



## Micronesia, Federated States of

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

### International Religious Freedom Report 2009

October 26, 2009

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

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

#### Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 271 square miles and population of 108,000. 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. The United Church of Christ is the main Protestant denomination. On the island of Kosrae, the population is approximately 7,800, 95 percent of whom 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 Protestant. Smaller religious groups 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, although no Buddhist monks or clergy live on the island. 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.

#### Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

##### Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The Constitution at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution's Declaration of Rights forbids the establishment of a state religion or governmental

restrictions on freedom of religion.

The Government observes Good Friday and Christmas as national holidays.

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

Missionaries of many religious traditions are present and operate freely.

There are numerous church-sponsored schools, and religious groups operate radio stations that broadcast religious programming to many parts of the country.

#### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the reporting period.

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 who had not been allowed 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 affiliation, belief, or practice. There was no notable tension between the two largest religious groups, Protestants and Catholics, and an Inter-Denominational Council exists to address social problems and promote official cooperation between the two.

#### Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The U.S. Embassy also worked closely with church-related nongovernmental organizations in its efforts to promote good governance and religious tolerance.