



Micronesia, Federated States of

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.

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 260 square miles and population of 107,900. The country consists of 607 islands spread over a 2,000-mile long swath of ocean; diverse languages and cultures exist within each of the country's four states. Several Protestant denominations, as well as the Roman Catholic Church, are present in every state. Most Protestant groups trace their roots to American Congregationalist missionaries. On the island of Kosrae, the population is approximately 7,800; 95 percent are Protestants. On Pohnpei, the population of 35,000 is evenly divided between Protestants and Catholics. On Chuuk and Yap, an estimated 60 percent are Catholic and 40 percent are Protestant. Religious groups with small followings include Baptists, Assemblies of God, Salvation Army, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and the Baha'i Faith. There is a small group of Buddhists on Pohnpei. Attendance at religious services is generally high; churches are well supported by their congregations and play a significant role in civil society.

Most immigrants are Filipino Catholics who have joined local Catholic churches. The Filipino Iglesia Ni Cristo also has a church in Pohnpei.

In the 1890s, on the island of Pohnpei, intermissionary conflicts and the conversion of clan leaders resulted in religious divisions along clan lines which persist today. More Protestants live on the western side of the island, while more Catholics live on the eastern side.

Missionaries of many religious traditions are present and operate freely.

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 Bill of Rights forbids the establishment of a state religion and governmental restrictions on freedom of religion. There is no state religion.

The Government provides a few grants to private, church-affiliated schools. Public schools do not provide religious instruction.

Christmas and Good Friday are national religious days.

There are numerous church-sponsored schools, and religious groups operate radio stations that broadcast religious programming on Pohnpei, Yap, and Chuuk.

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.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice. Protestant churches have formed an Inter-Denominational Council to address social problems.

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. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy regularly meet with the leaders of religious communities. The Embassy also worked closely with church-related nongovernmental organizations in its efforts to promote good governance and religious tolerance.

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