

EXCERPT - Croatia

AMNESTY

INTERNATIONAL

REPORT 2015/16

**THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S
HUMAN RIGHTS**



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INTERNATIONAL**



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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Amnesty International's mission is to conduct research and take action to prevent and end grave abuses of all human rights – civil, political, social, cultural and economic. From freedom of expression and association to physical and mental integrity, from protection from discrimination to the right to housing – these rights are indivisible.

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First published in 2016 by
Amnesty International Ltd
Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton
Street, London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

© Amnesty International 2016
Index: POL 10/2552/2016
ISBN: 978-0-86210-492-4

A catalogue record for this book
is available from the British
Library.

Original language: English

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2. Côte d'Ivoire: Il faut mettre fin aux arrestations arbitraires d'opposants à l'approche de la présidentielle ([Press release](#), 5 October)

CROATIA

Republic of Croatia

Head of state: **Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović (replaced Ivo Josipović in February)**

Head of government: **Zoran Milanović**

Croatia struggled to provide adequate reception conditions and access to asylum proceedings to the large number of refugees and migrants that arrived in the country. Parliament passed a law providing survivors of war crimes of sexual violence with reparations. Discrimination against Croatian Serbs and Roma continued.

DISCRIMINATION

The state-wide celebration in August of the 20th anniversary of Operation Storm, which saw 200,000 Serbs flee from Croatia in 1995, brought tensions between Serb and Croat nationalists back.

In August, the town council of Vukovar passed a motion to remove public signs in the Cyrillic (Serb) alphabet, and to require a special request and the payment of a fee for the receipt of official communications in Cyrillic, despite the fact that 34% of the town's population were ethnic Serbs. The Croatian law on minority rights entitles minorities amounting to one third of the municipal population to official usage of their languages and scripts. Discrimination against Croatian Serbs in public sector employment and in the restitution of tenancy rights to social housing vacated during the 1991-1995 war persisted.

Social exclusion of and discrimination against Roma remained widespread, particularly in accessing adequate housing and employment opportunities.

The municipal court in Split acquitted three men standing trial for a homophobic attack against six women in the town in 2012. The

victims alleged that the local police had threatened them when they filed their complaint, failed to arrest the suspects on the spot and investigate the crime effectively.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In June, the Osijek County Court confirmed the decision of the Zagreb Municipal Court, finding that Zagreb Pride, a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) organization, violated the honour and dignity of a former employee of the Croatian Radio Television (HRT) by placing her on the annual list of candidates for the most homophobic person of the year 2013. The Court ordered the organization to pay 41,018.91 HRK (€5,414) to the journalist and to publish the verdict on its website.

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

In February, the International Court of Justice cleared Serbia and Croatia of mutual claims of genocide, finding that neither Serbia nor Croatia had established the necessary intent on the part of the other to commit genocide during the conflict in the 1990s.

In May, the Croatian Parliament passed the Law on the rights of victims of sexual violence in war. The Law provides survivors of wartime sexual violence with Croatian citizenship, a lump-sum compensation amounting to €13,000 and a monthly allowance amounting to €328. In addition to the payments, survivors will be entitled to health care, medical rehabilitation and psychological support. The Law entered into force in June with the first allowances due to be paid out in January 2016.

However, Croatia had not yet adopted a comprehensive legislative framework that would regulate the status of, and access to reparation for, all civilian victims of war crimes.

Croatia did not ratify the International Convention against Enforced Disappearances nor did it adopt a law on missing persons. In the absence of these legal instruments, relatives of the 1,600 missing persons in

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Croatia were denied access to justice and reparations.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

By the end of the year, more than 550,000 refugees and migrants had transited through Croatia towards other EU countries, with the assistance of state authorities providing free transportation.¹ Only a few hundred people made an asylum application and, by October, 37 had been granted international protection. The authorities failed to identify vulnerable individuals, including unaccompanied minors and victims of human trafficking entering the country through its land borders.

1. Hundreds of refugees stranded in dire conditions on Croatia/Slovenia border (News story, 19 October)

CUBA

Republic of Cuba

Head of state and government: Raúl Castro Ruz

Despite increasingly open diplomatic relations, severe restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and movement continued. Thousands of cases of harassment of government critics and arbitrary arrests and detentions were reported.

BACKGROUND

The year saw significant changes in Cuba's diplomatic relations. In April, President Castro met US President Barack Obama during Cuba's first attendance of the Summit of the Americas, the first meeting between leaders of the two countries in nearly 60 years. In May, Cuba was removed from the USA's list of countries designated as state sponsors of international terrorism. Cuba and the USA reopened their respective embassies and announced their intent to re-establish diplomatic relations.

Despite this, in September President Obama renewed the Trading with the Enemy

Act, which imposes financial and economic sanctions on Cuba. In October the UN General Assembly adopted, for the 24th consecutive year, a resolution calling on the USA to lift the unilateral embargo.

By the end of the year, Cuba had failed to ratify either the ICCPR or ICESCR, both of which it had signed in February 2008, or the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Government critics continued to experience harassment, "acts of repudiation" (demonstrations led by government supporters with participation of state security officials), and politically motivated criminal prosecutions. The judicial system remained under political control.

The government continued to control access to the internet and blocked and filtered websites, limiting access to information and criticism of the state. Activists reported that mobile phones were without service during the Pope's visit in September.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Reports continued of government critics, including journalists and human rights activists, being routinely subjected to arbitrary arrests and short-term detention for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly and movement.

The Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN) documented more than 8,600 politically motivated detentions of government opponents and activists during the year.

Prior to Pope Francis' visit in September, the authorities announced they would release 3,522 prisoners, including people over 60 years of age, prisoners under 20 years of age with no previous criminal record, chronically ill prisoners, and foreign nationals whose countries agreed to repatriate them, according to *Granma*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party.