

MONACO 2017 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion and its public expression and prohibits compelling participation in religious ceremonies. Roman Catholicism is the state religion and state ceremonies often include Catholic rituals. Religious groups have to apply to the government to build a public place of worship and to receive recognition, which provides certain legal rights and privileges. In July the Supreme Court annulled the government's decision not to recognize the Jehovah's Witnesses. Optional Catholic religious instruction is available in public schools.

The only private religious schools were Catholic. According to the government, there was insufficient demand for non-Catholic private religious schools.

The U.S. Consulate General in Marseille queried the government about religious freedom and received a written response stating all religious groups had "total freedom of worship." In September and December a representative from the U.S. Consulate General in Marseille discussed religious freedom issues with Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish representatives.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the U.S. government, the total population is 31,000 (July 2017 estimate), of whom 7,600 are citizens. According to the 2016 census, the total population is 37,000, of whom 8,400 (22.5 percent) are citizens. The Catholic archdiocese estimates that 90 percent of the population is Catholic. Protestant officials stated that Protestants are the second largest group after Roman Catholics, representing 2 percent of the population with 200-220 families. According to the European Jewish Congress and the local Association Culturelle Israelite (Jewish Cultural Association), approximately 1,000 residents, most of whom are noncitizens, are Jewish. According to a long-time Muslim resident, there is a small Muslim community of approximately 280 people, most of whom are noncitizens from North Africa. The Jehovah's Witnesses report they have several hundred members resident in the country. A small number of residents adhere to other religious beliefs.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

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The constitution guarantees individuals the freedom of religion and public worship and protects the freedom to express opinions on all issues, provided no crimes are committed in the exercise of those freedoms. No one may be compelled to participate in the rites or ceremonies of any religion or to observe its days of rest.

The constitution states Roman Catholicism is the state religion.

Any religious group wishing to construct a place of worship in a public space must register a request with the Ministry of Interior.

Associations, including religious ones, must request formal recognition from the Ministry of the Interior, which provides a response within one month. Recognized religious groups obtain certain attendant rights and privileges, such as the ability to hire employees and possess property. The government has granted formal recognition to the Protestant and Jewish communities.

Catholic religious instruction is available in schools as an option requiring parental authorization. Private schools may provide religious instruction for religions other than Catholicism.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

Catholic rituals were generally a part of state ceremonies, including annual national day celebrations.

While the government's stated policy was to consider non-Catholic religious groups' requests to build public places of worship on a case-by-case basis, the government reported it did not receive any requests for new sites.

In July the Supreme Court annulled a decision by Minister of State (prime minister-equivalent) Serge Telle to refuse recognition of the country's Association of Jehovah's Witnesses. The minister of state had refused recognition on January 8, 2016 citing "serious and legitimate doubts regarding the sectarian nature of the denomination of Jehovah's Witnesses." The Supreme Court called the minister's justification for the refusal "too vague." The court added that "freedom of association holds an especially strong legal stature... [and]...the refusal to grant recognition of a declaration duly justified is not necessarily legal."

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Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

The only private religious schools were Catholic. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there was insufficient demand for private schools offering instruction in other religions.

A long-time Muslim resident stated there were no pending requests to the government to build a mosque, as the Muslim community could not afford to buy property for a mosque and there was a nearby mosque in Beausoleil, France, less than one kilometer (0.6 miles) away. Muslim residents also worshipped in private prayer rooms inside their own residences.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The U.S. Consulate General in Marseille queried the government about the state of religious freedom in the country. The Ministry of Interior responded in writing that there was “total freedom of worship for any religious group.”

A representative from the U.S. Consulate General in Marseille met with Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish representatives in September and December and discussed their perceptions of religious freedom in the country.