



## Kiribati

### International Religious Freedom Report 2005

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

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

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

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to 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, an island state of 265 square miles, had a population of approximately 90,000. Missionaries introduced Christianity into the area in the mid-19th century. According to 2002 government statistics, major religious groups included: the Roman Catholic Church (55 percent); Kiribati Protestant Church (KPC), formerly the Congregational Church (37 percent); Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) (3 percent); Seventh-day Adventists (2 percent); and the Baha'i Faith (2 percent). Persons with no religious preference accounted for an estimated 5 percent of the population. Members of the Catholic faith were concentrated in the northern islands of the Gilbert Islands group, while Protestants were the majority in the southern Gilbert Islands.

The Mormons, Council of World Missions, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh-day Adventists all had missionaries in the country.

#### Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is no state religion. The Government does not favor a particular religion, nor were there separate legal categories for different religions.

Christmas, Easter, and National Gospel Day are official holidays.

There are no criteria for registering religious groups, nor are there consequences for not registering.

##### *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.

##### *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.

#### Abuses by Terrorist Organizations

There were no reported abuses targeted at specific religions by terrorist organizations during the period covered by this report.

#### **Section III. Societal Attitudes**

Christianity, the religion of more than 90 percent of the population, remained a dominant social and cultural force, but relations were amicable among the country's religions.

Nonbelievers, who constituted a very small percentage of residents, do not suffer discrimination. Most governmental and social functions begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer delivered by an ordained minister, cleric, or other church official.

#### **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.

Released on November 8, 2005

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