



Luxembourg

International Religious Freedom Report 2008

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

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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 societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

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 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.

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. There is no state religion. 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 that sign conventions (agreements) with the Government. Pursuant to negotiated agreements with the Government, the following religious groups receive such support: Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Anglican, some Protestant denominations, and Jewish congregations.

The Government chose a dual-track approach on approval of a Muslim Convention law and its implementing statutes, using both proposed statutes from the Islamic Center Councils and a parliamentary bill on a Muslim Convention. In January 2008 four of the five Islamic Center Councils approved the statutes and submitted them to Parliament. On July 6, 2007, Parliament took up a bill on the convention with the Muslim community. At the same time, the "Shuura," an 11-member committee representing the Muslim community, submitted its proposed statutes, detailing the procedural operations of the Muslim community, including the selection of the mufti and imams, to the country's five Islamic Center Councils for their approval. It was not known when Parliament would resume action on the Convention. During the previous reporting period, the Government drafted a convention approved by the Cabinet and submitted it to the "Shuura" for its consideration. The Muslim community first submitted an application for financial support from the Government more than 9 years ago, although it was not until late 2003 that the Muslim community named a national representative and single interlocutor that would allow discussions over their convention to proceed. This interlocutor heads the

"Shuura."

On March 7, 2008, the ongoing legislative process on the liberalization of euthanasia was discussed during a meeting with Prime Minister Juncker, Pope Benedict XVI, and the Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States.

The Government observes Shrove Monday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Whit Monday, Assumption Day, All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, Christmas, and the second day of Christmas as national holidays.

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 (there are 116 communes which regulate local affairs) between representatives of the Catholic Church and communal authorities. Government-paid lay teachers provide instruction (totaling 2 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 all schools, including private religious schools where 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 basic religious precepts of non-Christian religions. This program was developed in consultation with the Catholic Church and Muslim community, among others, and it was scheduled to be made universal in the country's school system in 2009.

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 the report. 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 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

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

Although the Jewish community reported no serious concern about anti-Semitism, community leaders indicated there was occasional conflation of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, with criticism of Israel and Israeli policies directed toward the community even when the connection was not valid.

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. Embassy officers regularly meet with representatives of government ministries at a working level to discuss matters related to religious freedom. During the reporting period, they 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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