

## TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In April, the government regulated the National System for the Prevention of Torture but failed to create a National Committee, which should have been integrated with legislators, government officials and civil society organization representatives. The Committee's functions would include visiting detention centres and establishing criteria for the use of force, control of overpopulation and transfer regulations.

Allegations of torture and other ill-treatment were not investigated, as in the cases of prisoners Marcelo Tello and Iván Bressan, imprisoned in the province of Santiago del Estero.<sup>2</sup>

In Mendoza, there were recurring reports of torture but no one was brought to justice. A number of jails were overcrowded and some prisoners were kept in isolation for more than 20 hours a day.<sup>3</sup>

- 
1. Argentina: Deben investigarse denuncias de tortura en Santiago del Estero  
[www.amnistia.org.ar/noticias-y-documentos/archivo-de-noticias/argentina-99](http://www.amnistia.org.ar/noticias-y-documentos/archivo-de-noticias/argentina-99)
  2. Argentina: La provincia de Mendoza tiene la obligación de investigar las denuncias de tortura en las cárceles  
[www.amnistia.org.ar/noticias-y-documentos/archivo-de-noticias/argentina-103](http://www.amnistia.org.ar/noticias-y-documentos/archivo-de-noticias/argentina-103)
  3. Argentina: El acceso al aborto no punible debe ser garantizado en la provincia de Buenos Aires y entodo el país  
[www.amnistia.org.ar/noticias-y-documentos/archivo-de-noticias/argentina-91](http://www.amnistia.org.ar/noticias-y-documentos/archivo-de-noticias/argentina-91)

## ARMENIA

---

### Republic of Armenia

Head of state: **Serzh Sargsyan**

Head of government: **Hovik Abrahamyan**

---

**Peaceful protesters were dispersed by police using excessive force in several instances.**

**Activists working on controversial issues were threatened and attacked.**

## BACKGROUND

Between July and August, skirmishes in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border turned into heavy fighting resulting in the reported death of 13 Azerbaijani soldiers and five Armenians, including two civilians.

On 17 July, the Armenian government announced its plans to sign an agreement joining the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union by the end of the year, after it had opted out of signing the EU Association Agreement in 2013.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Police broke up peaceful protests using excessive force on a number of occasions throughout the year. On 7 March, hundreds gathered outside the Ministry of Finance to protest against a controversial pension reform proposal. Police dispersed the peaceful protesters using excessive force. Three persons were arrested, fined and released the next day; two were allegedly ill-treated while in detention. On 23 June, police violently dispersed around 50 demonstrators in Yerevan protesting against electricity price increases, arresting 27. Later the same day, police officers physically assaulted three journalists waiting for the release of protesters outside the Kentron police station.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

On 5 November, staff of the NGO Women's Resource Centre and other women's rights activists were threatened and verbally assaulted as they were leaving a court room where they had been assisting a victim of domestic violence. In 2013, the Women's Resource Centre had received anonymous death threats following its calls for gender equality legislation. No effective investigations into either of these incidents had been conducted by the end of the year.

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

The adoption of a draft bill prohibiting all forms of discrimination was put on hold, while provisions expressly prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation were removed. The anti-discrimination bill was drafted as part of the requirements for Armenia's EU Association membership, but was abandoned after the government opted instead to join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union.

On 25 July 2013, a court in Yerevan sentenced two young men who threw Molotov cocktails into a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people friendly bar to two-year suspended sentences. Despite admitting the homophobic motives behind their attack, both men were amnestied in October 2013.

## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

By the end of the year, all 33 Jehovah's Witnesses who had been detained for refusing to perform alternative service in previous years were released and required to perform alternative service.

## TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Local human rights defenders continued to raise concern over high numbers of reported beatings and ill-treatment in police custody.

Authorities still had to effectively investigate the allegations of ill-treatment in custody of the opposition leader Shatn Harutyunyan. Shatn Harutyunyan and 13 other activists were arrested following clashes with the police on 5 November 2013, when they were attempting to march to the presidential building. Allegations of ill-treatment by two activists detained during protests on 7 March also remained without effective investigation.

# AUSTRALIA

---

## Australia

Head of state: **Queen Elizabeth II, represented by Sir Peter Cosgrove (replaced Quentin Bryce in March)**

Head of government: **Tony Abbott**

---

**Australia's hard-line approach to asylum-seekers continued, with those arriving by boat either sent back to their country of departure, transferred to offshore immigration detention centres, or detained in Australia. Indigenous Peoples continued to be heavily over-represented in prisons despite comprising only a fraction of the population, with Indigenous youth being imprisoned at 25 times the rate of non-Indigenous youth. Regressive new legislation, introduced in the name of counter-terrorism and security, failed to protect the rights to privacy and freedoms of expression and movement.**

## REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Australia maintained its offshore processing policy, transferring anyone who arrived by boat after 19 July 2013 to Australian-run immigration detention centres on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island or Nauru. By 1 December 2014, approximately 2,040 asylum-seekers were detained in these centres, including 155 children on Nauru. Violence and possibly inadequate medical treatment resulted in the deaths of two asylum-seekers at the Australian-run immigration detention centre on Manus Island (see Papua New Guinea entry).

Australia continued to turn away boats containing asylum-seekers. By September, 12 boats with 383 people on board had been turned back at sea. An additional two boats were returned directly to Sri Lanka.

In October, the government introduced legislation to "fast track" the processing of over 24,000 asylum applications that had

been suspended. The legislation removed a number of important safeguards and will allow people to be returned to other countries regardless of Australia's *non-refoulement* obligations under international law.

Australia also maintained its mandatory detention policy for those arriving without valid visas. By 1 December, there were 3,176 individuals in detention centres in mainland Australia and on Christmas Island, including 556 children. In August, the government announced it would transfer the majority of children and their families from onshore detention centres to the community on bridging visas.

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Due to the failure of successive governments to effectively address Indigenous disadvantage, Indigenous Peoples continued to be over-represented in prisons. They comprised 27.4% of adults and 57.2% of juveniles in prisons, despite accounting for just 2.3% of all adults and 5.5% of youth in the general population.

In August, a young Aboriginal woman died in police detention in Western Australia when she was returned to custody twice by the local hospital with serious internal injuries. She had been detained to pay a fine, a policy that disproportionately affects Indigenous Peoples.

Between September and December, the Western Australian government demolished the majority of buildings in the remote Aboriginal community of Oombulgurri following a 2011 forced eviction. Many remote communities across Australia were at risk following the Federal government's decision in September to discontinue funding essential and municipal services.

## COUNTER-TERROR AND SECURITY

National laws were introduced broadening intelligence agency powers, monitoring online activity and preventing the reporting of unlawful conduct by members of those agencies. New laws criminalized travel to areas abroad designated by the government

as places where a listed terrorist organization was engaged in "hostile activity", while shifting the evidentiary burden on to the accused. The operation of controversial preventative detention and control orders were extended and an ill-defined offence of "advocating" terrorism introduced.

## TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Australia had its fifth periodic review before the UN Committee against Torture in November. The Committee criticized Australia for continuing with its policies of mandatory detention and offshore processing of asylum-seekers. It also raised concerns about overcrowding in prisons and the disproportionately high rates of Indigenous incarceration. The Committee called on Australia to swiftly ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

# AUSTRIA

---

## Republic of Austria

Head of state: **Heinz Fischer**

Head of government: **Werner Faymann**

---

**Chronic neglect of detainees in preventive detention was exposed. Inquiries were ongoing into allegations of excessive use of force by police during demonstrations. Second-partner adoption was made legal for same-sex partners. Protection gaps remained in anti-discrimination legislation. A new humanitarian programme to grant refugee status to 1,000 Syrian nationals was launched. Asylum procedures remained long and the provision of independent legal advice to asylum-seekers was inadequate. Austria ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and the Arms Trade Treaty.**