



Romania

International Religious Freedom Report 2007

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The Constitution and the law provide for freedom of religion. While the Government generally respected this right in practice, some restrictions adversely affected the rights of many religious groups. Minority religious groups also continued to claim, credibly, that low-level government officials impeded their efforts at proselytizing and interfered with other religious activities.

There was no overall change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government continued to differentiate between recognized and unrecognized religious groups, and registration and recognition requirements continued to pose obstacles to minority religious groups. Parliament passed a new law on religious freedom in December 2006 that took effect in January 2007. Many domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and religious groups criticized the law, arguing that it would institutionalize discrimination against many religious minorities and create impediments for many such groups to obtain official recognition as a religion. The Government did not return property to the Greek Catholic community that was transferred by the communists to the Orthodox Church in 1948. The Greek Catholic Church was the only denomination dismantled under Communist rule and whose churches were confiscated and given to another denomination, the Orthodox Church. This dismantling led to a particularly discriminatory situation for the Greek Catholic Church, which continued during the period covered by this report. The Government continued to make progress in recognizing the history of the Holocaust in the country. Some minority religious groups continued to allege that local authorities created delays in granting construction permits based upon religion.

There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious belief or practice. There were incidents in which the Romanian Orthodox Church showed hostility toward non-Orthodox churches and criticized the proselytizing of Protestant and other religious groups. In general, the Orthodox Church continued to refuse to return the Greek Catholic churches that it received in 1948. The Orthodox Church often used its influence to put pressure on small groups and government officials to its own advantage.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Through 2006 the U.S. Embassy regularly expressed concern about discriminatory components of the draft law on religion, including with presidential advisors, Members of Parliament, and the Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs. The Embassy also continued to raise concerns with officials about the failure of the Government to ensure the full restitution of religious properties, including Greek Catholic churches. The Embassy also strongly supported the Government's efforts to recognize the true history of the Holocaust in Romania, including the implementation of the recommendations in the 2004 Wiesel Commission report, the training of teachers to teach the history of the Holocaust in the country, and the commemoration of the country's Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 91,699 square miles and a population of 21.7 million.

According to the 2002 census, Romanian Orthodox believers (including the Orthodox Serb Bishopric of Timisoara) comprised 86.8 percent of the population. Roman Catholics made up 4.7 percent of the population, and Greek Catholics were less than 1 percent, although, according to a recent estimation of the Greek Catholic Church, its adherents comprised about 3.6 percent of the population. The following religious groups comprised less than 2 percent of the population: Old Rite Christian (Orthodox) Church, Protestant Reformed Church, Christian Evangelical Church, Romanian Evangelical Church, Evangelical Augustinian Church, Lutheran Evangelical Church Synod-Presbyterian, Unitarian Church of Romania, Baptist Church, Apostolic Church of God (Pentecostal Church), Seventh-day Christian Adventist Church, Armenian Church, Jews, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baha'i Faith, the Family (God's Children), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Unification Church, the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, Transcendental Meditation, Hare Krishna, and Zen Buddhism. According to the 2002 census, the number of atheists was 8,524, and there were 12,825 persons who did not have any religious affiliation.

Most religious groups have followers dispersed throughout the country, although a few religious communities are concentrated in particular regions. Old Rite members (Lippovans) are located in Moldavia and Dobrogea. Most Muslims are located in the southeastern part of the country. Most Greek Catholics reside in Transylvania, but there are also Greek Catholics in Bucharest and the Banat and Crisana regions. Protestant and Catholic believers tend to be in Transylvania, but many also are located around Bacau. Orthodox or Greek Catholic ethnic Ukrainians live mostly in the northwestern part of the country. Orthodox ethnic Serbs are primarily in Banat. Armenians are concentrated in Moldavia and the south. Members of the Protestant Reformed, Roman Catholic, and Unitarian churches from Transylvania are virtually all ethnic Hungarians.

Approximately 40 percent of the population claimed to attend religious services once or several times a month, according to a November 2006 poll.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Although the Constitution and the law provide for freedom of religion, the Government exercises considerable influence over religious life through laws and decrees. Government registration and recognition requirements continued to pose obstacles to minority religious groups.

The total number of officially recognized religions remained low. Until December 2006 there were 18 recognized religions, and the Government registered other religious groups as religious associations or foundations under a law on associations, a status which did not guarantee the same rights as a recognized religion. The Government has refused to grant religion status to a number of religious groups since 1990, including the Organization of the Orthodox Believers of Old Rite, the Baha'i Faith, and the Mormons, primarily because of the absence of legislation.

Under the provisions of the new religion law passed December 27, 2006, the Government implemented a three-tier system of recognition: religious groups (which are not legal entities), religious associations, and religions. Religious groups are groups of people who share the same faith but do not receive tax exemptions or support from the state. Religious associations are legal entities that do not receive government funding, must be registered as such in a religious association registry, and are exempted from taxes only for places of worship. Unrecognized groups are not permitted to engage in profit-making activities. In order to register, religious associations must have 300 citizen members and must submit members' personal data. Under the law on associations, the membership requirement for registration of any other type of association is three members. Religious associations are entitled to receive religion status if they have 12 years of continuous religious activity and a membership of 0.1 percent of the Romanian population (approximately 22,000 persons).

The new religion law recognizes the same 18 religions: the Romanian Orthodox Church, Orthodox Serb Bishopric of Timisoara, Roman Catholic Church, Greek Catholic Church, Old Rite Christian (Orthodox) Church, Reformed (Protestant) Church, Christian Evangelical Church, Romanian Evangelical Church, Evangelical Augustinian Church, Lutheran Evangelical Church-Synod Presbyterian, Unitarian Church, Baptist Church, Pentecostal Church, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Armenian Church, Judaism, Islam, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Recognized religions are eligible for state support according to their representation in the census, plus they have the right to establish schools, teach religion in public schools where they have a number of adherents, receive government funds to build churches, pay clergy salaries with state funds and subsidize clergy's housing expenses, broadcast religious programming on radio and television, apply for broadcasting licenses for denominational frequencies, have cemeteries, and enjoy tax-exempt status. The 18 religions have 1 year from the implementation of the new religion law to submit their documents in order to have their official status reconfirmed by the state.

The law entitles religious communities to bury without restriction their believers in the cemeteries of other religions in localities where they do not have their own cemetery and there are no communal cemeteries.

NGOs, the National Anti-Discrimination Council (CNCD), and religious groups expressed concern that a provision forbidding religious defamation and hatred, as well as the public offense to religious symbols, might infringe on freedom of speech and religion. The law forbids public authorities from asking individuals to specify their religious affiliation for any reason related to their interactions with the state.

Under the religion law, the state-provided budget is determined by the number of adherents of each recognized religion in the most recent census and "the religion's needs" (a rather ambiguous provision). The Government had not issued the implementing rules and regulations for the new religion law. Consequently, its implementation had not started by the end of the reporting period. Some minority religious groups, such as the Greek Catholics, claimed that the census undercounts members of their community significantly, as Romanian ethnicity is commonly perceived as determining an individual's religion as Orthodox.

In 2005 the Government amended the property restitution legislation, including law 501/2002, which provides for the restitution of religious property. This law also covers the restitution of farm and forest land and other real estate to ethnic communities and addresses restitution to religious groups. The amendments aimed at expediting restitution, clarified and simplified the procedures for property restitution, broadened the scope of restitution to include land of demolished buildings, and extended the application deadlines by 6 months.

The law also introduced fines for officials who hinder the restitution process and created a property fund to compensate claimants with shares of stock for properties (farm and forest land included) that cannot be returned in kind. Shareholders in the potential \$5 billion property fund, however, could not exchange their shares for cash since the fund was not listed on the stock exchange by the end of the reporting period. The Government adopted an ordinance at the end of June 2007 which should enable the fund to be evaluated and then listed on the stock exchange by mid-2008. The ordinance also provides for cash payments in lieu of restitution of up to approximately \$215,000 (500,000 RON), paid over a 2-year period. Larger claims are to be additionally paid with stock in the property fund.

Under the amended law 501/2002, buildings used by public institutions (such as museums, schools, and hospitals) are to remain in tenants' hands for a period of 3 or 5 years, depending on the function of the public institutions, during which time they are to pay rent to the churches. The majority of church properties belong in this category. However, this law does not address the Greek Catholic churches, which were confiscated under communist rule in 1948 and handed over to the Orthodox Church; the 2005 amendments stated that the issue would be addressed in separate legislation. A 1990 government decree set up a joint Orthodox and Greek Catholic committee at the national level to resolve the situation of former Greek Catholic churches, but this committee effectively stopped meeting in 2004. A 2005 law permits the Greek Catholic Church to resort to court action whenever the bilateral dialogue regarding the restitution of churches with the Orthodox Church fails. Prior to that, the courts had often refused to rule in cases regarding Greek Catholic churches due to the 1990 decree. While this law enables the many restitution lawsuits to proceed, the law itself does not reconstitute properties to the Greek Catholic Church.

A 2004 law, also amended by the 2005 legislation, stipulates the restitution of all buildings that belonged to ethnic communities and were confiscated between September 6, 1940, and December 22, 1989. As in the case of religious properties, buildings used for the "public interest" will remain in the hands of the present users for either 3 or 5 years, depending on the current use of the structure. At the request of the Jewish community, the law extended the period of the confiscation of properties to include the time period between 1940 and 1945, when the pro-Nazi government seized a large number of Jewish properties.

The law does not prohibit or punish assembly for peaceful religious activities.

There is no law against proselytizing, nor is there a clear understanding by the authorities of what activities constitute proselytizing.

The Government permits, but does not require, religious instruction in public schools. Attendance in religion classes is optional. Only the 18 recognized religions are entitled to hold religion classes in public schools, but only if their adherents constitute a certain proportion of the classes. The law permits instruction according to the faith of students' parents. The Constitution and the new religion law allow the establishment of confessional schools subsidized by the state.

Ministry of Justice regulations provide for unrestricted access of recognized religions and religious associations to any type of detention facilities, even if their assistance is not specifically requested. The National Administration of Penitentiaries (ANP) can bar the access of representatives of a religious group only if it can provide solid proof that the presence of the group in question actually endangers the security of the detention facility. The regulations also forbid any interference by the management of penitentiaries with religious programs and forbid the presence of management representatives at the meetings between representatives of any faith and prisoners. Distribution of religious publications cannot be subjected to any restriction. Prison representatives in charge of religious assistance should not be priests or representatives of any faith.

The law entitles recognized religions to have military clergy trained to render religious assistance to conscripts.

The law governing the rights of foreigners, revised in 2003, introduced a long-stay visa for religious activities. Visa requirements include approval by the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, evidence that the applicants represent a religious organization legally established in the country, certification of medical insurance, and a criminal record review. The law provides for up to 5 years of visa extensions. There are penalties for any foreigner who stays without a visa, but such penalties do not appear to be linked to religious activities. By raising the threshold for qualifying as a religious association from 3 to 300 citizens, the 2006 Religion Law may disqualify many foreigners from receiving a long-stay visa for religious activities.

Local permits are required in order to build places of worship, which is similar to other types of construction.

The new religion law has been criticized by civil society groups and international organizations such as the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission) and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission. The Government did not consult with unrecognized religious groups regarding the draft law. Of the 18 recognized religions that were consulted by the Government, the Greek Catholic Church and Jehovah's Witnesses refused to support the draft law from the start, while the Baptist Church withdrew its support after its proposed amendments were excluded from the text. The law requires a very high numerical threshold of 0.1 percent of the population--or approximately 22,000 persons--for new religious groups to qualify for religion status, a membership number that even some recognized religions do not have. In addition, minority religious groups must undergo a 12-year waiting period in order to qualify for the more preferential religion status. Civil society organizations recommended the elimination of both requirements during the debates on the draft religion law.

Christmas and Orthodox Easter are national holidays. Members of the other recognized religions that celebrate Easter on a different date are entitled by law to have an additional holiday.

A 2006 law to combat anti-Semitism bans fascist, racist, and xenophobic organizations and includes the persecution of Roma in addition to Jews in its definition of the Holocaust.

The International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (Wiesel Commission) Report (2004) made recommendations aimed at increasing public awareness of the occurrence of the Holocaust in Romania. The report recommendations included government reversal of the previous rehabilitation of Nazi war criminals, establishment of a national Holocaust Remembrance Day, construction of a national Holocaust memorial and museum in Bucharest, and enforcement of legislation making Holocaust denial a crime. In addition, the commission recommended the comprehensive inclusion of the accurate history of the Holocaust in school curriculums and textbooks.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Since 1990 authorities have refused to grant religion status to the Organization of the Orthodox Believers of Old Rite, the Adventist Movement for Reform, the Baha'i Faith, and the Mormons, who are registered as religious associations. During the reporting period, no religious group tried to acquire religion status because they were waiting for the adoption of the new religion law. After the new law went into effect, religious groups were told the procedures for registration had not yet been completed.

According to the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs, in 2006 religious communities received approximately \$16.5 million (46,005,000 RON) in direct proportion to the number of their believers according to the 2002 census, with the Orthodox Church receiving the largest share. The Greek Catholic Church complained that the Government delayed the granted funds and the Church did not have time to spend the funds for their intended purpose by the end of the calendar year. Any unspent money is returned to the state at the end of each calendar year.

Some minority religious groups continued to report that local authorities opposed granting them construction permits for places of worship for unjustified reasons. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses reported that in some localities authorities illegally conditioned the granting of permits on the requirement that all neighbors in the area agree to the construction (e.g., in Sighisoara, Mures County). The Jehovah's Witnesses complained that the mayor of Calarasi, Calarasi County, refused under various pretexts to enforce a June 2006 court ruling entitling the religious group to build a place of worship there. The Greek Catholic Church reported similar cases in Sapinta (Maramures County) and Pesteană (Valcea County).

Several minority religious groups complained that local authorities and Orthodox priests prevented religious activities from taking place, even when the groups had been issued permits. The Seventh-day Adventist Church reported difficulties in obtaining approvals to use public halls for religious activities following pressure by Orthodox priests, especially in rural areas or small localities. In many cases the Adventist Church ultimately decided not to use public halls for its activities. However, in some cases local authorities did not give in to pressure by the Orthodox Church and acted in accordance with the law, granting approval.

Few politicians sponsor bills and measures that would irritate (or displease) the Orthodox Church. Generally, local officials tended to be tolerant toward minority religious groups, but there were incidents where they were pressured or intimidated by Orthodox clergy. In some instances local police and administrative authorities tacitly supported societal campaigns (a few of which involved physical intimidation) against proselytizing by non-Orthodox religious groups or demonstrated a passive attitude towards stopping the harassment (see Section III).

The Jehovah's Witnesses reported several cases where they were intimidated by local authorities. On March 17, 2007, in

Targoviste, Dambovita County, two policemen, accompanied by an Orthodox priest, disrupted religious activity conducted by three Jehovah's Witnesses and forced them to come to police headquarters, where the commander told them they could not talk with persons in the streets without prior approval. The Jehovah's Witnesses did not receive an answer to a complaint filed by one of the three members involved in the incident.

On January 13, 2007, two members of Jehovah's Witnesses were stopped by the mayor of Branisca while they were practicing religious ministry. The mayor asked them to leave the locality and told the Witnesses that their preaching activity was illegal. Police said that the mayor would be investigated. The prosecutor investigated but did not bring criminal charges against the mayor.

On September 21, 2006, community police in Timisoara, Timis County, fined a member of Jehovah's Witnesses for distributing religious leaflets. In answer to the Jehovah's Witnesses' complaint, the head of Timisoara community police argued that the fine was justified because Jehovah's Witnesses did not have an advertising contract with the city hall, thus violating a local council decision. Community police also accused Jehovah's Witnesses of practicing "improper proselytism." The Jehovah's Witnesses appealed the fine in court, which cancelled it as illegal.

On August 27, 2006, the mayor of Baia de Fier, Gorj County, interrupted two Jehovah's Witnesses while they were preaching. The mayor verbally abused them and instigated local residents to acts of violence. On August 6, 2006, the mayor of Baia de Fier, a local councilor, and the head of the local police demanded that several Jehovah's Witnesses members leave Baia de Fier and verbally abused them. In answer to a complaint by the Jehovah's Witnesses, the county police department blamed the incident on the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Jehovah's Witnesses reported that after many years of harassment, its members did not encounter any more difficulties during the reporting period from the local authorities or the Orthodox Church in Mizil, Prahova County.

In Pestana a Greek Catholic community established in 2005 has faced discrimination and harassment since a group of villagers, along with the Orthodox priest, switched to the Greek Catholic faith. Tensions continued during the reporting period because of the Orthodox Church's refusal to comply with a court ruling allowing Greek Catholics to have access to the local cemetery and the local authorities' refusal to issue a construction permit for a Greek Catholic church.

State authorities did not respond to Greek Catholic complaints regarding restitution of properties or discriminatory attitudes by local officials.

Jehovah's Witnesses continued to complain that their missionaries were granted only 2-year and even 1-year visa extensions without any explanation. The Baptist Church also reported that its missionaries who did not have U.S. or EU citizenship only received visas of maximum 1-year duration. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also complained of inconsistent requirements and high fees to obtain or renew visas.

Although proselytizing is not restricted by law, several minority religious groups, including both recognized and unrecognized religions, made credible complaints that low-level government officials impeded their efforts to proselytize, interfered in religious activities, and otherwise discriminated against them during the period covered by this report.

Some minority recognized religious groups complained that public schools refused to offer classes in their faith. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, Greek Catholic Church, Baptist Church, and Jehovah's Witnesses continued to report such cases. According to these minority religious groups, the local inspectors for religion classes are in many cases Orthodox priests who routinely deny accreditation to teachers of other religions. According to Greek Catholic and Baptist reports, some school authorities or directors denied access in their schools to teachers of these religions. The School Inspectorate of Dolj County prevented, under various pretexts, a Baptist minister from teaching religion classes in the village of Carcea in the 2006-07 school year, despite the presence of 19 students requesting religion classes in this faith. Minority religious groups, including the Greek Catholic and Baptist Churches, credibly asserted that authorities pressured children of other faiths to attend classes of Orthodox religion. Allegedly some schools purposely scheduled Orthodox religion classes in the middle of the day so that all students were required to attend. The Baptist Church also reported that some school directors refused to offer Baptist religion classes even in districts where there were a large number of Baptist adherents. The Baptist Church reported cases where school officials attempted to pressure Baptist students to change their faith. The Seventh-day Adventist Church continued to complain that, since 2002, the School Inspectorate of Cluj County excluded two of the requested three classes on Adventist religion in the school curriculum, although there were sufficient students for three full classes.

In addition, the Baptist Church continued to report that, at some festivities in public schools, officials required all students to attend Orthodox religious services.

Similar official conduct requiring attendance at Orthodox religious services also reportedly occurred within the army.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church complained that authorities invited only the Orthodox Church to the National Day celebration. In addition, authorities have allowed only the Orthodox Church to have an active role in opening ceremonies in schools and on other occasions.

In November 2006 the CNCD, in reply to a complaint filed by a Buzau-based NGO, asked the Ministry of Education to remove religious symbols from schools, with the exception of classrooms where religious classes were taught. The decision caused vehement reactions by the Orthodox Church. In December 2006 the Ministry of Education decided that parents, local communities, and school management should have decision-making power on the presence or absence of icons in the classroom. The debate continued and no action had been taken by the end of the reporting period.

Several NGOs and minority religious groups complained about an Orthodox religion textbook published in July 2006 by the Ministry of Education with the coordination of the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs. The book described the emergence of the Greek Catholic Church in the 18th century as the result of "Catholic proselytizing" and described the Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is, and Mormons as sects "representing a genuine threat to the society." A chapter in the book says that sects proselytize using means such as brainwashing, bribing, blackmailing, and exploitation of the poor.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church continued to complain that some universities refused to change the date for exams for Adventist students when these are scheduled on Saturdays. Adventist school students could not participate in the school olympics because they took place only on Saturdays.

According to minority religious groups, the military clergy is comprised only of Orthodox priests, with the exception of one representative of the Catholic Church and one from the Evangelical Alliance.

Media reported that in September 2005 the Bucharest city hall illegally approved a permit to construct a building next to the Roman Catholic Saint Joseph Cathedral, which might damage the foundation of the cathedral. In November 2006 an investigative commission of the Senate urged the Government to stop the construction of the building. Despite domestic and international protests, including street demonstrations and messages from the Vatican, the European Parliament, and other forums, as well as complaints by the Roman Catholic Church, construction continued. The Roman Catholic Church complained that the courts deliberately transferred a lawsuit it filed against the construction company twice in order to further delay a ruling on the case. The case remained pending at the end of the reporting period.

Some NGOs and religious groups reported that in some counties, such as Suceava, Salaj, Mures, Maramures, and Hunedoara, the national identity card application continued to include a potentially discriminatory request for religious affiliation, despite a 2006 government decision that eliminated this requirement. The Baha'i Faith reported that a Baha'i member was advised by the identity card bureau to write Orthodox under religious affiliation.

Some religious groups complained that the National Audio-Visual Council made it difficult for radio frequency licenses to be purchased for religious broadcasting. Minority religious groups complained of a lack of provisions to provide for the free access of religious groups to state-owned media.

In many cases religious minorities have not succeeded in regaining possession of properties that were confiscated under Communist rule. Many properties returned to religious denominations contained government offices, schools, hospitals, or cultural institutions that would require relocation, and lawsuits and protests by current possessors have delayed restitution of the property to rightful owners. Although some progress was made during the period covered by this report, the pace of restitution was extremely slow, and the large majority of religious property restitution cases remained unresolved. In many cases local authorities refused to turn over restituted properties in which county or municipal governments had an interest and challenged in court the decisions of the Special Restitution Commission, the section within the National Authority for Property Restitution responsible for restituting religious and ethnic communal urban property. There were many complaints that the local authorities consistently delayed providing information about the claimed properties to the Special Restitution Commission, thereby obstructing the restitution process, despite the fines stipulated by the new 2005 legislation for such delays. The National Authority for Property Restitution reported, however, that after the adoption of the 2005 legislation local authorities provided information more rapidly.

The Greek Catholic Church complained that the Special Restitution Commission delayed the actual issuance of restitution decisions after approving them in principle. There have also been many complaints that the Property Fund, which should provide compensation in stock, has not yet been listed on the stock exchange and is not expected to be listed before 2008.

The Special Commission for Restitution started its activity in 2003 and by the end of the reporting period had restituted 1,105 buildings of a total of 14,716 applications. Another 664 cases had been either denied or otherwise resolved, and 76

cases had been approved to receive compensation.

Since 2003 the Special Restitution Commission returned only 103 of the 6,723 properties other than churches that the Greek Catholic Church claimed under the restitution legislation and decided to grant compensation in eight additional cases. The Church has also received 60 to 65 of the 80 properties that were restituted by government decree in 1992, but mostly only on paper. Three schools in Cluj were examples of this "only on paper" return. The Greek Catholic Church accused the Bucharest mayor's office of having blocked the restitution of 1 of the 80 properties.

The Government continued to avoid adoption of legislation regarding the restitution of Greek Catholic churches by the Orthodox Church, which had received them from the communist state in 1948. The Greek Catholic Church received from the Orthodox Church, either through negotiation or in court, fewer than 200 of the 2,600 churches and monasteries it owned in 1948. Restitution of existing churches was financially important to both denominations because local residents were likely to attend the church whether it was Greek Catholic or Orthodox. Consequently, the number of members and corresponding share of the state budget allocation for religious groups were at stake.

Courts delayed hearings on many lawsuits filed by the Greek Catholic Church, and the lawsuits were often impeded by constant appeals by the Orthodox Church. In some lawsuits over church ownership, the courts asked the Greek Catholic Church to submit the number of believers in the localities in question, although there is no legal provision requiring this. This was, for example, the case in the court in Arad County, which asked the Greek Catholic Church for the number of believers in Simand when the Greek Catholic Church claimed a church.

Historical Hungarian churches, including Roman Catholic as well as Protestant churches (Reformed, Evangelical, and Unitarian), have received a small number of their confiscated properties from the Government. Approximately 80 percent of the buildings previously confiscated from Hungarian churches are used as public buildings. Of approximately 3,000 buildings, 33 were restituted by government decrees. Hungarian churches could not take possession of all of them because of lawsuits and the opposition of current occupants. The Roman Catholic Church had not received the Batthyanaeum Library, despite a 2003 court ruling. The Church filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 2003, and a decision was still pending by the end of the reporting period. The discussions between the Roman Catholic Church and the Special Commission for Restitution, which reportedly began in 2006, failed to identify potential solutions for the restitution of the building. Full restitution of the Roman Catholic Bishop's palace in Oradea remained impeded by slow movement of museum holdings to their new location, which was scheduled to end in 2008. Since 2003 the Special Commission for Restitution has restituted in principle 599 of the approximately 2,700 claimed buildings.

By the end of July 2007, the total number of "resolved" cases since 2003 was 1,759, and the number of cases of restitution was 1,105. A total of 76 cases had been approved for compensation to the Hungarian churches, with 195 buildings restored during the period covered by this report. However, Hungarian churches did not regain physical possession of many of these properties. The Unitarian Church won separate lawsuits regarding three buildings and took actual possession of two of them. The mayor of Cluj delayed signing the documents for the third building under various pretexts.

The Reformed Church in Oradea filed complaints with local authorities over their allocation of a sports playground to a local Orthodox parish in 2004. The playground was promptly locked by the Orthodox parish. The Church claimed that it rightfully belonged to a local Reformed high school. Despite repeated protests by the Reformed Church, the case remained unresolved at the end of the period covered by this report.

In the 1990s the Government decreed the return of 42 buildings to the Jewish community, 36 of which the community took partial or full possession. In many cases restitution was delayed by lawsuits. The community was able to reclaim land only in Iasi, where it received 18 plots of land. However, 18 additional land claims of the Jewish community remained unresolved in Iasi, including a plot of land that the prefect divided and distributed to other persons. In this case, the county land restitution commission decided to give different plots in compensation for the one that was sold, but the National Agency of State Domains challenged this in court. The Special Restitution Commission processed 202 of approximately 2,000 pending cases in the reporting period and approved 66 cases for compensation. The users of 10 of the buildings challenged the restitution decisions in court, and three of the decisions were cancelled by courts. The other seven lawsuits were in progress.

Another frequent problem with restitution was a refusal by the occupant to return a property or pay rent for occupancy. The nominal owner can still be held liable for payment of property taxes in such cases.

The Greek Catholic Church complained that, in many regions where it had claimed farm and forest land, local authorities, at the request of the Orthodox Church, opposed restitution outright or proposed that restitution to all religious denominations be in direct proportion to the number of their believers (the Orthodox Church having the large majority of all believers in the country). The Greek Catholic Church also reported that the Bucharest mayor's office opposed the return of 40,000 square meters of land in Bucharest.

On March 13, 2007, a Suceava court ruled in favor of the restitution of 166,813 of the 192,000 hectares of forest land reclaimed by the Romanian Orthodox Church Fund of Bukovina. The representative of the state, the National Forest Company, appealed the ruling, and the case remained pending.

In Certeze, Satu Mare County, local authorities, pressured by Orthodox priests, continued to refuse, under various pretexts, to restitute a piece of land to the Greek Catholic Church for the construction of a church. In April 2007 the Greek Catholic Church complained to the prefect's office; a decision remained pending at the end of the reporting period. Similar cases occurred in Baisoara and Feleacu, Cluj County.

On March 27, 2007, the CNCD ruled on a complaint filed by a Targu Mures-based NGO, deciding that local authorities in Chiheru de Jos, Mures County, discriminated against the Greek Catholic Church in the restitution of some farm land. The Orthodox Church received 90 hectares of the farm land that had belonged to the Greek Catholic Church, while the authorities offered only compensation to the latter. The CNCD reprimanded the city government for this decision. Similar cases in which the Orthodox Church received former Greek Catholic land occurred in Belotint, Gurba, Cherelus (Arad County).

According to the local Muslim community, after repeated requests the Bucharest city government approved in 2006 the allocation of a piece of land, insufficient in size, for the establishment of a Muslim cemetery. The community still had not received the land during the reporting period and continued to face problems with the burial of its members.

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.

Anti-Semitism

Acts of anti-Semitism, including desecration and vandalism of Jewish sites, continued during the period covered by this report. The extreme nationalist press and individuals continued to publish anti-Semitic articles. Some groups held public events or made statements with anti-Semitic themes. According to MCA Romania, authorities tended to minimize the significance of such incidents of vandalism, usually explaining them as being the actions of children, drunkards, or persons with mental disorders.

A series of acts of desecration or vandalism of Jewish property occurred during the reporting period. On February 11, 2007, 4 minors vandalized 22 tombs in a Jewish cemetery in Bucharest, causing damage worth approximately \$3,700 (9,200 RON). Police proposed to the Prosecutor's Office that they not prosecute the minors. A group of minors vandalized an old Jewish cemetery in Tulcea on January 12, 2007, and the Prosecutor's Office also decided not to prosecute them. On January 1, 2007, the Center for the Study of the History of Romanian Jews was vandalized, and the Federation of Jewish Communities filed a complaint with police. In September 2006 a 19-year-old individual was arrested while painting swastikas on some housing blocks in Buzau. The individual had previously been involved in three other cases, which included posting racist messages on the Internet and painting Nazi symbols on a synagogue. In December 2006 the Prosecutor's Office in Suceava started the prosecution of two young persons for disseminating fascist, racist, and xenophobic symbols, which they painted on two buildings and cemeteries in November 2005. There have been approximately a dozen reported instances of anti-Semitic property destruction and vandalism each year during the previous several reporting periods, ranging from painting swastikas on buildings, to desecrating graves and cemeteries, to vandalizing synagogues, Jewish-owned buildings, and in one case, a Torah scroll. Police sometimes identified perpetrators.

In January 2007 the Federation of Jewish Communities and a Jewish NGO filed a criminal complaint against a professor who consistently denied the occurrence of the Holocaust in the country in the media and his books. The Legionnaires (also called the Iron Guard, an extreme nationalist, anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi group that existed in the country in the interwar period) continued to republish inflammatory books from the interwar period. Authorities occasionally investigated and prosecuted offenders, but all court cases resulted in acquittals.

During the reporting period, anti-Semitic views and attitudes were expressed during talk shows broadcast by private television stations, which failed to respond to complaints made by Jewish organizations. Police and prosecutors investigated two professors in the previous reporting period for publishing anti-Semitic articles or articles denying the Holocaust. One investigation was dropped; the other court case was ongoing. Authorities also initiated criminal prosecution against a 17-year-old male for creating an anti-Semitic website that incited violence against two teenagers of the Jewish

community; a court decision was pending.

Extremist organizations occasionally held high-profile public events with anti-Semitic themes. In November 2006, Vatra Romaneasca (Romanian Hearth) Union, a nationalistic NGO, sponsored a symposium to discuss, among other issues, the "Holocaust in Romania" as an expression of "institutionalized anti-Romanianism." The New Right organization continued to sponsor yearly marches, followed by religious services, to commemorate Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the founder of the Legionnaire Movement. The New Right continued to foster the ideals of the Iron Guard in the media and the Internet. The New Generation Party, which grew significantly in the polls, maintained its 2004 slogan, which was used by the 1930s anti-Semitic Legionnaire Movement.

During the reporting period, the leader of the extreme nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM), Corneliu Vadim Tudor, continued to make statements and write articles containing strong anti-Semitic attacks. In a speech on March 23, 2007, Tudor denied that any Holocaust activities had occurred in the country.

In March 2007 the Federation of Jewish Communities released a declaration expressing sadness and surprise at a December 2006 ruling by the Bucharest Appellate Court, which partially exonerated Marshal Antonescu and some others convicted for war crimes. Antonescu was responsible for widespread atrocities against Romanian Jews during World War II.

In its April 2007 annual report, the Simon Wiesenthal Center included Romania in the category of countries that paid insufficient attention to or were unsuccessful in efforts to investigate Nazi war criminals.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

Most mainstream politicians continued to criticize anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia publicly, and criticized attempts to deny the occurrence of the Holocaust in the country. The Government continued to make substantial progress in recognizing and teaching the true history of the Holocaust in the country.

The Government continued to make progress in its efforts to expand public school education on the true history of the Holocaust in the country. It included the Holocaust in compulsory history courses in 7th grade as a dimension of World War II, as a full chapter in a 9th grade history course, in connection to World War II in 10th grade, as a specific theme in 11th grade, and in the chapter on national minorities in the 12th grade curriculum. There is also an optional course on "History of the Jews and Holocaust" for the 12th grade. The Government continued to train teachers in Bacau, Cluj, Bucharest, Iasi, and Craiova to teach the Holocaust. In addition, the teachers received training in programs offered jointly by the Ministry of Education and Yad Vashem Institute, and others went to Paris and the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The Ministry of Education maintained a website that included a guide to assist teachers nationwide who instruct courses on the Holocaust. The Ministry also published and distributed 15,000 copies of the guide in schools, continued to distribute books and supplementary materials to help teach the Holocaust, and continued to sponsor national and international seminars on the Holocaust and the teaching of its history, as well as national contests regarding the Holocaust.

In January 2007 government officials and Members of Parliament attended and addressed the commemoration of the 1941 pogrom in Bucharest. In accordance with recommendations by the Wiesel Commission, the Government continued to commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day on October 2006 with events in several cities. The events, many organized in local schools, were attended by officials and key dignitaries, including the President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister. The President laid the cornerstone for a Holocaust memorial to be built in Bucharest. In his address the President stated that Romanians still largely lacked remorse for their country's role in exterminating up to 380,000 Jews during the Second World War.

On June 6, 2007, the Government earmarked approximately \$170,000 (RON 400,000) for the rehabilitation of 14 synagogues by the end of the year.

On May 24, 2007, the President signed a decree withdrawing the Star of Romania medal from PRM leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor, known for making numerous xenophobic and anti-Semitic comments.

The State Secretariat for Religious Affairs met with representatives of religious groups on a regular basis and attended the meetings of leading bodies of some religious groups. According to the State Secretariat, the Government continued its efforts to mediate and defuse tensions between the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches in some local areas. After the adoption of the new religion law, the State Secretariat started meetings at central and local levels with the recognized religions and religious associations to discuss the implementation of the law.

The State Secretariat also organized national and international symposiums and interconfessional meetings in Bucharest, Iasi, Timisoara, and Constanta between September and December 2006.

The new religion law entitles religious denominations to bury, without any restriction, their believers in the cemeteries of other religions in localities where they do not have their own cemetery or without communal cemeteries.

Several religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, reported that, after the adoption of new regulations for religious activity in prisons, the access of religious groups to detention facilities improved significantly.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church reported that, during the reporting period, an increased number of universities and the Ministry of Justice had positive reactions to the requests of Adventist students not to schedule their exams on Saturdays, and state institutions and local authorities became increasingly cooperative with recognized minority religious groups with regard to the latter's social projects.

The Jehovah's Witnesses noted improvements in the attitude of the police and courts.

The Baptist Church also mentioned the authorities' increased tolerance toward minority religious groups.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious belief or practice during the reporting period.

The Romanian Orthodox Church exercises substantial influence in its dominant role among a majority of the population and policymakers, and Orthodox religious leaders almost exclusively preside over state occasions. In particular, many Orthodox leaders make public appearances with prominent political figures, and religious messages often contain political promises or goals, and support for particular political positions.

Romanian Orthodox Church authorities were often intolerant of other religious groups and repeatedly criticized the "aggressive proselytizing" of Protestant, neo-Protestant, and other religious groups, which the Church repeatedly described as "sects." This led to physical and verbal conflicts in some cases.

Minority religious groups alleged that some members of the Orthodox clergy provoked isolated incidents of organized group intimidation, impeded their efforts to proselytize, and interfered in religious activities.

The press also reported several cases in which adherents of minority religions were prevented by others from practicing their faith, and local law enforcement authorities did not protect them.

The CNCD, established to curb discrimination of any kind (including on religious grounds), received six complaints of discrimination on religious grounds between July 1, 2006, and June 30, 2007.

The Jehovah's Witnesses continued to allege verbal and physical abuse, in particular by some Orthodox priests, and indifference from some police; in some instances, the priests reportedly had the support of local authorities and the police. Many complaints regarding assault remained unresolved, and aggressors were often not punished.

On April 14, 2007, in Barlad, Vaslui County, an Orthodox priest and his deputy verbally and physically abused two female Jehovah's Witnesses in the presence of a minor; the aggressors pushed the two women and the minor in a car, drove around, beat them, and threatened to kill them. The priest and his deputy eventually took the Jehovah's Witnesses members to the police. The Jehovah's Witnesses complained that such cases occurred repeatedly in Valea Mare, Arges County, in July and August 2006, where an Orthodox priest accompanied by a group of villagers verbally and physically abused a group of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Jehovah's Witnesses filed a complaint with the police and received the answer that the case was under investigation. The mayor and other individuals from his office also threatened and verbally abused the Jehovah's Witnesses. In July 2006 an Orthodox priest stopped Jehovah's Witnesses in their ministry and insulted them.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints complained of repeated harassment and discrimination against its members, including in the workplace. This included incidents where members were threatened with losing their jobs at work or harassed by colleagues because of their religious affiliation. The Church also reported incidents in which teachers forced children to declare their faith and then harassed them. According to the Church's reports, societal actors, particularly Orthodox priests but others as well, repeatedly and consistently harassed and abused its missionaries. Police

sometimes arrested and charged perpetrators of these abuses, and courts in some cases fined them.

The Baptist Church reported that, during the period covered by the report, two aggressive individuals repeatedly disrupted the religious activity of the Baptist community in Botiz, Satu Mare County, and that the police declared that they could not do anything about it.

There were several instances of priests confiscating religious publications of Jehovah's Witnesses. On November 8, 2006, in Ulmeni, Calarasi County, Orthodox priests confiscated materials, and on November 4, 2006, in Capalnita, Harghita County, a Roman Catholic priest did the same. On July 29, 2006, Jehovah's Witnesses preaching in Namaesti village were insulted by an Orthodox priest in their ministry. On July 13, 2006, an Orthodox priest confiscated religious leaflets from a group of Jehovah's Witnesses in Tecuci, Galati County. The priest reportedly verbally and physically abused them. After the Jehovah's Witnesses filed a complaint, one of the members involved in the incident was called to the police station, where an officer told him that some villagers, allegedly disturbed by the religious activities of Jehovah's Witnesses, had filed complaints against them. The police did not answer the complaints filed by the Jehovah's Witnesses in these cases.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church reported similar incidents with Orthodox priests in several localities. In Pitesti, Arges County, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had problems for several years with an Orthodox priest who repeatedly took and broke the missionaries' name tags and destroyed religious pamphlets they were carrying. In Viseu, Maramures County, the Seventh-day Adventist Church rented a public hall for religious activities between March 3 and 17, 2007. An Orthodox priest wrote a letter to the mayor expressing indignation that he had given his approval to rent the hall to the Adventists for "aggressive proselytizing." Both the mayor and the director of the public hall responded that the action of the Adventist Church was in line with both the Constitution and the new religion law, which guarantee freedom of religion.

Minority religions credibly complained about the intolerant attitude of some Orthodox religion teachers, who in some instances depicted non-Orthodox churches to students as "sects" and a danger to all who might wish to join them, and in rare cases incited students to desecrate minority religious symbols.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, Greek Catholic Church, Baptist Church, and Baha'i Faith continued to complain that Orthodox priests allowed the burial of non-Orthodox believers in confessional or even public cemeteries (often treated as confessional by Orthodox priests in rural areas) only when certain conditions were met; they allowed burials only in isolated sections of the cemetery or if non-Orthodox religious services were not used. During the reporting period, the Adventist Church reported such incidents in Filipestii de Padure, Stejaru, Neamt County, and Scobinti, Iasi County. In Scobinti an Adventist believer was eventually buried according to the Orthodox rite, after repeated attempts by the Adventist Church to bury him with Adventist religious services. These incidents took place in 2007 after the adoption of the new religion law, which allows the religious groups access to cemeteries belonging to other churches. To avoid such encounters, the Adventist Church decided to renew its request to the mayors' offices for land for cemeteries in a large number of localities where it had congregations.

The Baptist Church also reported that its attempts to receive land for cemeteries in some localities were unsuccessful. Orthodox priests also denied access for Greek Catholics to many cemeteries in more than 20 localities, including Pecica, Arad County, Desesti, Maramures County, Ungheni, Mures County, Salva, Bistrita-Nasaud County. According to Baptist reports, in December 2006 unidentified individuals vandalized four tombs of neo-Protestant believers in Targu Neamt, Neamt County.

Relations between the Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox Archbishopric of Timisoara continued to be amicable and cooperative. The Orthodox Bishopric of Caransebes also continued to have similar positive dialogues with the Greek Catholic Church.

For the most part, however, Orthodox leaders opposed and delayed returning churches to the Greek Catholics. The Greek Catholic Church of the eparchy of Lugoj complained that the Orthodox Bishopric of Arad, Ienopole, and Halmagiu, which was using more than 90 Greek Catholic churches, not only refused to restitute them but also to hold alternate religious services. At the end of the period covered by this report, the Orthodox Bishopric had returned no church to the Greek Catholics.

Despite the Orthodox Patriarch's promise to restitute a major cathedral in Gherla, Cluj County, the Greek Catholic Church had not received it by the end of the period covered by this report. An important Greek Catholic church in Bucharest, the subject of a case that awaited a hearing by the ECHR, was eventually restituted by the Orthodox Church in December 2006. The church was supposed to be returned to the Greek Catholic Church 16 years ago, but the Orthodox Church kept appealing the original court decision, thus delaying the restitution.

Despite the stated desire for dialogue, the Orthodox Church demolished Greek Catholic churches--some of which had

been declared historical monuments--in at least 10 localities, half of which were in Cluj County. Authorities did not react to Greek Catholic complaints about the illegal demolition of a Greek Catholic church in Taga, Cluj County, in May 2006. Another church continued to face unauthorized demolition in Ungheni, Mures County, where the Orthodox Church continued construction of a new church around the Greek Catholic church. In a similar manner, using an oft repeated tactic of building new walls around the outer walls of the older church, the Orthodox Church demolished an 18th century Greek Catholic church in Badon, Salaj County, on April 5, 2007.

In Nicula, Cluj County, the Orthodox Church continued construction close to the famous Greek Catholic Monastery of Nicula, despite a court order to halt any construction. A decision in a slow-moving lawsuit over the ownership of the church remained pending. Similar cases were reportedly developing in Orastie, Hunedoara County, and Iara, Cluj County, where the Orthodox Church began construction of buildings close to the former Greek Catholic churches, presumably with the intention of subsequently demolishing the latter. Over the years the Orthodox Church repeatedly rejected the Greek Catholic requests for alternating services in over 230 localities.

Longstanding tensions persisted between the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches in many localities where large numbers of the Orthodox congregation switched to the Greek Catholic Church. An example is in Stei, Hunedoara County, where the Orthodox Church continued to deny the Greek Catholics access to their former church. The Greek Catholic Church also could not obtain possession of the rectory restituted in 2004 because the Orthodox Church appealed a restitution decision in favor of the Greek Catholics. Other examples of this behavior occurred in Valea de Jos, Bihor County, and in Chet, Bihor County. The Greek Catholic Church asked the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs in many cases to mediate its dialogue with the Orthodox Church concerning alternative services in the churches, but the State Secretariat failed to do so.

Representatives of minority religious groups credibly complained that Orthodox priests give out most of the religious assistance in the country, partly because the Orthodox Church prevents minority religions from granting humanitarian or religious assistance to hospitals, children's homes, and shelters for the elderly. Charitable activities carried out by other churches in children's homes and shelters were often negatively interpreted as proselytizing. In many cases minority religious groups felt compelled to form nonreligious associations to gain access to public institutions to carry out charitable activities.

After the dialogue between the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches came to a halt in 2004, disputes between the two religions' believers over church property increased in intensity. Greek Catholic communities decided, in many cases, to build new churches because of the lack of progress in restituting their properties either through dialogue with the Orthodox Church or in court; however, their efforts were hampered by the Orthodox Church, sometimes with the support of local authorities. Tensions continued in many localities where the Orthodox Church refused to comply with court rulings that ordered restitution of churches to the Greek Catholic Church, such as in Bogdan Voda, Maramures County; Valanii de Munte, Bihor County; Lupsa, Alba County; and in localities where the Greek Catholic Church began lawsuits for restitution, such as Prunis, Cluj County; Simand, Arad County; Camarzana, Satu Mare County; and Viile Satu Mare, Satu Mare County. In Valanii de Munte, Bihor County, on May 28, 2007, approximately 30 Orthodox priests and 80 believers prevented the enforcement of a final court ruling restituting a church to the Greek Catholics.

During this reporting period, the Orthodox Church increased pressure on Parliamentarians to support a draft law stipulating the restitution of land and other properties in direct proportion to the number of believers, which would actually legitimize to a great extent the communists' decision to give the Greek Catholic properties to the Orthodox Church.

In most localities with two churches (one of which had belonged to the Greek Catholic Church) and only one Orthodox priest, the Orthodox Church frequently does one of three things: holds alternate religious services between the two locations, keeps the Orthodox church locked and holds the services in the former Greek Catholic church, or establishes a second Orthodox parish in the locality. Additionally, more than 20 former Greek Catholic churches remained closed.

In Dumbraveni, Sibiu County, the Orthodox Church continued to refuse to enforce a previous court ruling to share a local church with the Greek Catholic Church. Although the Orthodox Church promised to return the Greek Catholic church after it completed the construction of a new Orthodox church, it continued to refuse to do so after the construction was over.

A Roman Catholic Csango community, an ethnic group that speaks a Hungarian dialect, continued to complain that they were unable to hold religious services in their mother tongue because of opposition by the Roman Catholic Bishopric of Iasi, which cooperates closely with the Orthodox Church, despite a 2005 CNCD decision holding that the act of denying religious services in the mother tongue is a restriction on religious freedom.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discussed religious freedom issues with the Government of Romania, including at senior political

levels. The U.S. Government also maintained active public outreach on religious freedom. The Embassy maintained close contact with a broad range of religious groups and NGOs in the country, including Muslim groups and other minority religious groups, to monitor and discuss religious freedom. The Ambassador and other embassy representatives regularly met and raised religious freedom concerns with religious leaders and government officials who work on religious affairs in Bucharest and in other cities.

Throughout the period covered by the report, embassy representatives and other U.S. government officials discussed with government officials at multiple levels the importance of full official recognition of the Holocaust in the country, improvements in Holocaust education in school curricula, and implementation of the 2004 recommendations of the Wiesel Commission. The Embassy supported visiting delegations focusing on issues related to the Holocaust, including the Wiesel Commission members and U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad Foundation. Embassy personnel and visiting U.S. officials repeatedly discussed the Holocaust in Romania with local and international members of the Wiesel Commission and supported the work of the commission. Among many other events, the Ambassador and other U.S. officials participated in the commemoration of National Holocaust Day in October 2006. The Embassy also supported the activities that the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum carried out. The Embassy cosponsored a 4-day conference on racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia in Bacau in May 2007 with NGOs and a round table on unresolved Holocaust issues with the Elie Wiesel Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania.

The Ambassador and other embassy officials repeatedly raised concerns about the slow restitution of religious properties, particularly of Greek Catholic churches, with government officials, including the President, Prime Minister, and the Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs. Members of the embassy's office in Cluj had meetings with Reformed, Evangelical, Greek Catholic, Jewish, and Orthodox officials in Cluj and Oradea, and discussed restitution of religious properties. U.S. officials continued to lobby in government circles for fair treatment on property restitution issues, including religious and communal properties, and for nondiscriminatory treatment of all religious groups.

In 2006 embassy and other U.S. government officials continuously expressed concern to officials and encouraged revision of the government-sponsored draft law on religion, which included numerous elements that would inhibit the freedom of religion. The Embassy approached the Government at all levels on this issue, including Parliamentarians, presidential advisors, and the Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs.

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