

Ireland 2024 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Ireland during the year.

There were no credible reports of significant human rights abuses.

The government took credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Section 1. Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

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

b. Coercion in Population Control

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

Section 2. Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The law provided 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 media members.

The law prohibited words or behaviors likely to generate hatred against persons because of their race, nationality, religion, ethnicity, national origins, or sexual orientation.

The law placed a duty on broadcasters not to broadcast any material that could reasonably be regarded as causing harm or offense, or as being likely to promote or incite crime or that undermines the authority of the state.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The constitution provided for the rights of workers to form and join independent unions and bargain collectively. The law provided for the right to strike in both the public and private sectors, except for police and military personnel and postal and utility workers. The law prohibited antiunion

discrimination and provided for reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. The law provided a mechanism for the registration of employment agreements between employers and trade unions governing wages and employment conditions.

The law did not require employers to engage in collective bargaining. Police and military personnel could form associations (technically not unions) to represent them in matters of pay, working conditions, and general welfare. The Industrial Relations Acts provided a governmental dispute resolution mechanism in some circumstances where an employer refused any engagement with worker representatives.

Labor unions had the right to pursue collective bargaining and did so freely, with employers' cooperation in most cases. Sector-wide collective bargaining agreements were not legally binding. While workers were constitutionally protected in forming trade unions, employers were not legally obliged to recognize unions or to negotiate with them. Private-sector unions described significant obstacles organizing unions. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions described examples of interference, such as an employer body discouraging a company from meeting with a union after initially agreeing to discuss layoff conditions with the union. The functions of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), an independent statutory body, included the promotion and maintenance of good workplace relations. In addition, the WRC was responsible for achieving compliance with relevant

employment legislation. The Labour Court was the court of last resort in industrial relations disputes and the sole appellate body in employment rights cases.

There was no right to take industrial action, but there were legal protections for certain workers who did this by, for example, going on strike. Where notice of a strike or any other form of industrial action was being served on an employer, a minimum of seven days' notice applied. Sympathy and political strikes or strikes against an organization that was not the direct employer were not lawful.

The government effectively enforced the law. Penalties were commensurate with those for analogous crimes, and inspection was adequate to enforce compliance. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

Trade unions expressed concerns regarding the government's reluctance to implement EU directives on adequate minimum wages. The country allocated adequate resources to provide oversight of labor relations. The Labour Court generally processed cases with a minimum of delay. Workers freely exercised their labor rights. Unions conducted their activities without government interference.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at

<https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The law provided for a national minimum hourly wage that exceeded the unofficial poverty income level. Laws establishing and regulating wage levels covered migrant workers. The law limited maximum working hours to 48 hours per seven-day period. There was no statutory entitlement to premium pay for overtime.

There were no reports of significant violations of wage, hour, or overtime laws.

Occupational Safety and Health

The government set appropriate occupational safety and health (OSH) standards for all industries, many of which were derived from EU directives and regulations. By law an employer could not penalize, through dismissal, other disciplinary action, or less favorable treatment, employees who lodged a complaint or exercised their rights under health and safety legislation. The government proactively identified unsafe conditions. Employers had an obligation to protect an employee's safety, health, and welfare at work as far as was reasonably practicable. Workers could remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety without

jeopardy to their employment.

There were isolated reports of violations in the offshore fishing and construction sectors.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

The government effectively enforced minimum wage, overtime, and OSH laws. The WRC secured compliance with wage and hour legislation through inspection and dispute resolution. The WRC's Inspection Services had the authority to carry out employment rights compliance inspections. The Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment was responsible for enforcing OSH laws, and inspectors were authorized to make unannounced visits and initiate sanctions.

Depending on the seriousness of the violation, courts could impose fines, prison sentences, or both for violating the law. Penalties were commensurate with those for similar crimes and were regularly applied against violators. The number of inspectors was sufficient to enforce compliance. Inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections.

The government acted to prevent violations, particularly against vulnerable groups.

The informal economy was estimated to be relatively small. Most informal

employment was in the construction, hospitality, and farming sectors. The government enforced labor laws in the informal sector, primarily through the WRC.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

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

Prolonged Detention without Charges

The constitution prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government generally observed these requirements.

An arrest typically required a warrant issued by a judge, except in situations necessitating immediate action for the protection of the public. The law provided the right to a prompt judicial determination of the legality of a detention, and authorities respected this right. Authorities were required to inform detainees promptly of the charges against them and, with few exceptions, could not hold them longer than 24 hours without charge. For crimes involving firearms, explosives, or membership in an unlawful organization, a judge could extend detention for an additional 24 hours

upon a police superintendent's request. The law permitted detention without charge for up to seven days in cases involving suspicion of drug trafficking, although police were required to obtain a judge's approval to hold such a suspect longer than 48 hours. The law required authorities to bring a detainee before a district court judge "as soon as possible" to determine bail status pending a hearing. A court could refuse bail to a person charged with a crime carrying a penalty of five years' imprisonment or longer or when a judge deemed continued detention necessary to prevent the commission of another offense.

The law permitted detainees, upon arrest, to have access to attorneys. The court appointed an attorney at public expense if a detainee did not have one. The law allowed detainees prompt access to family members.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

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

e. Trafficking in Persons

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

Section 3. Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibited such practices, and there were no credible reports government officials employed them.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

The law prohibited all the worst forms of child labor and employment of children younger than age 16 in full-time jobs. Employers could hire children as young as age 14 for light work on school holidays as part of an approved work experience or educational program. Employers could hire children older than 15 on a part-time basis during the school year. The law established rest intervals and maximum working hours, prohibited the employment of children 18 and younger for most late-night work, and required employers to keep detailed records of workers younger than 18. Seafarers ages 16 or 17 could be required to work at night if the work was not detrimental to their health or well-being.

The law identified hazardous occupations and OSH restrictions for workers younger than 18. Employers were required to verify there was no significant

risk to the safety and health of young persons and consider the increased risk arising from the lack of maturity and experience in identifying risks to their workers' safety and health. The law stipulated that exposure to physical, biological, and chemical agents or certain processes be avoided and provided a nonexhaustive list of agents, processes, and types of work from which anyone younger than 18 could require protection.

The government effectively enforced applicable laws and received no reports of illegal child labor. The WRC was responsible for enforcement, and it was effective, with adequate resources and investigative and enforcement powers. Penalties were commensurate with those for analogous crimes. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

There was no significant presence of the worst forms of child labor.

Child Marriage

The legal minimum age for marriage was 18, including for citizens who married abroad. Forced marriage was illegal and punishable by a fine, up to seven years' imprisonment, or both. The government enforced the law effectively.

c. Protection to Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration, and

other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

On August 1, the High Court ruled that the government's failure to provide accommodation to international protection applicants violated Article 1 (right to dignity) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. In response Tánaiste (deputy prime minister) Micheál Martin stated the court recognized the government's "strenuous efforts" in providing for asylum seekers, adding "we will continue to do everything we possibly can to fulfil our international legal obligations."

Provision of First Asylum

The law provided for the granting of refugee status or protection to refugees. Asylum seekers whose initial applications were rejected could appeal the decision. Asylum seekers had access to legal advice.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) expressed concern regarding the length and complexity of the application and appeal processes. In 2023 the average length of stay in "direct provision" was 24 months, unchanged from the previous year. Direct provision was a system that included housing, meals, a weekly cash allowance, access to health care, and education for children.

Despite gaps in its victims of trafficking National Referral Mechanism that excluded asylum seekers, in 2023 the government reported identifying nine

trafficking victims in the asylum system. Victims were referred either by a government-funded NGO, Health Services Executive, or through government offices responsible for reviewing asylum applications and government-funded accommodations.

Resettlement

Under the Irish Refugee Protection Program, the country had accepted more than 4,000 refugees since 2019 under various resettlement plans, the largest of which was a UNHCR program.

In addition, as of August 31, approximately 107,000 Ukrainians had registered in the country under the Temporary Protection Directive. The Department of Justice, the Department of Social Protection, Health Service Executive, and International Organization for Migration provided services to new arrivals.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

According to the 2022 census, the Jewish community numbered approximately 2,700 persons. Governing party Fine Gael initiated “internal disciplinary procedures” following October 7 antisemitic remarks from one of its Dublin City councilors. During a Dublin City Council meeting, Punam Rane said the U.S. economy was “ruled by the Jews, by Israel.” The Jewish Representative Council of Ireland condemned the remarks and rejected

Rane's apology. There were no reports of antisemitic violence or vandalism. There were sporadic reports of high-profile members of the Jewish community being harassed on social media. Authorities enforced the law when violations were reported.