



Liechtenstein

International Religious Freedom Report 2008

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

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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 61.7 square miles and a population of 35,400. According to the 2000 census, membership in religious denominations was as follows: 78.4 percent Roman Catholic; 8.3 percent Protestant; 4.8 percent Muslim; 1.1 percent Orthodox Christian; 0.1 percent Jewish; 0.4 percent other religious groups; 2.8 percent professed no formal creed; and 4.1 percent of residents did not indicate religious affiliation in the census.

The Muslim community has grown over the last two decades as a result of an influx of migrants primarily from Turkey, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, many of whom resettled from other Western European countries. According to official census statistics, the Muslim population increased from 689 in 1990 to 1,593 in 2000.

A government-contracted survey of 600 residents published in April 2008 found that 40 percent of the population participated in formal religious services at least once a month. Muslims were the most active religious group -- 44 percent attend religious service at least once a week, compared to 23 percent of Catholics and 24 percent of other Christians.

Section II. Status of 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 law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Criminal Code prohibits any form of discrimination or debasement of any religion or 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.

Funding for religious institutions comes from the general budget, as decided by Parliament, and is not a direct "tithe" paid by citizens. The Government gives money not only to the Catholic Church but also to other denominations. Catholic and Protestant churches receive regular annual contributions from the Government in

proportion to membership as determined in the census of 2000; smaller religious groups are eligible to apply for grants for associations of foreigners or specific projects. For 2008 the Government budgeted \$240,000 (300,000 Swiss francs) for the Catholic Church; \$40,000 (50,000 Swiss francs) to the Protestant churches; and \$20,000 (25,000 Swiss francs) for the Muslim community. The Catholic Church receives additional sums from the 11 municipalities that pay for the maintenance of church buildings and the salaries of parish priests. The Protestant churches receive approximately \$148,000 (185,000 Swiss francs) annually from the municipalities. All religious groups enjoy tax-exempt status.

In 2004 and 2005 both the U.N. Human Rights Committee and 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.

The relationship between the state and the Catholic Church was being redefined. On November 9, 2007, Prime Minister Otmar Halser presented a reform plan on the institutional separation of church and state. The plan was developed by a government working group, which for several years had been discussing legislative reform of the relations between the state and religious communities. Under a proposed constitutional amendment, the Catholic Church will lose its status as the official state church. Instead, the Catholic, Protestant, and the Protestant-Lutheran churches will be granted official recognition as religious communities. Other religious communities are to be considered private organizations falling under civil law but may be granted official recognition if they meet certain criteria. On June 10, 2008, the Government opened the public consultation of the proposed constitutional amendment and accompanying draft laws, after the Prime Minister, in January 2008, had convened a round table of representatives of all religious communities to discuss the reform of church-state relations. During the reporting period, both Prince Hans-Adam II and Hereditary Prince Alois reiterated their stance in favor of the separation of church and state.

The Government observes Epiphany, Candlemas/Groundhog Day, Good Friday, Easter, Easter Monday, Ascension, Whit Sunday, Whit Monday, The Nativity of Mary, All Saints' Day, Immaculate Conception, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and St. Stephen's Day as national holidays. Assumption Day (August 15) is celebrated as National Day. Sunday is a public holiday; shops remain closed and Sunday work is generally not allowed.

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 by an acknowledged religious group. Visa requests for religious workers were normally not denied and were processed in the same manner as requests from other individuals.

The Government grants the Muslim community a residency permit for one imam, plus one short-term residency permit for an additional imam during Ramadan. The Government routinely grants visas to the imams in exchange for the agreement of the Turkish Association and the Muslim community to prevent sermons that incite violence or advocate intolerance.

Religious education is part of the curriculum at public schools. Catholic or Protestant religious education was compulsory in all primary schools, but the authorities routinely granted exemptions for children whose parents requested them. The curriculum for Catholic confessional education is determined by the Roman Catholic Church with only a minor complementary supervisory role by the municipalities, with the exception of Balzers, Triesen, and Planken, which have stronger governmental supervision. At the secondary school level, parents and pupils choose between traditional confessional education organized by their religious community and the nonconfessional subject "Religion and Culture." Since its introduction in 2003, more than 85 percent of Catholic pupils have chosen the new subject. Representatives of the Protestant community 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, Protestant churches offer religious education classes outside of regular school hours with financial support from the Government.

In the 2007-08 school year, the Government introduced Islamic education classes in public primary schools in five municipalities. Approximately 70 pupils enrolled. The Government required that instructors have both

pedagogical and subject training and that classes be held in German. The curriculum was developed by the Institute for Interreligious Pedagogics and Didactics in Cologne, Germany, and instruction was supervised by the Department of Education. This was the first time that Islamic education classes were offered in primary schools. Previously Muslim parents could only send their children to a mosque for religious instruction.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report.

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 a radio interview broadcast on January 1, 2008, Prince Hans-Adam II reaffirmed the need to uphold religious freedom. The Prince acknowledged that Muslim communities had become sizeable and thus must be given the opportunity to build mosques. Similarly, in a newspaper interview published on November 13, 2007, Hereditary Prince Alois stated that as the Muslim community had grown and quite a few of its members acquired citizenship, the authorities should allow them to build mosques and establish an Islamic cemetery or confessional sections in public cemeteries.

On January 29, 2008, the Government held for the third time a special memorial hour to commemorate the Holocaust. The Government 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. Since 2003 secondary schools have held discussion forums on the Holocaust on the occasion of the Day of Remembrance.

Since 2004 the Government has maintained a working group for the better integration of Muslims into society, consisting of representatives and officials who deal with Islamic issues. The working group's objectives are to counter mutual prejudices and promote respect and tolerance on the basis of dialogue and mutual understanding. In a practice begun at the working group's suggestion, the Government continues to issue a short-term residency permit for one additional imam during Ramadan and beginning in 2006 initiated a regular annual contribution of \$20,000 (25,000 Swiss francs) to the Muslim community. The working group was also pivotal to the government project to establish Islamic education in public primary schools.

The Government's Equal Opportunity Office is charged with handling complaints of religious discrimination, but during the reporting year, the office received no such complaints. In 2007 the office took over the mandate of the interdepartmental Working Group against Racism, Anti-Semitism, and Xenophobia to prevent racist and xenophobic attitudes through awareness-raising, the promotion of mutual understanding and respect, as well as to prevent and combat anti-Semitism.

The Government supported or sponsored a variety of activities to promote the integration of immigrants and intercultural understanding.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were isolated reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. However, prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom, such as the January 1, 2008, radio interview of Prince Hans-Adam II, advocating religious freedom and the statements of the Hereditary Prince on the separation of church and state. Catholics, Protestants, and members of other religious groups work well together on an ecumenical basis. Differences among religious groups are not a

significant source of tension in society.

In its third country report released on April 29, 2008, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) noted that it had received reports of instances of verbal and physical abuse against Muslims, particularly women wearing a headscarf. ECRI also expressed concern about instances of alleged racial discrimination in access to employment and housing, primarily against Muslims from Turkey and the Balkans. The report also recorded complaints of Muslim community leaders about the lack of an adequate mosque and Islamic cemetery as well as about difficulties in finding suitable premises for their cultural activities. The Government maintained that its working group on Islamic integration has dealt intensively with the issue of a cemetery but that the Muslim members of the group had not always treated the issue as a priority.

A government-contracted study on religious attitudes and practices released in April 2008, which surveyed 600 of the country's residents, found that majority attitudes towards religious groups are largely characterized by tolerance. However, approximately 30 percent harbor negative views of Muslims, and 17 percent expressed critical views on Jews.

In August 2007 police closed the investigation into the vandalism in June 2007 in a small chapel in the woods near Schaanwald in the county of Mauren. Police believed the incident, which caused limited damage, to be a childish prank but failed to identify any suspects.

There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts against persons or property. The Jewish community is too small to have an organizational structure.

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 Embassy and the Office of Foreign Affairs conduct annual discussions of religious freedom issues in preparation for this report.

Released on September 19, 2008

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