



## U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

### Luxembourg

#### 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 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 999 square miles and a population of approximately 460 thousand. The country is historically Roman Catholic, and Catholicism remained the predominant faith. According to a 1979 law, the Government may not collect or maintain statistics on religious affiliation; however, more than 90 percent of the population was estimated to be baptized Catholic. The Lutheran and Calvinist churches were the largest Protestant denominations. Muslims were estimated to number approximately 9,000 persons, including approximately 900 refugees from Montenegro; Orthodox Christian (Greek, Serbian, Russian, and Romanian) adherents were estimated to number 5,000 persons; and there were approximately 1,000 Jews. The Baha'i Faith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Universal Church, and Jehovah's Witnesses were represented in smaller numbers. The number of professed atheists reportedly was growing.

There were no significant foreign missionary groups. Many religious groups described as "sects" were represented in the country. They were expected to obey the law, but their activities did not produce significant political or social concerns.

#### 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. There is no state religion. The Government does not register religious groups. However, based on the Concordat of 1801, some churches receive financial support from the state. The constitution specifically provides for state payment of the salaries and pensions of clergy of those religious groups which sign conventions with the Government. Pursuant to negotiated agreements with the Government, the following religious groups receive such support: Catholic, Greek and Russian Orthodox, Jewish, and some other Protestant denominations. In 2003, the Romanian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, and Anglican churches also concluded conventions with the Government.

An application for financial support for the Muslim community has been under consideration for more than eight years. In late 2003, the Muslim community named a national representative and single interlocutor, which allowed discussions over the convention to proceed. Once signed, the convention would allow the Muslim community to receive government funding. Although the minister of religion set a goal for conclusion of the convention by the end of 2006, there was no agreement by the end of the reporting period. For the convention to be completed, the Government requires the Muslim community to fully respect the constitution, including the equal treatment of men and women.

The following holy days are considered national holidays: Shrove Monday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Whit Monday, Assumption Day, All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, Christmas, and the second day of Christmas.

There is a long tradition of religious education in public schools. A 1997 convention between the minister of national education and the Catholic Archbishop governs religious instruction. In accordance with this convention, religious instruction is a local matter, coordinated at the communal level between representatives of the Catholic Church and communal authorities. Government-paid lay teachers provide instruction (totaling two school hours per week) at the primary school level. Parents and pupils may choose between instruction in Catholicism or an ethics course; requests for exemption from religious instruction are addressed on an individual basis. Although approximately 81 percent of primary school students choose religious instruction, the number drops to 57 percent for high school students.

The Government subsidizes private religious schools. All private, religious, and nonsectarian schools are eligible for and receive government

subsidies if the religious group concluded a convention with the state. The Government also subsidizes a Catholic seminary.

In 2004, the Government launched a pilot program in one high school that provides nondenominational values education, highlighting the principal world religious groups and schools of thought. This program was developed in consultation with the Catholic Church and Muslim community, among others, and, after five years, it is intended to be made universal in the country's school system.

#### 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.

#### Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. The Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim faiths worked well together on an interfaith basis. Differences among religious groups were not a significant source of tension in society. There were no reports of verbal or physical violence against Jewish persons or property during the period covered by this report.

#### Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its policy to promote human rights. The embassy's human rights officer met with representatives of several government ministries at a working level to discuss matters related to religious freedoms. The ministries were cooperative interlocutors, who spoke openly about the relationship between religious groups and the Government. The human rights officer also met with representatives from religious groups and nongovernmental organizations, none of whom voiced any concern over the state of religious freedom in the country.

Released on September 15, 2006

[International Religious Freedom Report Home Page](#)