



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Seychelles

International Religious Freedom Report 2006

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 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 religious groups 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 has an area of 444 square miles, and its population is approximately 82,500. According to a 2006 government estimate, about 90 percent of the population is Roman Catholic and 7 percent is Anglican. There are other Christian churches, including Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal Church, the Pentecostal Assembly, the Nazarites, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Hinduism, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith also are practiced.

A few foreign missionary groups practice in the country, including the Missionaries of Charity, a Roman Catholic religious society.

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. At all levels, the Government sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Seventh-day Adventist churches, Islamic mosques, and Baha'i local spiritual assembly have individual acts of incorporation. Other churches that are not corporate bodies are registered as associations with the Registrar General and are entitled to tax-free privileges, similar to a charity. All religious organizations must register to be entitled to tax-free privileges. If an organization does not want tax-free privileges, it is not required to register.

The Government tends to remain uninvolved with religious matters, but it provides program time to different religious organizations on the national radio broadcasting service. On alternate Sunday mornings, the national radio service airs Catholic Mass and Anglican services, which last from 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. The Islam and Hindu faiths are allowed 15-minute broadcasts every Friday afternoon, and the Baha'i and Seventh-day Adventist faiths are allowed 15-minute broadcasts every Saturday afternoon.

Government employees of all faiths can request paid leave on any of their holy days, and such leave generally is granted. 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 majority of government ministers are Catholic.

The Roman Catholic holy days of Good Friday, Easter, Corpus Christi, Assumption of Mary, All Saints' Day, Immaculate Conception Day, and Christmas are national holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In the past, the Government did not demonstrate favoritism toward one religion over another; however, in 2004, the Baie Sainte Anne Church, a Catholic church, was awarded \$200,000 (1 million Seychelles rupees) for major renovation works.

According to the Government, a portion of the national budget is periodically allocated to provide assistance to faiths that request financial support at the beginning of each year. In the past, Baha'i and Hindu groups have benefited from these grants, which are awarded on a case-by-case basis and based on the availability of budgeted funds.

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

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom.

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.

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