



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Liechtenstein

International Religious Freedom Report 2006

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The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Roman Catholic Church is the official state church.

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 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 61.7 square miles (160 square kilometers) and, as of 2002, a total population of 33,863, according to the Office of the National Economy. Membership in the different religious communities was as follows: 25,730 Roman Catholics, 2,354 Protestants, 1,384 Muslims, 258 Eastern Orthodox, 72 Buddhists, 31 Jehovah's Witnesses, 18 Jews, 14 Baha'is, 13 Anglicans, 9 New Apostolics, 8 other religions, and 329 with no formal affiliation to any religious community. For 3,643 residents, authorities had no indication of their religious affiliation. As of 2002, the Government discontinued statistics on religious affiliation.

There were no significant foreign missionary groups in the country.

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. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Criminal Code prohibits any form of discrimination or debasement of any religion or any of its adherents. The constitution makes the Roman Catholic Church the established church of the country, and as such it enjoys the full protection of the state.

Church funding comes from the general budget, as decided by Parliament, and is not a direct "tithe" paid by the citizens. The Government gives money not only to the Roman Catholic Church but also to other denominations. Roman Catholic and Protestant churches receive regular annual contributions from the Government in proportion to membership size as determined in the census count of 2000; smaller religious groups are eligible to apply for grants for associations of foreigners or specific projects. In 2006, the Government made a contribution of \$20,000 (25,000 Swiss francs) to the Muslim community. The Catholic and Protestant churches' finances are integrated directly into the budgets of the national and local governments. The Roman Catholic Church receives approximately \$240,000 (300,000 Swiss francs) per year, plus additional sums from the eleven municipalities. The relationship between the state and the Roman Catholic Church is being redefined. In 2003, the Government reestablished a working group that discussed legislative reform, but the working group has not met since 2004. In 2004, the Government contracted an independent study on church financing reform that is being discussed with local governments. All religious groups enjoy tax-exempt status.

The Archdiocese of Vaduz is scheduled to receive a sum of \$2.4 million (3 million Swiss francs) over a total of five years as part of a financial settlement with the Diocese of Chur (Switzerland), to which it belonged until 1997. The transaction will permit the financial separation of the dioceses from one another. The first payment of \$800 thousand (1 million Swiss francs) was transferred in December 2003. Additional payments were being made in installments of \$320 thousand (400 thousand Swiss francs). The Archdiocese of Vaduz intended to use the funds to pay back its property loan.

In May 2005, the Council of Europe's (COE) Commissioner for Human Rights criticized the fact that standing policy favored the Catholic Church over other religious communities in the distribution of state subsidies and urged the Government to review its policies to ensure an equitable distribution of these funds. In 2004, the U.N. Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) also expressed concern about the unequal treatment of different religious denominations in the allocation of public funds. The issue of state subsidies to religious communities formed part of the government-sponsored discussions to reach consensus on the redefinition of the relationship between the state and the Roman Catholic Church.

There were no significant foreign missionary groups in the country. To receive a religious-worker visa, an applicant must demonstrate that the host organization is important for the entire country. An applicant must have completed theological studies and be accredited with an acknowledged religious group. Visa requests normally were not denied and were processed in the same manner as requests from other individuals or workers.

Since 2001, the Government has granted the Muslim community a residency permit for one imam, plus one short-term residency permit for an additional imam during Ramadan. The Government follows a policy of routinely granting visas to the imams in exchange for the agreement of both the Turkish Association and the Islamic community to prevent religious diatribes by the imams or the spread of religious extremism.

Religious education is part of the curriculum at public schools. At the secondary school level, parents and pupils choose between traditional confessional religious education and the nonconfessional subject "Religion and Culture." Since its introduction in 2003, more than 85 percent of Roman Catholic pupils have chosen the new subject, with the remainder following traditional confessional classes held by the Catholic Church. Representatives of the Protestant community have complained that the optional subject "Religion and Culture" de facto eliminated classes in Protestant doctrine because it made it virtually impossible for the minority community to meet the quorum of four pupils to hold confessional classes as part of the regular curriculum. As an alternative, the Protestant Church offers extra-curricular religious education classes with financial support from the Government. Regarding Roman Catholic confessional education at primary schools, a working group representing the local municipalities, religious teachers (catechists), and the Department of Education has worked out an agreement with the archbishop of Vaduz. The agreement retained the compulsory nature of confessional religious education and granted the Roman Catholic Church autonomy in setting the curriculum. With regard to oversight of religious education, the agreement gave the archbishop the final say on employment decisions of religious teachers, including dismissals, and provided for only a complementary supervisory role of the local municipalities. All municipalities except for Balzers, Triesen, and Planken, which decided to retain the old model of religious education, have implemented the agreement. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Protestants were the only other religious community allowed to offer religious education in primary schools. Members of other religious groups were not required to attend these classes. Groups other than the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestants were free to regulate their own religious education.

The Government collaborates with religious institutions by supporting interfaith dialogue and providing adult education courses in religion, as well as other subjects.

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 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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In April 2006, a group of fifteen teachers from the country traveled to Israel for a study trip at Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial complex. The purpose of the trip was to learn about the Holocaust and methods of teaching its various aspects.

In 2004, the Government established a working group for the better integration of members of the Muslim community into society. The working group consists of representatives of the Muslim community and government officials who deal with Islam as part of their duties. The working group's objectives are to counter mutual prejudices and promote respect and tolerance on the basis of dialogue and mutual understanding. At the working group's suggestion, the Government decided to issue a short-term residency permit for an additional imam during Ramadan and, in 2006, to make, for the first time, a contribution of \$20,000 (25,000 Swiss francs) to the Muslim community. In cooperation with the national library, the working group has already made accessible to the public a selection of books in Turkish as well as books on Islam.

The Government's Equal Opportunity Office is charged with handling complaints of religious discrimination, but the office has not yet been contacted concerning a case of discrimination based on religious belief. The Government has also established an interdepartmental Working Group against Racism, anti-Semitism, and Xenophobia whose purpose is to prevent racist and xenophobic attitudes through awareness raising and the promotion of mutual understanding and respect. The working group also coordinates the Government's measures to prevent and combat anti-Semitism.

The Government supported or sponsored a variety of activities to promote the integration of immigrants and intercultural understanding, including a class on intercultural dialogue in the curriculum of the national administration's internal training program.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Roman Catholics, Protestants, and members of other faiths work well together on an ecumenical basis. Differences among religious faiths are not a significant source of tension in society. There have been no reports of verbal or physical acts against Jewish persons or property. The Jewish community in the country is too small

to sustain an organizational structure of its own.

In 2004, the UNHRC expressed concern about the persistence of xenophobia and intolerance, especially against Muslims and persons of Turkish origin.

On January 27, 2006, the Government held a special memorial hour to commemorate the Holocaust. President Otmar Hasler called on the population to commemorate the historic date and presented the day of remembrance as part of the Government's efforts to fight racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Secondary schools in the country have held discussion fora on the Holocaust on this date since 2003.

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. The embassy and the foreign office conduct annual discussions of religious freedom issues in preparation for this report.

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[International Religious Freedom Report Home Page](#)