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Seychelles

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

International Religious Freedom Report 2010

November 17, 2010

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; however, short biweekly nonworship broadcasts of Catholics and Anglicans were censored before broadcast. 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 444 square miles and a population of 87,000. The 2002 government census estimated that 82 percent of the population is Roman Catholic and 6 percent Anglican.

Other Christian groups include Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal Church, the Pentecostal Assembly, Nazarites, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Hindus, Muslims, and Baha'is are present in small numbers.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for 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 government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter, Corpus Christi, Assumption of Mary, All Saints' Day, Immaculate Conception Day, and Christmas.

Government employees of all religious backgrounds can request paid leave on any of their holy days, and the government usually granted such requests. The Islamic Society of Seychelles generally submits requests to the Department of Public Administration for Muslim employees to receive leave on Islamic festival days.

The government provided broadcast time to different religious organizations on the national radio broadcasting service. On alternating Sunday mornings, the national radio service aired Catholic mass and Anglican services, which lasted from one hour and 15 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes. The government allowed Muslim and Hindu groups a 15 minute broadcast every Friday afternoon, and the Baha'is and Seventh-day Adventists were authorized a 15 minute broadcast every Saturday afternoon. An amendment to the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Act prohibited political parties and religious groups from obtaining radio licenses. The amendment was under legal challenge before the Court of Appeal at the end of the reporting period.

Religious groups were not required to register but must apply to the Ministry of Finance to receive tax exemptions. The Catholic, Anglican, and Seventh-day Adventist churches, along with mosques and the Baha'i local spiritual assembly, were incorporated with the Ministry of Finance and received tax privileges. The Registrar of Associations recognized 42 religious associations not incorporated with the Ministry of Finance.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in practice; however, short biweekly nonworship broadcasts of Catholics and Anglicans were censored before broadcast.

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

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

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 in Mauritius, which is responsible for U.S. diplomatic relations with the country, repeatedly raised concerns about broadcasting restrictions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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