

LUXEMBOURG 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year.

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

U.S. embassy officials met with government representatives in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss matters related to religious freedom. In addition, embassy staff discussed religious freedom with local community leaders, and organized an interfaith Passover Seder.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the National Statistics Office, the population is 510,000. A 2011 study by the Center for Studies of Population, Poverty, and Socio-Economic Policy estimates that more than 70 percent of the population is Roman Catholic.

According to that study and local religious groups, approximately 2 percent of the population is Protestant (Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican), 2 percent Muslim, 1 percent Christian Orthodox (Greek, Serbian, Russian, and Romanian), and 0.3 percent Jewish. There are small numbers of Bahais, Jehovah's Witnesses, and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and the Universal Church.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. While there is no state religion, the constitution provides for state payment of salaries and pensions for clergy of those religious groups that sign a convention with the government. To qualify, a religious group must establish an official and stable representative body with which the government can interact. The following religious groups receive support: Catholic; Greek, Russian, Romanian, and

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Serbian Orthodox; Anglican; the Reformed Protestant Church of Luxembourg; the Protestant Church of Luxembourg; and Jewish congregations.

Religious instruction in public schools is a local matter, coordinated between representatives of the Catholic Church and 106 communes. There are government-salaried religious instructors at all levels in public schools. Parents and pupils may choose between instruction in Catholicism or an ethics course. Schools grant exemption from this instruction on an individual basis.

The government subsidizes all private religious schools affiliated with a parent religion that has signed a convention with the state. The government also subsidizes a Catholic seminary.

The government is a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Shrove Monday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Whit Monday, Assumption Day, All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, Christmas, and the day after Christmas.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

The government established a commission of nongovernmental specialists to study the current status of church-state relations in response to criticism from agnostic groups that government funding for religious groups was unjustified and unbalanced. On October 3, the commission submitted its report to religious groups, political parties, and concerned nongovernmental organizations for comment. At year's end, consultations among the concerned parties continued. The report concluded that the established system of official recognition and financial support of religious groups was working satisfactorily, although it noted a slight imbalance in favor of the Catholic Church, notably in terms of financial support.

Pending the outcome of consultations on a potential overhaul of church-state relations, the government suspended negotiations on new conventions with religious groups, including with the Muslim community.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. ambassador met with high-ranking representatives of major religious groups throughout the year, and embassy officers met with officials in the Ministry for Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss matters related to religious freedom. In April the embassy organized a Passover Seder dinner attended by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders, and government officials, including the minister for religious affairs.