



## Luxembourg

### International Religious Freedom Report 2007

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 by the Government during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice.

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 460,000. The country is historically Roman Catholic, and Catholicism remains the predominant faith. According to a 1979 law, the Government may not collect or maintain statistics on religious affiliation; however, the Ministry of Religious Affairs estimates that more than 90 percent of the population is Catholic. The Lutheran and Calvinist Churches are the largest Protestant denominations. The local press estimates that there are 9,000 Muslims, including 900 refugees from Montenegro; 5,000 Orthodox Christians (Greek, Serbian, Russian, and Romanian); and 1,000 Jews. The Baha'i Faith, the Universal Church, and Jehovah's Witnesses are represented in smaller numbers. There is a small Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) community in Dommeldange, which has been growing since its establishment in 2000. The number of professed atheists is believed to be growing.

There are foreign missionaries, some ministering to English-speaking residents.

#### 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 salaries and pensions of clergy of those religious groups which sign conventions (agreements) with the Government. Pursuant to negotiated agreements with the Government, the following religious groups receive such support: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Anglican, some Protestant denominations, and Jewish congregations.

The Muslim community submitted an application for financial support from the Government more than nine years ago, although it wasn't until late 2003 that the Muslim community named a national representative and single interlocutor which would allow discussions over their convention to proceed. This interlocutor heads the 11-member committee, the "Shuura" representing the Muslim community. During the reporting period, the Government drafted a convention which the cabinet approved and submitted to the Shuura, which began the preparation of statutes it intends to submit to the Government, detailing the procedural operations of the Muslim community including the selection of the mufti and of imams.

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. National religious holidays do not have an evident negative effect on other religious groups.

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 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. Approximately 81 percent of primary school students and 57 percent of high school students choose religious instruction.

The Government subsidizes private religious schools. All private, religious, and nonsectarian schools receive government subsidies if the religious group has a convention with the state. The Government also subsidizes a Catholic seminary.

In 2006 the country's education initiative to provide religious and moral instruction for students in their last year of coursework received favorable notice in the European Union's report on Discrimination and Islamophobia. Currently in its test phase, the initiative, begun as a pilot program in 2004 in one high school, focuses on interfaith dialogue and explains the human values of non-Christian religions. This program was developed in consultation with the Catholic Church and Muslim community, among others, and it is intended to be made universal in the country's school system in 2009.

#### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The Government does not maintain a list of "sects" and the only distinction made is between religious groups that receive financial funding from the Government and those that do not.

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 United States 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

The 2006 European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia report indicates that some business firms have accommodated Muslim employees by permitting breaks for prayer, providing food meeting dietary requirements, requiring no meetings during Ramadan, and permitting holiday leave during Eid al-Fitr. However, these practices did not appear to be widespread.

#### Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice. Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim groups worked well together on an interfaith basis. Differences among religious groups were not a significant source of tension in society.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its policy to promote human rights. An Embassy's officer met with representatives of several government ministries at a working level to discuss matters related to religious freedom. The 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.

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