

LUXEMBOURG 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion. In June, following a pledge made upon taking office in late 2013 to make the state more secular, the ruling coalition introduced a modified national day schedule prioritizing secular over religious elements. The government also continued the suspension of discussions with the Muslim community about establishing a convention following a similar pledge to terminate or renegotiate existing conventions with other religious groups. Muslim community leaders stated they fulfilled the current legal requirements for a convention.

There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

The U.S. Ambassador as well as embassy officers met with high-ranking religious leaders to discuss matters related to religious freedom, notably reactions to government plans for a more secular state. The Ambassador hosted interfaith iftar and seder dinners in April and July, respectively, that focused on bringing together leading representatives of the various religious communities and government officials.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population is 521,000 (July 2014 estimate). 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 Framework

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The constitution guarantees religious freedom, freedom from compulsory participation in or attendance at church services, and the precedence of civil over church marriage, meaning that religious ceremony marriages will not be recognized by the state unless they are preceded by a civil ceremony at a local commune. The constitution also provides for the regulation of state-church relations through conventions between the state and individual religious groups. 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 have signed conventions with the state, and therefore receive support: Catholic; Greek, Russian, Romanian, and Serbian Orthodox; Anglican; the Reformed Protestant Church of Luxembourg; the Protestant Church of Luxembourg; and Jewish congregations.

Religious instruction in public schools is managed locally, coordinated between representatives of the Catholic Church and 106 communes. Parents and pupils may choose between instruction in Catholicism or an ethics course. There are government-salaried Catholic religious instructors at all levels in public schools. Schools grant exemptions 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.

Government Practices

In June, following a pledge made upon taking office in late 2013 to move towards a more secular state, the ruling coalition introduced a modified national day schedule prioritizing secular over religious elements. The government also continued the suspension of discussions with the Muslim community about establishing a convention, following a pledge to terminate or renegotiate existing conventions with other religious groups. Muslim community leaders stated they fulfilled the current legal requirements for a convention.

The government is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Ambassador met with high ranking representatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to discuss government plans for a more secular state. Embassy officers also met with representatives of religious communities to discuss the Muslim community's lack of a legal convention with the government, the reaction of the Catholic Church to government plans for a more secular state, and the role of the Catholic Church in welfare activities.

In April the embassy organized a Passover seder attended by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders, and government officials. In July the embassy organized an iftar attended by high-ranking representatives of the Muslim and Christian communities. The seder and iftar focused on bringing together leading representatives of the various religious communities and government officials to further interfaith dialogue.

In September the Ambassador met with representatives of the Shura, the main representative body of the Muslim community in the country, at their request to discuss the Muslim community's concerns about U.S. policy in the Middle East and its impact on the religious community's relationship with the embassy. During this meeting, they also discussed the community's lack of a legal convention with the government.