



Liechtenstein

International Religious Freedom Report 2007

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 61.7 square miles and, at the end of 2006, a population of 35,200. According to the 2000 census count, membership in religious denominations was as follows: 78.4 percent Roman Catholic, 8.3 percent Protestant, 4.8 percent Muslim, 1.1 percent Christian Orthodox, 0.1 percent Jewish, 0.4 percent other religions, and 2.8 percent professed no formal creed. For 4.1 percent of residents, authorities had no indication of their religious affiliation. The Government discontinued gathering intermittent statistics on religious affiliation in 2002, indicating a desire to protect personal data.

The Muslim community has grown over the last two decades as a result of an influx of migrants primarily from Turkey and the Western Balkans (Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina), many of whom resettled from other Western European countries. According to official census statistics, the Muslim population increased from 689 in 1990 to 1,593 in 2000.

There are few foreign missionary groups in the country.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Criminal Code prohibits any form of discrimination or debasement of any religion or any of its adherents. The Constitution makes the Roman Catholic Church the established church of the country, and as such it enjoys the full protection of the state.

Funding for religious institutions comes from the general budget, as decided by Parliament, and is not a direct "tithe" paid by the citizens. The Government gives money not only to the Catholic Church but also to other denominations. Catholic and Protestant churches receive regular annual contributions from the Government in proportion to membership size as determined in the census count of 2000; smaller religious groups are eligible to apply for grants for associations of foreigners or specific projects. For the year 2007 the national Government budgeted \$240,000 (300,000 Swiss francs) to the Catholic Church and \$40,000 (50,000 Swiss francs) to the Protestant churches. Since 2006 the Government has also contributed \$20,000 (25,000 Swiss francs) per year to the Muslim community. The Catholic Church receives additional sums from the 11 municipalities that pay for the maintenance of church buildings and the salaries of parish priests. The Protestant churches receive approximately \$148,000 (185,000 Swiss francs) annually from the municipalities. All religious groups enjoy tax-exempt status.

Both the Council of Europe's (COE) Commissioner for Human Rights and the U.N. Human Rights Committee in the past criticized the fact that standing policy favored the Catholic Church over other religious communities in the distribution of state subsidies and urged the Government to review its policies to ensure an equitable distribution of these funds.

The relationship between the state and the Catholic Church was being redefined. In November 2006 and May 2007 the Government hosted two more sessions of the working group seeking consensus on legislative reform on this issue. On June 21, 2007, Prime Minister Otmar Hasler told Parliament that a provisional constitutional amendment for a new regulation of relations between the state and the religious communities had been drafted; it would be incumbent upon the municipalities to enter into talks with the Catholic Church on the separation of church and state at the county level. During the reporting period, both Prince Hans-Adam II and Hereditary Prince Alois publicly took a stance in favor of the separation of church and state.

To receive a religious-worker visa, an applicant must demonstrate that the host organization is important for the entire country. An applicant must have completed theological studies and be accredited with an acknowledged religious group. Visa requests for religious workers were normally not denied and were processed in the same manner as requests from other individuals or workers.

The Government grants the Muslim community a residency permit for one imam, plus one short-term residency permit for an additional imam during Ramadan. The Government follows a policy of routinely granting visas to the imams in exchange for the agreement of both the Turkish Association and the Muslim community to prevent religious diatribes by the imams or the spread of religious extremism.

Religious education is part of the curriculum at public schools. At the secondary school level, parents and pupils choose between traditional confessional religious education and the nonconfessional subject "Religion and Culture." Since its introduction in 2003, more than 85 percent of Catholic pupils have chosen the new subject, with the remainder following traditional confessional classes held by the Catholic Church. Representatives of the Protestant community have complained that the optional subject "Religion and Culture" de facto eliminated classes in Protestant doctrine because it made it virtually impossible for the minority community to meet the quorum of four pupils to hold confessional classes as part of the regular curriculum. As an alternative, Protestant churches offer religious education classes outside of regular school hours with financial support from the Government.

At the primary school level, a recent agreement between the Catholic Church and the local and national governments retained the compulsory nature of confessional religious education. The agreement granted the Catholic Church greater autonomy in setting the curriculum and provided for only a complementary supervisory role of the local municipalities. All municipalities, except for Balzers, Triesen, and Planken, which decided to retain the old model of religious education with stronger government supervision, have implemented the agreement.

At the end of February 2007, the Government approved a project to introduce Muslim religious education classes in public primary schools. The Government set several criteria, namely that instructors have received both pedagogical and topical training and that classes are to be held in German. The Government also insisted that the curriculum be reviewed by experts and that instruction be supervised by the Department of Education. The project was initially scheduled to run for one year and to be evaluated in the spring of 2008. It would be the first time that Muslim religious education classes are offered in primary schools. Previously Muslim parents could only send their children to a mosque for religious instruction.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the country.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In a newspaper interview published February 14, 2007, Prince Hans-Adam II declared that it was very important to sustain the dialogue between religions and to promote religious freedom. The Prince also declared himself in favor of establishing Muslim cemeteries in the country.

On January 29, 2007, the Government held for the second time a special memorial hour to commemorate the Holocaust. The Government called on the population to commemorate the historic date and presented the Day of Remembrance as part of the Government's efforts to fight racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Since 2003 secondary schools have held discussion forums on the Holocaust on the occasion of the Day of Remembrance.

Since 2004 the Government has maintained a working group for the better integration of members of the Muslim community into society, consisting of representatives of the Muslim community and Government officials who deal with Islam as part of their duties. The working group's objectives are to counter mutual prejudices and promote respect and tolerance on the basis of dialogue and mutual understanding. In a practice begun at the working group's suggestion, the Government continues to issue a short-term residency permit for one additional imam during Ramadan and beginning in 2006 initiated a regular annual contribution of \$20,000 (25,000 Swiss francs) to the Muslim community. Discussions of the working group also led, in 2006, to the establishment of a subworking group preparing the Government project to introduce Muslim religious education in public primary schools.

The Government's Equal Opportunity Office is charged with handling complaints of religious discrimination, but the office has not been contacted in the recent past concerning a case of discrimination based on religious belief. The Government has also established an interdepartmental Working Group against Racism, anti-Semitism, and Xenophobia whose purpose is to prevent racist and xenophobic attitudes through awareness raising and the promotion of mutual understanding and respect. The working group also coordinates the government's measures to prevent and combat anti-Semitism.

The Government supported or sponsored a variety of activities to promote the integration of immigrants and intercultural understanding, including a class on intercultural dialogue in the curriculum of the national administration's internal training program.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom, such as the February 14, 2007, newspaper interview of the Prince Hans-Adam II, advocating religious freedom and the statements of the Hereditary Prince on the separation of church and state. Catholics, Protestants, and members of other faiths work well together on an ecumenical basis. Differences among religious faiths are not a significant source of tension in society.

On June 13, 2007, unknown vandals seriously damaged a small chapel in the woods near Schaanwald in the county of Mauren. According to police reports, the vandals damaged the altar and destroyed several religious icons, and ravaged the interior of the chapel with burning matches. At the end of the reporting period, the investigation was ongoing.

On December 22, 2006, a national court sentenced a 23-year-old Turkish resident to a suspended fine of \$2,900 (3,600 Swiss francs) for violating the antiracism clause of the Penal Code. The court found that he had disseminated two computer files with anti-Semitic content and transferred them onto a computer of a mosque in a nearby Swiss border town to which members of a religious association registered in the country had access.

There were no reports of physical acts against Jewish persons or property. The Jewish community in the country is too small to sustain an organizational structure of its own.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The Embassy and the Office of Foreign Affairs conduct annual discussions of religious freedom issues in preparation for this report.

Released on September 14, 2007

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