the government for the most part did not provide asylum seekers with public social benefits. Asylum seekers were able to enroll in a health-insurance program only through their employers, leaving many of them uninsured during the COVID-19 pandemic, when unemployment peaked among asylum seekers.

Without insurance through employers, or when employers did not arrange a private insurance policy for them as required by law, asylum seekers had access only to emergency care. The Ministry of Health offered medical insurance for minor children of asylum seekers for 120 shekels (\$37) per month, but children of undocumented migrants were excluded from this program. Despite a Supreme Court injunction from November 2020, the Ministry of Health continued to exclude some children of undocumented migrants from national health-insurance policy coverage. The government sponsored a mobile clinic and mother and infant health-care stations in south Tel Aviv that were accessible to migrants and asylum seekers. Hospitals provided emergency care to migrants and treated them for COVID-19 but often denied follow-up treatment to those who failed to pay, according to the PHRI. Mental-health services for the asylum seeker and refugee population remained limited to one clinic treating 250 patients, while the need for such services increased substantially because of COVID-19, leading to lengthy waitlists, according to PHRI. Asylum seekers who were recognized as victims of trafficking were eligible for rehabilitation and care. The same eligibilities did not apply for victims of torture.

The law provides for mandatory education for any child from age three regardless of citizenship status. According to civil society organizations, several municipalities illegally segregated children of asylum seekers and other children in schools and kindergartens during the COVID-19 pandemic. On August 3, civil society organizations submitted a petition to the Tel Aviv Administrative Court on behalf of 325 children of asylum seekers and their parents as well as 100 parents of

Israeli citizens, demanding a halt to segregation in the city's education system. According to ACRI, there are four primary schools and some 60 kindergartens educating only children of asylum seekers. On September 5, the parties submitted a negotiated agreement to the court, according to which 200 of the students would be placed in schools outside of their area of residence. The petition was pending at the year's end.

Durable Solutions: There is no procedure for recognized refugees to naturalize. According to the Tel Aviv University Refugee Rights Clinic, only under exceptional humanitarian circumstances may a recognized refugee receive permanent residency.

Temporary Protection: The government provided temporary protection to individuals whom it did not recognize as refugees or who may not qualify as refugees, primarily Eritrean and Sudanese irregular migrants as described above.

g. Stateless Persons

Despite being eligible for Israeli citizenship since 1981, an estimated 23,600 Druze living in territory captured from Syria in 1967 largely refused to accept it, and their status as Syrian citizens was unclear. They held Israeli "laissez passer" travel documents, which listed their nationality as "undefined."

The government launched an investigation into reports that 2,625 Bedouins had their citizenship revoked when requesting services at the Ministry of Interior, beginning in 2017. The investigation found that in all except 500 cases, the revocations were flawed and the individuals had originally been registered correctly as citizens. The government subsequently reinstated the citizenship of those individuals. According to the government, of the 500 Bedouins who should not have been registered as citizens because they were children of permanent residents, approximately 400 were naturalized, 90 had yet to visit PIBA's offices to begin the process, and 10 cases were still pending.

There were reports of some stateless third-generation members of the Hebrew Israelites community whom the government judged ineligible for Israeli citizenship.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The law provides citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and Druze of the Golan Heights who have permanent residency status may vote in municipal elections and seek some municipal offices except that of mayor and are denied the right to vote in general elections or serve in the Knesset.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Observers considered the March 23 parliamentary elections free and fair. More than 67 percent of eligible voters cast ballots. During the March elections, observers noted minimal irregularities that had no impact on the outcome.

After the Ministry of Interior retroactively canceled the citizenship of 2,624 Bedouin citizens, many of them were unable to participate in national elections until their status was resolved (see section 2.g.).

Political Parties and Political Participation: The Basic Laws prohibit the candidacy of any party or individual that denies the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people or the democratic character of the state or that incites racism. A political party may not be registered if its goals include support of an armed struggle, enemy state, or terror organization against Israel. Otherwise, political parties operated without restriction or interference.

On February 17, the Central Elections Committee disqualified Labor Arab candidate Ibtisam Mara'ana by a 16-15 vote on the grounds of her denial of the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and due to her support for the armed struggle of a terrorist organization against the State of Israel. On February 28, the Supreme Court overruled the disqualification and reinstated Mara'ana's candidacy. On February 17, the Central Elections Committee (CEC) rejected two motions submitted by the ultranationalist Jewish Power Party and Religious Zionist Party to disqualify the Joint List and the United Arab List, known in Hebrew as Ra'am.

The Northern Islamic Movement, banned in 2015, continued its practice of boycotting national elections.

The law restricts the funding of individuals and groups that engage in “election activity” during the period of a national election, which is typically three months. The law’s sponsors described it as an effort to prevent organizations and wealthy individuals from bypassing election-funding laws, but some civil society organizations expressed concern the law would stifle political participation.

The law allows dismissal of a member of the Knesset if 90 of 120 Knesset members vote for expulsion, following a request of 70 members, including at least 10 from the opposition. The party of an expelled member may replace the member with the next individual on its party list, and the expelled member may run in the next election. Joint List member of the Knesset Yousef Jabareen and several NGOs asserted that the government intended the law to target Arab legislators and that the law harmed democratic principles such as electoral representation and freedom of expression.

In the period preceding the March elections, the NGO Adalah demanded that the CEC and the Ministry of Interior set up polling stations for Arab Bedouin citizens in the unrecognized villages in the Negev or provide the voters with transportation to their assigned polling stations. Authorities denied the request.

On June 22, the Supreme Court rejected a petition filed by former Knesset member Yousef Jabareen and Adalah against a Knesset decision to block members from overseas trips funded by organizations that endorse BDS against Israel.

Participation of Women and Members of Minority Groups: No laws limit participation of women or members of minority groups in the political process, and they did participate. The law provides an additional 15 percent in campaign funding to municipal party lists composed of at least one-third women. Women and minorities participated widely in politics, although their representation in the Knesset remained low. Of the 120-member Knesset, there were 35 women members and 14 members from ethnic or religious minorities (nine Muslims, three Druze, one Ethiopian-Israeli, and one Christian). As of December, the government’s 35-member cabinet included nine women, one of whom was

Ethiopian-Israeli. There were two Arabs. Four members of the 15-member Supreme Court were women, and one was Arab. Of the 257 mayors and local council heads, 14 were women.

Eligible voters among the approximately 100,000 Arab Bedouin citizens that live in unrecognized villages in southern Israel, registered as tribal residents and are not entitled to vote in municipal elections.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were reports of government corruption, although impunity was not a problem.

Corruption: The government continued to investigate and prosecute top political figures. In 2019 the then attorney general indicted then prime minister Netanyahu for allegedly taking a bribe, fraud, and breach of trust in connection with the regulation of a telecommunications company. The indictment also covered an alleged attempt to direct authorities to suppress media coverage in exchange for favorable press and the alleged receipt of inappropriate gifts. The trial was continued at year's end.

Former labor minister Haim Katz was indicted for separate offenses of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust. Former minister of interior Aryeh Deri and former deputy minister of housing and construction Yakov Litzman were separately under investigation for various alleged offenses. On August 9, former minister and member of Knesset David Bitan was indicted for bribery, breach of trust, money laundering, and tax offenses.

On March 17, the prosecution filed an indictment against Nathan Forman, a former Egged bus company official, for receiving bribes in the amount of 5.5 million new Israeli shekels (\$1.71 million) from the German company EvoBus GmbH, tax offenses amounting to 26 million shekels (\$8.08 million), and money laundering.

The law prohibits police from offering a recommendation on whether to indict a public official when transferring an investigation to prosecutors. The attorney

general or state prosecutor may ask police for a recommendation, however. Detectives or prosecutors convicted of leaking a police recommendation or an investigation summary may be sentenced to up to three years' imprisonment. The law does not apply to investigations in process at the time of the law's passage.

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

A variety of Israeli, Palestinian, and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were somewhat cooperative and responsive to their views, and parliamentarians routinely invited NGOs critical of the government to participate in Knesset hearings on proposed legislation. Human rights NGOs have standing to petition the Supreme Court directly regarding governmental policies and may appeal individual cases to the Supreme Court.

On October 22, the government designated six Palestinian human rights NGOs under the country's 2016 counterterrorism law, preventing any legal cooperation or support between the designated NGOs outside of Israel and NGOs operating in Israel. Domestic NGOs, particularly those focused on human rights abuses, continued to view the law requiring disclosure of support from foreign entities on formal publications as an attempt to stigmatize, delegitimize, and silence NGOs critical of the country's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

The law mandates additional scrutiny of requests for National Service volunteers from NGOs that receive more than one-half of their funding from foreign governments.

The staff of domestic NGOs, particularly those calling for an end to the country's military occupation of the West Bank and NGOs working for the rights of asylum seekers, stated they received death threats from nongovernmental sources.

According to HRDF, Israeli authorities repeatedly subjected B'Tselem's field researcher in the South Hebron Hills, Nasser Nawaj'ah, to harassment,

intimidation, and reprisal. On March 6, Shin Bet interrogators allegedly threatened that Nawaj'ah would end up like Harun Abu Aram, a Palestinian civilian who the IDF shot in the neck and paralyzed, if he continued his work. Nawaj'ah was subsequently detained and questioned by IDF soldiers at least four times in ensuing weeks.

On April 6, the Jerusalem District Court ruled that a travel ban against Amnesty International's West Bank campaigner Laith Abu Zeyad imposed in 2019 for undisclosed "security reasons," would remain in place. According to Amnesty International, the travel ban was a punitive measure against Abu Zeyad's work as a human rights defender.

The United Nations or Other International Bodies: The government generally cooperated with the United Nations and other international bodies aside from several high-profile cases. The country withdrew from UNESCO in 2019. The government continued its policy of nonengagement with the UN Human Rights Council's "special rapporteur on the situation in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967." In 2020 the government suspended relations with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), following publication of a UN Human Rights Council database of companies and "business activities related to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory." Since June 2020 the government had not extended OHCHR staff visas due to the suspension.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The state comptroller served as ombudsman for human rights problems. The ombudsman investigated complaints against statutory bodies subject to audit by the state comptroller, including government ministries, local authorities, government enterprises and institutions, government corporations, and their employees. The ombudsman is entitled to use any relevant means of inquiry and has the authority to order any person or body to assist in the inquiry.

Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, including spousal rape, is a felony for which

conviction is punishable by 16 years' imprisonment. Conviction of rape under aggravated circumstances or rape committed against a relative is punishable by 20 years' imprisonment. Killing a spouse following abuse is chargeable as murder under aggravated circumstances, with a sentence, if convicted, of life imprisonment. Authorities generally enforced the law.

In 2020 the number of requests for assistance involving rape to the Association for Rape Crisis Centers was 9 percent higher than in 2019. Authorities opened 1,362 investigations of suspected rape in 2020, compared with 1,399 in 2019. In January, five men were indicted for a gang rape and sodomy of a 17-year-old minor in Ashkelon during a two-week period, including allegedly giving the survivor hard drugs daily. One of the five was the survivor's partner, and he allegedly encouraged the others to commit these acts and documented it.

On January 20, the president of the Supreme Court published a procedure intended to facilitate the process of testifying for survivors of sexual assault. The procedure includes escorting the survivor in the court, reducing waiting time in the court, mandating the presence of both male and female judges, and limiting interaction between the survivor and the perpetrator to a minimum.

During the year, 22 women and girls were killed by their male partners or by other family members. According to Israel Women's Network, more than 200,000 women lived in situations of domestic violence. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs' hotline received 7,977 calls regarding domestic violence cases between January and October, an increase of 10 percent from 2020. In June a woman was arrested and held in detention for four days after refusing to testify in court against her former husband, who allegedly abused and threatened her. Following her arrest, the woman testified while her legs were chained together and stated her complaint was false. She was released after her appearance in court. A representative of the Public Defender's Office stated that more proportionate measures could have been used by authorities to ensure the woman's testimony before the court.

According to Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs data, the number of reports of domestic violence tripled in the first two months of the year compared with the average in 2019 and were slightly higher than the 2020 average. A state

comptroller's report from June 30 highlighted insufficient funding, low investment in early identification, long waiting times for treatment, and early administrative release of violent men without rehabilitation as matters of concern in the country's struggle against domestic violence. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs operated 16 shelters for survivors of domestic abuse, including two for the Arab community, two mixed Jewish-Arab shelters, two for the ultra-Orthodox community, and eight for non-ultra-Orthodox-Jewish communities. The ministry also operated a hotline to report domestic abuse, including a text-message-based hotline. The Ministry of Justice Legal Aid Department represented women seeking restraining and safety orders and defended them in domestic violence cases.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is illegal. Penalties for sexual harassment depend on the severity of the act and whether the harassment involved blackmail. The law provides that victims may follow the progress on their cases through a computerized system and information call center. In 2020 the prosecution filed 47 indictments for sexual harassment, which represented 15 percent of the total number of cases referred to it for potential prosecution during the year, a similar percentage to 2019 statistics. According to a Civil Service Commission report, in 2020 there were 230 sexual harassment complaints submitted to its Department of Discipline, compared with 214 complaints in 2019. During 2020 the commission submitted 20 lawsuits to its disciplinary tribunal, compared with 15 in 2019.

On March 11, the Haifa District Court convicted actor Moshe Ivgy of four counts of indecent acts and sexual harassment. On July 12, the actor was sentenced to 11 months' imprisonment, subsequent probation, and compensation for two of the victims.

Reproductive Rights: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities. According to NGOs, Arab/Palestinian women citizens of Israel, particularly from the Bedouin population, women asylum seekers, and Palestinian women from East Jerusalem, had limited access to health-care services. Traditional practices in Orthodox Jewish communities often led women to seek approval from a rabbi to use contraception.

The country has maintained a pro-birth policy regarding reproductive care, subsidizing fertility treatments until age 45 but for the most part not subsidizing contraceptives, except for women under age 20 and women in the IDF.

Discrimination: The law provides generally for the same legal status and rights for women as for men, including under family, religious, personal status, and national laws, as well as laws related to labor, property, inheritance, employment, access to credit, and owning or managing business property. The government generally enforced the law effectively, but a wage gap between women and men persisted (see section 7.d.). Women and men are treated differently in Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Druze religious courts responsible for the adjudication of family law, including marriage and divorce.

The law allows a Jewish woman or man to initiate divorce proceedings, but both the husband and wife must give consent to make the divorce final. Sometimes a husband makes divorce contingent on his wife conceding to demands, such as those relating to property ownership or child custody. Jewish women in this situation could not remarry, and any children born to them from another man would be deemed illegitimate by the rabbinate without a writ of divorce. Rabbinical courts sometimes punished a husband who refused to grant his wife a divorce while also stating the courts lacked the authority under Jewish religious law to grant the divorce without a husband's consent.

A Muslim man may divorce his wife without her consent and without petitioning the court. A Muslim woman may petition for and receive a divorce through the sharia courts without her husband's consent under certain conditions. A marriage contract may provide for other circumstances in which she may obtain a divorce without his consent. Through ecclesiastical courts, Christians may seek official separations or divorces, depending on their denomination. Druze divorces are performed by an oral declaration of the husband or the wife and then registered through the Druze religious courts.

In some ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods, private organizations posted "modesty signs" demanding women obscure themselves from public view to avoid distracting devout men. The Beit Shemesh municipality received several extensions from the Supreme Court, which ordered the municipality to remove

such signs in 2018. On July 1, the Supreme Court ordered the attorney general to develop a national enforcement policy within 90 days that would allow the implementation of the court's verdict, due to the failure at the local level to remove such "modesty signs." The court ruled that 30 days after the policy was in place, fines would be imposed on the municipality for lack of enforcement.

Publicly displayed photographs of women were regularly defaced in cities with large ultra-Orthodox populations. According to media reports, due to failed enforcement against vandalism, some companies preferred to self-censor and not show women in their ads. In a December 2020 Knesset hearing, police stated they had opened 21 investigations following the vandalizing of women's photographs in public spaces between 2018 and 2020; police closed 19 of these investigations without filing charges and transferred one to prosecutors.

Women's rights organizations reported a continuing trend of gender segregation and women's exclusion, including in public spaces and events, in the IDF, and in academia. In academia, segregation based on gender in classes originally meant to accommodate the ultra-Orthodox population expanded to entrances, labs, libraries, and hallways of academic spaces, based on the Council of Higher Education inspections revealed through a Freedom of Information Act request. On July 12, the Supreme Court permitted a gender-segregated bachelor's degree track for the purpose of increasing ultra-Orthodox integration in higher education but prohibited segregation in public spaces on campuses and called for the immediate cancellation of the policy prohibiting women lecturers from teaching men-only classes. Incidents of segregation were also reported in government and local authorities' events and courses. For example, in April the Jerusalem Municipality published an ad for a gender-segregated event for children up to the age of nine. Following a letter by the Israel Women's Network asserting this type of separation is illegal, the municipality opened the event to the public without segregation between the sexes.

Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence or Discrimination

There were numerous reports of discrimination against Mizrahi Jewish citizens (Jews with roots in the Middle East and North Africa), Ethiopian Jewish citizens, Arab and Druze Israeli citizens, as well as temporary workers from East,

Southeast, and South Asia, and African migrants. Persons presenting as Asian reported experiencing harassment based on false beliefs they were responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic, presumptions that they were low-wage workers or even commercial sex workers, and other indignities. Some immigrant laborers experienced poor and sometimes life-threatening working and living conditions (see section 7.e.).

During the May escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, intercommunal violence erupted between Jewish and Arab-Palestinian Israeli citizens leading to the death of four victims (see section 1.a.). On May 10, in the mixed Jewish-Arab city Lod, Jewish residents shot and killed Moussa Hassouna in what his father described as a “cold blood murder.” The prosecution indicted four Jewish suspects on the lesser charge for reckless homicide despite their initial investigation for the crime of murder, and the court subsequently released them to home arrest. Right-wing politicians argued that the suspects used firearms in self-defense while the family of the victim rejected this argument. On May 11, also in Lod, seven Arab suspects pelted the car of Yigal Yehoshua, hitting him in the head with a brick. On May 17, Yehoshua died from what was described by authorities as a terror attack. The prosecution filed an indictment against seven Arab suspects for murder charges. They were in detention, and the trial continued at year’s end. On May 11, in the northern mixed Jewish-Arab town Acre, Arab suspects set fire to the Jewish-owned Efendi hotel. Aby Har-Even, a guest staying at the hotel, sustained burns and suffered from smoke inhalation and on June 6, died. The prosecution indicted seven Arab citizens for arson but not for the death of Har-Even.

Arab Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Ethiopian citizens faced persistent institutional and societal discrimination. Arab/Palestinian communities in Israel continued to experience high levels of crime and violence, especially due to organized crime and high numbers of illegal weapons, according to government data and NGOs. Causes included a low level of police enforcement surrounding violence and organized crime within Arab communities; limited financial services and access to credit in Arab localities; easy access to illegal weapons; and socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, unemployment (especially among youth), limited housing, and the breakdown of traditional family and authority structures, according to the Abraham Fund Initiatives and other NGOs. The impact of the

coronavirus pandemic on crime and violence exacerbated the situation, and surveys have shown Arab citizens trust police less than Jewish citizens do. Government actions to address the matters included: opening nine police stations in Arab towns since 2016, legislation setting minimum penalties, weapons collection operations, voluntary firearms submission programs, establishment of a military division designated to combat the flow of weapons from the IDF, improving communication with Arab citizens through Arabic-language media and social media, and enhancing community policing and trust with the community.

According to the Abraham Initiatives, the number of killings in Arab society reached unprecedented levels with 126 victims, 107 Arab citizens and 19 Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, compared with 96 in the year 2020, and 89 in 2019.

According to the government, police devoted attention and resources to strengthening law enforcement capabilities to address crime in these communities, reducing the circulation of weapons, and developing narcotics prevention and treatment services for Arab communities. These efforts are reflected, among other things, in the establishment of a special division for the prevention of crime in Arab communities (the “Saif” Division), establishing police stations, and consolidating existing stations in Arab communities. The Ministry of Public Security stated it works to promote legislative amendments to empower enforcement measures to combat crime and violence in Arab communities. Several government decisions have been initiated in this regard.

Israeli authorities investigated reported attacks against Palestinians and Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel, primarily in Jerusalem, by members of organizations that made anti-Christian and anti-Muslim statements and objected to social relationships between Jews and non-Jews.

Although the law provides that all residents of Jerusalem are fully and equally eligible for public services provided by the municipality and other authorities, the Jerusalem municipality and other authorities failed to provide sufficient social services, education, infrastructure, and emergency planning for Palestinian neighborhoods, especially in the areas between the barrier and the municipal boundary. Approximately 117,000 Palestinians lived in that area, of whom

approximately 61,000 were registered as Jerusalem residents, according to government data. According to the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, 78 percent of East Jerusalem's Arab residents and 86 percent of Arab children in East Jerusalem lived in poverty in 2017.

There were multiple instances of security services or other citizens racially profiling Arab/Palestinian citizens. Some Arab/Palestinian civil society leaders described the government's attitude toward the Arab/Palestinian minority as ambivalent; others cited examples in which Israeli political leaders incited racism against the Arab/Palestinian community or portrayed it as an enemy.

In 2018 the Knesset passed the "Nation-State Law," changing Arabic from an official language, which it had been since Israel adopted prevailing British Mandate law in 1948, to a language with a "special status." The law also recognized the right to national self-determination as "unique to the Jewish people" and called for promotion of "Jewish settlement" within "the land of Israel," which Israeli-Arab/Palestinian organizations and leaders feared would lead to increased discrimination in housing and legal decisions pertaining to land. On July 8, the Supreme Court rejected 15 petitions against the Nation-State Law in a 10-1 ruling, with the single Arab justice dissenting.

The High Court ruled there were no grounds for judicial intervention to rule the law unconstitutional but added that its provisions must be interpreted in light of the country's other basic laws, which specifically address the dual character of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Adalah stated in response that the court had enshrined Jewish supremacy and racial segregation as founding principles of the Israeli state, while ACRI said the law was enacted with the direct aim of hurting the Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel and to make them second-class citizens. Druze leaders criticized the law for relegating a minority in the country to second-class-citizen status. Opponents also criticized the law for not mentioning the principle of equality to prevent harm to the rights of non-Jewish minorities.

The justice minister welcomed the court's decision, saying it was an important law which forms another chapter in the country's constitution. The minister added the law enshrines the essence and character of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people and does not infringe on the individual rights of any citizen.

In 2020 PHRI published a report based on data and surveys of the Central Bureau of Statistics indicating significant health gaps between Jewish and Arab/Palestinian citizen populations. The Arab/Palestinian citizen population was found to be lagging in life expectancy, infant mortality, morbidity, self-assessed health, diabetes, obesity, smoking rates and more. The report's findings point to gaps, sometimes significant, in the quality of health-care services provided to the country's Arab/Palestinian residents compared to Jewish residents. These gaps emerged particularly with respect to primary care in the community and to a much lesser degree in terms of specialist care. In 2020 further gaps emerged with respect to the government's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

In June 2020 several Jewish Israelis attacked Muhammad Nasasrah, allegedly after they heard him speak Arabic. Joint List member of Knesset Ahmad Tibi criticized police for failing to investigate the incident. In November 2020 the prosecution filed an indictment against three suspects for "assault under aggravated circumstances." Their trial continued at year's end.

Throughout the year, there were reports of nationalistic hate crimes by Jewish individuals and groups against Palestinians and Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel and property, often with the stated purpose of exacting a "price" for actions taken by the government against the attackers' interest. The government classifies any association using the phrase "price tag" as an illegal association. The government further classifies a price-tag attack as a security (as opposed to criminal) offense. According to police, the most common offenses were attacks on vehicles, defacement of real estate, harm to Muslim and Christian holy sites, assault, and damage to agricultural lands. For example, on March 12, unknown perpetrators set cars on fire and sprayed graffiti, a Star of David, and the writing "enough with intermarriage" in the village of Ein Naqquba in central Israel. According to the NGO Tag Meir, the assailants also poured gasoline on the home of two families, including on the window of the room occupied by two young children, and tried to set it on fire. On March 12, police opened an investigation into the incident.

On September 1, the Jerusalem Juvenile Court acquitted five minors indicted for incitement to terror and violence in 2015 after celebrating the killing of a Palestinian family in an arson attack by Jewish individuals by waving rifles and stabbing with knives a photo of one of the victims in what became known as the

“hate wedding.” On October 14, the prosecution petitioned against the acquittal of four of the five minors. The trial against eight adults who participated in the attack continued at year’s end.

The government employed an “appropriate representation” policy for non-Jewish minorities in the civil service. The percentage of Arab employees in the public sector was 12.2 percent (61.5 percent of whom were entry-level employees), according to the Civil Service Commission. The percentage of Arab employees in the 62 government-owned companies was approximately 2.5 percent. During the year Arab citizens held 12 percent of director positions in government-owned companies, up from 1 percent in 2000, and Arab workers held 11 percent of government positions, up from 5 percent in 2000, according to the nonpartisan NGO Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality (Sikkuy).

Separate school systems within the public and semipublic domains produced a large variance in education quality. Arab, Druze, and ultra-Orthodox students passed the matriculation examination at lower rates than their non-ultra-Orthodox Jewish counterparts. The government continued operating educational and scholarship programs to benefit Arab students. Between the academic year of 2009-10 and 2020, the percentage of Arab students enrolled increased significantly: in the undergraduate programs from 13 percent to 19 percent, in master’s degree programs from 7 percent to 15 percent, and in doctoral programs from 5 percent to 7 percent, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics.

Approximately 93 percent of land is in the public domain. This includes approximately 12.5 percent owned by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), whose statutes prohibit sale or lease of land to non-Jews. Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel are allowed to participate in bids for JNF land, but the Israel Lands Administration (ILA) grants the JNF another parcel of land whenever an Arab/Palestinian citizen of Israel wins a bid. While the Supreme Court ruled in 2018 that the Lands Administration Executive Council must have representation of an Arab, Druze, or Circassian member to prevent discrimination against non-Jews, there were no members from these groups on the executive council at year’s end.

The Bedouin segment of the Arab population continued to be the most socioeconomically disadvantaged. More than one-half of the estimated 268,000

Bedouin citizens in the Negev lived in seven government-planned towns. In nine of 11 recognized villages, none of the residences were connected to the electrical grid or the water infrastructure system, according to the NCF. Nearly all public buildings in the recognized Bedouin villages were connected to the electrical grid and water infrastructure, as were residences that had received a building permit, but most residences did not have a building permit, according to the government. Each recognized village had at least one elementary school, and eight recognized villages had high schools.

Approximately 90,000 Bedouins lived in 35 unrecognized tent or shack villages without access to any government services (see section 1.e. regarding demolition and restitution for Bedouin property). Residents of unrecognized villages have no shelters or safe rooms from rockets, and the Iron Dome Missile Defense System did not provide coverage for many of the Bedouin villages since the government considers them to be “open spaces.”

According to an August 4 state comptroller report on the Bedouin population in the Negev, large discrepancies existed between the Settlement Authority and the Ministry of Interior Population Authority regarding the number of registered Bedouin, who numbered around 268,000, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics. For example, according to 2018 data from the Population Authority, the estimated number of Bedouin living in the seven local authorities of the Negev was 46,000 higher than the number of Bedouin registered with the Settlement Authority. According to the state comptroller, the absence of complete data on the number of residents physically living within the jurisdiction of each of the localities impacted the budgeting, planning, and infrastructure decisions of local authorities and harmed implementation of education, welfare, health, transportation, and communication programs.

The government generally prohibited Druze citizens and residents from visiting Syria. The government has prevented family visits to Syria for noncitizen Druze since 1982.

An estimated population of 159,500 Ethiopian Jews experienced persistent societal discrimination, although officials and citizens quickly and publicly criticized discriminatory acts against them.

The trial against an off-duty police officer who shot and killed 18-year-old Ethiopian-Israeli Selomon Teka in 2019 on charges of negligence continued at the year's end. On February 11, the officer was returned to his position. The following day, due to public outcry, the police commissioner announced the officer would instead take on administrative duties as a coordinator between police and the Fire and Rescue Department. His trial continued at the year's end.

On January 25, the Supreme Court ruled that police must develop a procedure with clear criteria to request identification without reasonable suspicion. This followed a petition filed in court by NGOs, which argued the procedure led to racial profiling and the targeting of Ethiopian-Israelis and other minority populations. In July police issued a procedure by which officers may request identification without reasonable cause in a very limited set of cases. Petitioning NGOs submitted requests for an additional hearing, asserting the procedure still allowed profiling; on December 29, the court rejected the requests. On May 3, the Tel Aviv Magistrate Court ruled a police officer illegally searched and questioned a 16-year-old Ethiopian-Israeli boy in 2018 and identified him as a potential criminal based on the color of his skin. The court ordered police to pay compensation to him.

On August 4, the state comptroller published a report on law enforcement authorities' treatment of Ethiopian-Israelis. The report examined changes implemented since a 2015 plan to increase trust between Ethiopian-Israelis and police as well as the 2018 interministerial team's recommendations to combat racism and discrimination, including in law enforcement bodies. Between 2015 and 2019, the report found there was a decrease of 4 percent in the number of arrests and 2 percent in the number of investigations of Ethiopian-Israelis, but the rate of detention, police investigations, and indictments for Ethiopian-Israelis adults was almost double that of the general population and nearly four times higher for minors. According to the report, the number of criminal prosecutions that included a racist motive decreased from 33 in 2015 to nine in 2019, contrary to the perception of populations affected by racism. The report cited a 2019 police survey indicating only 13 percent of Ethiopian-Israeli respondents had trust in police. The report found the number of complaints to DIPO by Ethiopian-Israelis was double the rate of complaints by the general population between 2017 and 2020. The report also found that the lack of a statistical breakdown of complaints

against police for racism, profiling, discrimination, and over-policing by population prevented a proper assessment of the situation and potential actions for improvement. According to the report, the Antiracism Coordinating Government Unit within the Ministry of Justice worked to combat institutional racism by receiving complaints and referring them to the relevant government authorities, but its effectiveness was limited as it had no enforcement authority or professional status vis-a-vis DIPO or police.

On February 4, Adalah sent a letter to the attorney general, minister of finance, minister of defense, and the Israel Land Authority demanding the cancellation of housing development projects and associated land allocations in construction of neighborhoods exclusively for Israeli military personnel. Adalah argued it constituted illegal residential discrimination and segregation against Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel who are exempted from military service.

On April 22, the Supreme Court issued a conditional order instructing the government to include Arab local authorities in the Northern Triangle area in its National Priority Area Plan which establishes certain areas eligible for housing, construction, and land development benefits. In its ruling the court further asked the government to explain why Arab localities were excluded from benefits received by neighboring Jewish localities. On October 6, the court ordered the government to respond by March 2022.

Children

Birth Registration: Regardless of whether they are born inside or outside of the country, children derive citizenship at birth if at least one parent is a citizen, provided the child resides with the parent who is a citizen or permanent resident. Births should be registered within 10 days of delivery. Births are registered in the country only if the parents are citizens or permanent residents. Any child born in an Israeli hospital receives an official document from the hospital that affirms the birth.

On July 26, the Supreme Court rejected a petition of a same-sex couple who demanded to make the process of registering parenthood for lesbian couples equal to that of heterosexual couples. The Israel LGBTI Task Force criticized the ruling

and stated that the government chose to continue wrongful discrimination, which led to what the task force called “bureaucratic torture.” A petition by 34 lesbian mothers against the Ministry of Interior’s refusal to list nonbiological mothers on birth certificates, despite court-issued parenting orders, was pending at year’s end.

For children of nonresident parents, including those who lack legal status in the country, the Ministry of the Interior issues a confirmation of birth document, which is not a birth certificate. The Supreme Court confirmed in a 2018 ruling that the ministry does not have the authority to issue birth certificates for nonresidents under existing law.

The government registers the births of Palestinians born in Jerusalem, although some Palestinians who have experienced the process reported that administrative delays may last for years. The St. Yves Society estimated that more than 10,000 children in East Jerusalem remained undocumented.

According to an April 12 report by the NGO Elem, in the first nine months of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, minors experienced significant worsening of various indices of wellbeing compared with 2019, including a 160 percent increase in reported depression and anxiety, a 180 percent increase in drug and alcohol use, a 250 percent increase in physical and verbal violence, and in reports of loneliness, with 426 incidents of self-harm reported in 2020 compared with 237 in 2019.

According to a November 2 Knesset report, 11,855 complaints were processed at the Child Online Protection Bureau hotline in 2020, an increase of 65 percent from 2019. Sexual offenses accounted for 25 percent of all complaints, followed by complaints involving the distribution of embarrassing photographs and videos, boycotts, or bullying (14 percent).

Education: Primary and secondary education is free and universal through age 17 and compulsory through grade 12.

The government did not enforce compulsory education in unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev. Bedouin children, particularly girls, continued to have the highest illiteracy rate in the country, and more than 5,000 kindergarten-age children were not enrolled in school, according to the NCF. The government did not grant construction permits in unrecognized villages, including for schools.

Following the nationwide closure of schools in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NGOs stated that approximately 50,000 Bedouin students were unable to participate in distance learning because they lacked access to computers and tablets and their schools lacked access to funding and infrastructure to implement Ministry of Health hygiene and social distancing regulations.

There were reportedly insufficient classrooms to accommodate schoolchildren in Jerusalem. Based on population data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, the NGO Ir Amim estimated that in the 2020-21 school year, there was a shortage of 2,840 classrooms for Palestinian children who were residents in East Jerusalem. Ir Amim reported that following a freedom of information request, Jerusalem Municipality stated it did not know where an estimated 37,233 Palestinian children in Jerusalem were enrolled in school. According to Ir Amim, this figure constituted 26.9 percent of East Jerusalem children of compulsory school age. The government operated public schools for Jewish children in which classes were conducted in Hebrew that were separate from schools for Arab children, whose classes were conducted in Arabic. For Jewish children, separate public schools were available for religious and secular families. Individual families could choose a public school system for their children to attend regardless of ethnicity or religious observance.

The government funded approximately 34 percent of the Christian school system budget and restricted the schools' ability to charge parents tuition, according to church officials. The government offered to fund Christian schools fully if they become part of the public (state) school system, but the churches continued to reject this option, citing concerns that they would lose control over admissions, hiring, and use of church property.

Jewish schoolgirls continued to be denied admission to ultra-Orthodox schools based on Mizrahi ethnicity (those with ancestry from North Africa or the Middle East) despite a 2009 court ruling prohibiting ethnic segregation of Mizrahi and Ashkenazi schoolgirls, according to the NGO Noar Kahalacha. In August parents of Mizrahi schoolgirls in Elad, together with the Justice Ministry Legal Aid, filed a petition to the Jerusalem District Court arguing that admissions examinations for ultra-Orthodox high school seminaries in the city were meant to exclude Mizrahi girls. The petition had yet to be acted on by year's end.

Several municipalities segregated children of African asylum seekers and other children in schools (see section 2.f.).

There was no Arabic-language school for a population of approximately 3,000 Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel students in Nof Hagalil (formerly Nazareth Ilit), a town where 26 percent of residents were Arab. As a result, most Arab students there attended schools in Nazareth and nearby villages.

On April 20, the Supreme Court dismissed an appeal by ACRI on behalf of Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel parents from Nof Hagalil demanding that the court order the municipality and the Ministry of Education to open an Arabic-language school for the population of approximately 3,000 Arab students. According to *Haaretz*, ACRI called the decision “saddening” but noted that the ruling had spoken to “the serious failure of the education system in Nof Hagalil, which neglects Arab students, who constitute a third of the city’s students, and sends them to the education system in Nazareth.” Despite rejecting the petition, the court’s ruling noted that the situation was unacceptable and the municipality was obligated to change it.

Child Abuse: The law requires mandatory reporting of any suspicion of child abuse. It also requires social service employees, medical and education professionals, and other officials to report indications that minors were survivors of, engaged in, or coerced into commercial sexual exploitation, sexual offenses, abandonment, neglect, assault, abuse, or human trafficking. The Ministry of Education operated a special unit for sexuality and for prevention of abuse of children and youth that assisted the education system in prevention and appropriate intervention in cases of suspected abuse of minors.

According to local government officials and human rights organizations, Gaza fence protests, air-raid sirens, and rocket attacks led to psychological distress among children living near Gaza, including nightmares and posttraumatic stress disorder.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: The law sets the minimum age of marriage at 18, with some exceptions for minors due to pregnancy and for couples older than 16 if the court permitted it due to unique circumstances. Some Palestinian girls

were coerced by their families into marrying older men who were Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel, according to government and NGO sources. In 2020 the Supreme Court ordered police to reexamine the request of a Bedouin woman, a survivor of two early and forced marriages who killed her second husband, to be recognized as a trafficking victim. The court ruled that while forced marriages did not constitute a trafficking offense in and of themselves, there was a possibility that such marriages could constitute trafficking if their purpose was to allow for sexual exploitation or forced labor or if they placed an individual at risk. At year's end, despite the court's order to re-examine the evidence, authorities had not granted the woman status as a trafficking victim.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law prohibits sexual exploitation of a minor and sets a penalty for conviction of seven to 20 years in prison. The law prohibits the possession of child pornography (by downloading) and accessing such material (by streaming). Authorities enforced the law. The Ministry of Public Security operated a hotline to receive complaints of activities that seek to harm children online, such as bullying, dissemination of hurtful materials, extortion, sexual abuse, and pressure to commit suicide.

The minimum age for consensual sex is 16. Consensual sexual relations with a minor between the age of 14 and 16 constitutes statutory rape for which conviction is punishable by five years' imprisonment.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's report *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data/reported-cases.html>.

Anti-Semitism

Jews constituted close to 75 percent of the population, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics. The government often treated crimes targeting Jews as nationalistic crimes relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rather than as resulting from anti-Semitism.

The government has laws and mechanisms in place regarding claims for the return of or compensation for Holocaust-era assets. Relevant laws refer to assets imported during World War II whose owners did not survive the war. Unclaimed assets were held in trust and not transferred to legal inheritors, who in most cases were not aware that their late relatives had property in Israel.

For additional information regarding Holocaust-era property restitution and related issues, please see the Department of State's *Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today (JUST) Act Report to Congress*, released publicly in July 2020, at <https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/>.

Trafficking in Persons

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

Persons with Disabilities

The law protects the rights of persons with disabilities, including their access to education, employment, health services, information, communications, buildings, and transportation, the judicial system, and other government services. The government generally enforced these laws. On November 4, the Knesset postponed until 2023 the deadline for making all government buildings accessible to persons with disabilities, five years past the original deadline. In August the Government Housing Administration estimated that 17 percent of public buildings would remain inaccessible for individuals with disabilities by the year's end.

The law requires that at least 5 percent of employees of every government agency with more than 100 workers be persons with disabilities. In 2020, according to a report by the Commission for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 61 percent of government agencies met this requirement. According to rights groups, Arab/Palestinian persons with disabilities suffer disproportionately from a lack of access to housing, public buildings, transportation, higher education, and information in Arabic from the government regarding their rights. For example, according to a report by the NGO Bizchut, the rate of Arab/Palestinian persons with disabilities receiving housing services from the Ministry of Welfare and

Social Affairs was five times lower than that of Jewish persons with disabilities, due to reasons that included lack of appropriate funding, outreach, and sufficient manpower.

On June 17, DIPO indicted a border police officer for reckless homicide after he allegedly shot and killed a Palestinian man with autism in Jerusalem after the man failed to heed the officer's calls to stop (see section 1.a.).

On February 16, an interministerial committee published its recommendations on improving law enforcement responses in encounters with persons with disabilities. The committee's recommendations include establishing emergency multidisciplinary intervention teams to respond to calls or complaints involving persons with disabilities, encouraging employment of persons with disabilities in law enforcement, developing programs to promote their interests, and improving interactions with persons with disabilities through tools such as message cards, emergency cards, kits in emergency vehicles, rights advisors, and contact with families.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

Discrimination against persons with HIV is illegal and, according to the Israel AIDS Task Force, institutional discrimination was rare.

On September 18, the Ministry of Health announced that the prohibition on blood donations by men who have sex with men would expire on October 1. Instead, the ministry implemented a rule stipulating that those wishing to donate blood would have to wait three months in case they had engaged in "high-risk sex with a new partner or multiple partners."

Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, including in goods, services, and employment. The government generally enforced the law, although some discrimination, including in employment and housing, persisted against LGBTQI+ persons. Intersex, transgender, and other gender diverse persons lack protections from discrimination based on gender identity, expression, and sex

characteristics.

On March 23, Avi Maoz, the head of the Noam Party which ran on an anti-LGBTQI+ platform, was elected to the Knesset as a part of the Religious Zionist Party. On August 2, Maoz compared homosexuality to pedophilia. On August 4, Religious Zionist head Bezalel Smotrich stated a pride parade caused the country's fourth wave of COVID-19. The Ministry of Education rejected his statement, and Minister of Health Nitzan Horowitz referred to the statement as a combination of ignorance, populism, frustration, and hate.

Some violent incidents against LGBTQI+ individuals during the year led to arrests and police investigations. For example, on April 4, a group of 15 youth attacked a man in Rishon LeZion after asking him if he was gay. They punched and kicked him until he was rescued by a taxi driver, who took him to his friend's car. The group then vandalized and caused damage to the car. Police detained and released two individuals as a part of their investigation. As of the year's end, there were no indictments in the case.

On August 8, two siblings were charged with attempted murder and conspiracy to commit murder as a part of a plea bargain after stabbing their 16-year-old brother outside an LGBTQI+ youth shelter in 2019 due to his sexual orientation. They were sentenced to 14 years' and six years' imprisonment, a fine, and payment of compensation to the survivor. A third individual, a friend of the siblings, was convicted of aiding and abetting the crime and sentenced to five-and-a-half years' imprisonment, a fine, and payment of compensation to the survivor.

On August 10, the Tel Aviv District Court ordered the release of an ultra-Orthodox minor from a psychiatric ward on the grounds that his family had pushed for his forced hospitalization due to his perceived sexual orientation. The family initially argued that the minor was aggressive and threatening but during the appeal, which was submitted by the minor with the assistance of the Ministry of Justice, retracted this statement. The court ruled a major reason for the hospitalization was the clash due to the parent's values regarding the minor's homosexuality and added that sexual orientation does not justify forced hospitalization.

Conversion therapy took place mainly within Jewish and Muslim religious

communities. The law allows for conversion therapy, but the Ministry of Health has warned the public against it, and Israeli mental health associations considered it an ethical and professional offense.

On June 29, the head of the Mitzpe Ramon local council published a letter indicating his opposition to holding the city's first pride parade. He wrote that he did not recognize the pride flag and refused to refer to LGBTQI+ persons as a community, only as individuals who are not ordinary who should not "externalize their sexual orientation." He speculated that the real goal of the community wasn't to legitimize same-sex attraction but rather to "break the social solidarity while challenging norms that bring society together – religion, nationality, and family." In place of a pride parade, the LGBTQI+ community held a demonstration in Mitzpe Ramon that was attended by hundreds.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

Individuals and militant or terrorist groups attacked civilians, including two stabbing attacks characterized by authorities as terror attacks (see section 1.a.), in addition to rockets shot into Israel by Gaza-based terrorist groups (see section 2.g., Conflict-related Abuses).

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. After a union declares a labor dispute, there is a 15-day "cooling period" in which the Histadrut, the country's largest federation of trade unions, negotiates with the employer to resolve the dispute. On the 16th day, employees are permitted to strike. Workers essential to state security, such as members of the military, police, prison service, Mossad, and the ISA, are not permitted to strike. The law prohibits strikes because of political grievances and allows the government to declare a state of emergency to block a strike that the government determined could threaten the economy or trade with foreign states. According to the Histadrut, this law has never been applied.

The law prohibits antiunion discrimination. A labor court has discretionary

authority to order the reinstatement of a worker fired for union activity.

The government enforced applicable laws effectively, and penalties were commensurate with those for other laws involving denials of civil rights, such as discrimination. According to the International Trade Union Confederation, some employers actively discouraged union participation, delayed or refused to engage in collective bargaining, or harassed workers attempting to form a union. Approval by a minimum of one-third of the employees in a workplace is needed to qualify a trade union to represent all workers in that workplace.

According to the worker's rights NGO Kav LaOved, a growing number of workers in education, social work, security, cleaning, and caregiving were employed as contract workers, which infringed on their right to associate, as it reduced their bargaining power and their right to equality.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits and criminalizes all forms of forced or compulsory labor. Penalties were commensurate with those for other analogous serious crimes, such as kidnapping, but the government did not effectively enforce the penal code.

Migrant and Palestinian workers in agriculture and construction and women migrant domestic workers were among the most vulnerable to conditions of forced labor, including bonded labor, domestic servitude, and slavery. NGOs reported some vulnerable workers experienced forced labor, including the unlawful withholding of passports, restrictions on freedom of movement, limited ability to change employers, nonpayment of wages, exceedingly long working hours, threats, sexual assault, and physical intimidation, partly because of a lack of adequate government oversight and monitoring.

The country has bilateral work agreements (BWAs) with Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, and China to employ migrants in the construction sector and with Thailand in the agricultural sector in order to prevent forced labor. On June 1, the government began implementing a BWA with the Philippines and has a BWA with Sri Lanka for the home caregiving sector. The government also has BWAs with Georgia and Nepal for institutional caregiving. BWAs provided foreign workers with information regarding their labor rights as well as a translated copy

of their labor contract prior to arrival in the country. The government continued to help fund a hotline for migrant workers to report violations, and the government's enforcement bodies claimed all complaints were investigated. Migrant workers not covered by BWAs suffered from continuing widespread abuses and exploitative working conditions, including excessive recruitment fees, false employment contracts, and lack of legal protections related to housing, nonpayment of wages, physical and sexual violence, and harassment.

Gray-market manpower agencies engaged in labor trafficking by exploiting visa waiver agreements between Israel and former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. The traffickers illegally recruited laborers to work in construction and caregiving, and charged them exorbitant recruitment fees, and sometimes sold them extremely expensive documentation.

Chinese and Turkish construction companies in the country compelled Chinese and Turkish workers to work under the threat of debt bondage or coercive promissory notes.

There were reports that some employers in the agriculture sector circumvented the BWAs by recruiting "volunteers" from developing countries to earn money and learn Israeli agriculture methods. Volunteers worked eight to 10 hours per day at a salary equal to half the minimum wage and without social benefits. The individuals received volunteer visas, which did not permit them to work. Other firms employed foreign students registered for work-study programs that consisted of long hours of manual labor and paid less than the minimum wage. For example, Vietnamese participating in a work-study program administered by a private company under the auspices of the country's Agency for International Development Cooperation, endured 14- to 16-hour workdays, were confined to company-controlled housing when not working, had their passports withheld, and were under \$30,000 promissory notes, according to Kav LaOved. During the year 10 participants in the program were recognized as trafficking victims. According to the government, it asked the Vietnamese company to cancel existing contracts, and redraw the contracts to provide for proper conditions.

Some employers recruited low-skilled foreign workers under the guise of being "experts" in their field. To prevent this, in 2020 PIBA adopted guidelines for

classifying foreign workers as experts. Under these guidelines the government considers an expert to be highly skilled in a field that does not require higher education or advanced degrees. Additionally, experts may not perform low-skilled jobs, come from a country with a lower GDP than Israel's, come from a country listed on the *Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report* as Tier 3 or Tier 2 on its watch list, or come from a country without a BWA.

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

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits all of the worst forms of child labor, provides for a minimum age of employment, includes limitations on working hours, and specifies occupational safety and health restrictions for children. Children ages 14 and older may be employed during official school holidays in nonhazardous light work that does not harm their health. Children ages 15 and 16 who have completed education through grade nine may be employed as apprentices. Those who completed their mandatory education early or who were unable to attend an educational institution regularly may work with a government permit. Regulations restrict working hours for youths between ages 16 and 18 in all sectors. The law prohibits children younger than 18 from working at construction sites and from working overtime.

The government generally enforced the law and conducted year-round inspections to identify cases of underage employment, with special emphasis on summer and school vacation periods. Penalties for child labor violations were not commensurate with those for analogous serious crimes, such as kidnapping. During the year authorities imposed a number of sanctions against employers for child labor infractions, including administrative warnings and fines.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The law prohibits discrimination in employment and occupation based on age, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, and disability. The law prohibits an employer from discriminating against employees, contractors, or persons seeking employment. The law protects women's labor rights during

pregnancy and maternity leave. Regulations on women's employment restrict women younger than 45, pregnant women, and women who are nursing from working in jobs which have the possibility of exposure to certain chemicals. The law provides for equal pay for equal work of male and female employees and prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. The law requires that at least 5 percent of employees of every government agency with more than 100 workers to be persons with disabilities. In 2020, according to a report by the Commission for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 61 percent of government agencies met this requirement (see section 6, Persons with Disabilities). The law does not explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of citizenship or HIV or AIDS status.

The government generally enforced applicable laws, and penalties for abuses were commensurate with other laws on civil rights, such as election interference, but civil society organizations reported that discrimination in the employment or pay of women, Arab/Palestinian citizens, Ethiopian-Israelis, and transgender persons persisted. The law charges the Commission for Equal Employment Opportunities with the implementation and civil enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunities Law. According to the commission's annual report, in 2020 it received 1,094 complaints, the highest number since the commission's establishment and a 40 percent increase from 2019.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2018 the average monthly salary for men was significantly higher than women's earnings. A government report showed a 32 percent pay gap between men and women in the public sector during 2019, according to the most recent available statistics. A part of the pay gap reportedly resulted from a differential between the average number of hours men and women worked each week.

At the beginning of the year, during the country's third lockdown on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, 68.5 percent of the country's unemployed were women and 31.5 percent were men. By comparison, at the beginning of 2020 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment gender gap was 1 percent.

On May 13, during the period of civil unrest and Israel's May military campaign, the Civil Service Commission issued a memorandum stating it would not hesitate

to take action against civil servants who expressed themselves in a racist manner or encouraged support for acts of violence on social media. Simultaneously, far-right activists made social media posts opposed to Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel, demanding they be fired by their employers. According to media reports, on May 18, the Ministry of Health summoned six Arab/Palestinian Israeli citizens and one Jewish citizen to a hearing based on claims received by the ministry. NGOs received additional reports of Arab/Palestinian Israeli citizens facing similar circumstances. Additional Arab/Palestinian citizens faced hearings and illegal terminations due to their participation in a one-day protest strike on May 18. On May 16, Kav LaOved and ACRI wrote to the Civil Service Commission demanding that it prevent a “witch hunt” against Arab/Palestinian citizens by canceling the hearings and clarifying guidelines regarding freedom of expression of public servants. According to Kav LaOved, none of the workers summoned to hearings was dismissed. On May 30, the commission published a directive providing criteria for examining the level of violation on workers’ freedom of expression and increased the threshold for disciplinary action.⁷

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Wage and Hour Laws: The law provides for a national minimum wage for all sectors of the economy. The minimum wage was above the poverty income level for individuals but below the poverty level for couples and families. Authorities investigated employers, imposed administrative sanctions, and filed indictments for violations of the Minimum Wage Law during the year.

The law allows a maximum 42-hour workweek at regular pay and provides for paid annual holidays. Premium pay for overtime is set at 125 percent for the first two hours and 150 percent for any hour thereafter up to a limit of 15 hours of overtime per week.

The Administration for the Regulation and Enforcement of Labor Laws was responsible for enforcing wage and hour laws, and the number of labor inspectors was insufficient to enforce compliance. Inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions. Labor inspectors faced a partial moratorium on their on-site work due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The government did not sufficiently enforce minimum wage and overtime laws, and

penalties were not commensurate with similar crimes such as fraud. According to the National Insurance, the level of noncompliance with the hourly minimum wage law stood at 11 percent of the labor market in 2018. According to data from the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs, enforcement actions were taken against 156 employers during 2019.

According to Kav LaOved, 700,000 individuals were employed on an hourly basis, which reduced their social rights and benefits because most lacked an employment contract containing specific protections.

Occupational Safety and Health: Occupational safety and health (OSH) regulations were insufficient for some industries in the country, particularly construction and agriculture. OSH inspectors actively identified unsafe conditions and responded to workers' OSH complaints, but the government did not effectively enforce the law in all sectors. Penalties for violations of the law were not commensurate with those for crimes such as negligence and were seldom applied. The law does not specifically provide for the right of workers to remove themselves from situations that endanger health or safety without jeopardy to their employment. Responsibility for identifying unsafe situations remains with OSH experts and not the workers. The Occupational Safety Directorate, along with union representatives and construction site safety officers, enforced labor, health, and safety standards in the workplace. Labor inspectors have the right to make unannounced visits, but the number of inspectors was insufficient to enforce compliance, particularly in the construction and agriculture industries, and scaffolding regulations were inadequate to protect workers from falls.

Informal Sector: Large populations of African migrants were targets of violence. Additionally, government policies on the legality of work forced many refugees to work in "unofficial" positions, making them more susceptible to abuse, poor treatment, and exploitative employment practices. PIBA, unlike police or the IPS, did not have an external body to which migrants could file complaints if subjected to violence, according to HRM.

Up to December 12, the law barred migrants from sending money abroad, limited the amount they could take with them when they left the country to minimum-wage earnings for the number of months they resided in the country, and defined

taking additional money outside the country as a money-laundering crime.

Conditional release visas of Eritrean and Sudanese refugees do not include a work permit, making their employment an offense, but the government continued its practice of not enforcing this offense against employers following a 2011 commitment to the Supreme Court.

Three migrant workers without adequate on-site protection from incoming projectiles were killed during their work during the country's May military campaign. On May 11, an Indian caregiver died when a rocket hit the home of her employer in Ashkelon, which did not have a shelter. On May 18, two Thai agricultural workers died and eight were injured from a direct rocket hit on the farm where they were working. According to Kav LaOved, workers in agricultural sites in the south did not have sirens or proper shelters in their place of work. On May 19, the Migrant Workers Administration instructed private recruitment agencies to allow any agricultural worker who seeks to be temporarily transferred to a different region due to the security situation to do so.

A police unit was responsible for investigating workplace accidents that resulted in death or severe injuries, mainly at construction sites. According to Kav LaOved, however, the police unit carried out only 39 investigations between its establishment in 2019 and June 30, while during the same period some 900 construction accidents occurred, 331 of them being severe or fatal. Less than 1 percent of accidents, according to Kav LaOved, resulted in cases that reached the prosecutor's office. During the year, 68 workers died in work accidents, according to the NGO Struggle Against Construction and Industry Accidents.

On February 2, ACRI and Kav LaOved filed a petition to the Supreme Court, demanding that the Social Security Institute cover the full medical costs of Palestinians injured in work accidents in Israel, as is the case with Israeli and migrant workers. According to the NGOs, the Social Security Institute covers medical costs of injured Palestinian workers in Israel only retroactively, after the injury is recognized as a work accident. In the meantime, the employee may not work and must either pay or give up treatment and rehabilitation. The petition was pending as of the year's end.

In December 2020 the government began implementing a 2016 resolution to issue work permits directly to Palestinian construction workers instead of to their employers to avoid illicit trade in permits and attendant high brokerage fees. On March 21, authorities began issuing similar permits to Palestinian workers in industry and service fields. A March survey by Kav LaOved showed that many construction workers continued to pay brokerage fees, sometimes even higher ones, during the year. The Maan Workers Association stated that, without proper enforcement, brokerage fees would remain a problem. An application helping to connect workers and employers began operating at the end of the year. The government continued to issue work permits to Israeli employers rather than to Palestinian workers in other sectors. The work permits linked the employee to a specific employer, creating a dependence that some employers and employment agencies exploited by charging employees monthly commissions and fees. In many cases the employer of record hired out employees to other workplaces.

During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, the Ministry of Defense issued an order allowing Palestinians working in construction and agriculture to continue work only if they remained in Israel for an extended period without returning to the West Bank. On May 18, during the period of civil unrest and the country's May military campaign, COGAT announced that only workers older than 45, workers in the health sector, and individuals under humanitarian circumstances were permitted to enter Israel, according to media reports.