



## Portugal

### 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; there are a number of government and privately sponsored activities that contribute to interfaith understanding.

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 35,672 square miles, and a population (as of January 2006) of approximately 10.4 million. More than 80 percent of the population above the age of twelve identified with the Roman Catholic Church; however, a large percentage stated that they did not actively participate in church activities. Approximately 4 percent identified with various Protestant denominations (including approximately 250 thousand evangelicals), and approximately 1 percent with non-Christian religious groups. Less than 3 percent stated that they had no religion.

Practitioners of non-Christian religions included approximately 35,000 Muslims (largely from sub-Saharan Lusophone Africa and South Asia), approximately 700 Jews, and a very small population of Buddhists, Taoists, and Zoroastrians. There was also a Hindu community of approximately 7,000 persons, which largely traced its origins to South Asians who emigrated from Lusophone Africa and from the former colony of Goa in India. Many of these minority communities were not formally organized.

Government estimates suggested that there were more than 200,000 immigrants from Eastern Europe in the country. More than half of these immigrants were from the Ukraine; many were Eastern Orthodox. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) reported 35,000 members. Brazilian syncretistic Catholic churches, which combined Catholic ritual with pre-Christian Afro-Brazilian ritual, such as Candomble and Umbanda, also operated in small numbers, as did Seventh-day Adventists. The Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), a proselytizing church that originated in Brazil, also practiced in the country. The Church of Scientology had approximately 200 active members, primarily in the Lisbon area.

Foreign missionary groups, such as the Mormons, operated freely.

#### 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. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion.

The Government is secular. Other than the constitution, the two most important documents relating to religious freedom are the 2001 Religious Freedom Act and the 1940 Concordat with the Holy See.

The 2001 Religious Freedom Act created a legislative framework for religious groups established in the country for at least thirty years or those recognized internationally for at least sixty years. The act provides qualifying religious groups with benefits previously reserved for the Catholic Church: full tax-exempt status, legal recognition for marriage and other rites, chaplain visits to prisons and hospitals, and respect for traditional holidays. It allows each religion to negotiate its own concordat-style agreement with the Government, although it does not ensure the acceptance of any such agreements. In December 2003, the Government enacted rules governing the commission that oversees the act's implementation. In 2004 procedures were published in the national gazette, *Diario da Republica*, on how to create the registry of religious entities.

The Catholic Church maintains a separate agreement with the Government under the terms of the 1940 Concordat. In May 2004, the

Government signed an amended concordat with the Vatican to comply with the 2001 Religious Freedom Act. The new concordat was approved by Parliament and the president and ratified in 2004. This document abrogates the previous concordat, which had been in force for sixty-four years but was considered obsolete due to the changes in national life. The new concordat recognized for the first time the juridical personality of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference. It also allows the Catholic Church to receive 0.5 percent of the income tax that citizens can allocate to various institutions in their annual tax returns.

Public secondary school curricula included an optional course called "Religion and Morals." This course functioned as a survey of world religious groups and was taught by laypersons. It could be used to give instruction on the Catholic religion, although the Catholic Church had to approve all teachers for this course. Other religious groups could set up such a course if they had ten or more children of that religion in the particular school. For example, the Evangelical Alliance held 263 classes in schools during the 2005-2006 school year. Under the 2001 Religious Freedom Act, each religion may approve the course's respective instructors.

In 2004, the Government established a Working Group for Inter-Religious Dialogue, a task force to promote multicultural and multireligious dialogue between the Government and society. Among its objectives are fostering tolerance for religious diversity, promotion of interreligious studies, and participation in national and international religious events. The working group is led by a government-appointed chairman and consists primarily of teachers who, by the nature of their jobs, have professional experience in this area.

Under the concordat, major Catholic holy days also are official holidays. Seven of the country's sixteen national holidays are Catholic holy days.

The Diocese of Leiria-Fatima broadcasts national Catholic programming through the Brazilian Catholic Television network, Cancao Nova.

The Government takes active steps to promote interfaith understanding. Most notably, five days a week the state television channel (Radiotelevisao Portuguesa 2) broadcasts A Fe dos Homens (The Faith of Men), a half-hour program consisting of various segments written and produced by different religious communities. The Government pays for the segments, and professional production companies are hired under contract to produce the segments. Religious communities send delegates to a special television commission, which determines the scheduling of segments. The television commission has operated on the general rule that religious communities eligible for the program are those that have been operating for at least thirty years in the country or at least sixty years in their country of origin.

The Catholic Church receives 22.5 minutes of programming time per episode, while the remaining 7.5 minutes is divided among the other religious groups. The Evangelical Alliance receives two 7.5-minute segments per week, while other participating religious groups receive approximately one 7.5-minute segment per month. The Catholic Church has a program of its own called "70x7," while other religious groups work together to schedule programming on the Caminhos ("Paths") broadcast every Sunday morning.

The Lisbon municipal government provided matching funds for completion of the city's mosque, completed at the end of this reporting period. In 2004, the municipality provided matching funds for the restoration of Lisbon's nineteenth-century synagogue, considered a building of historic significance and still used by the Jewish community for religious services and cultural events. The municipality of Lisbon also provided opportunities for the religious communities to participate in summer festival events.

#### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The Catholic Church receives some preferential treatment; for example, chief chaplaincies for the military, prisons, and hospitals remain state-funded positions for Catholics only.

The Papal Nuncio is always the dean of the diplomatic corps. The Church of Scientology, although recognized as a religious association since 1986, does not benefit from the 2001 Religious Freedom Act, since it has not been established in the country for thirty years or recognized internationally for sixty years, as required under the law. Scientology leaders were concerned that exclusion from the benefits accorded under the act may have a negative effect on their ability to practice their faith; however, they reported no discrimination or opposition during the period covered by this report.

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 religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom. Participation among the various religious groups in crafting the programming schedule for A Fe dos Homens facilitated greater understanding and enhanced mutual respect. Many communities conducted "open houses" or sponsored interfaith education seminars.

There were no reported cases of verbal or physical attacks against Jewish persons or property during the period covered by this report.

Following the interfaith congress held in 2003 at the Catholic shrine of Fatima, representatives of the world's leading religious groups

explored the possibility of opening the shrine to a variety of religious groups. The first steps in developing Fatima as a multifaith center were taken in May 2004 when a Hindu religious service was held at the shrine in the Chapel of the Apparitions. There were subsequently a number of events involving Muslims and Buddhists at the Fatima Sanctuary. As a result, a few conservative Catholic organizations criticized the Church and called for a more traditionalist role for the Catholic shrine. However, several bishops, including the chairman of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference, publicly dismissed the criticism and restated their desire to welcome other religious groups to the shrine.

The residents of the Azores and Madeira archipelagos, although traditionally Catholic, were also quite tolerant of other religious groups. Both Mormon and Baptist missionaries were active on the islands. They were well treated and participated in Azorean and Madeiran social life.

A number of initiatives during the period covered by this report focused on the promotion of religious tolerance. In November 2005, the Parliamentary Committee for Religious Freedom organized a two-day international seminar on Religion in a Democratic State, which took place in Lisbon's Ismaili Center. The seminar focused on religious freedom and the role of religion in democratic societies. On March 4, 2006, President Sampaio, the mayors of Lisbon and Sintra, the labor minister, and other high-ranking authorities attended the opening of the Aga Khan Foundation's community center in Lisbon. This community development project is sponsored by the Ismaili foundation in partnership with, among others, the Catholic Church's Holy House of Mercy charity organization. On April 19, 2006, in a ceremony in a public square in downtown Lisbon, Jews and non-Jews marked the 500th anniversary of the killing of thousands of Jews who had been forced by the state to convert to Christianity. City officials unveiled a small memorial at the site of one of the main stakes used during the three-day killing spree in 1496. These initiatives received significant media coverage.

The Aristides de Sousa Mendes Foundation is a nongovernmental organization established to honor the Portuguese consul general in Bordeaux, France, who defied his dictatorial government and issued visas enabling approximately 30,000 Jews to escape through the country during World War II. In 2004, the Foundation collaborated on many events in the country and in cities around the world to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Aristides de Sousa Mendes's death.

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

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. U.S. Embassy representatives have continuing contacts with leaders of the country's religious communities, including the Catholic Church and the Jewish and Muslim communities. The U.S. Embassy hosted several events to promote religious freedom and tolerance. On October 17, 2005, the charge d'affaires hosted an Iftar for Muslim ambassadors and leaders in the Portuguese Islamic community to show support for tolerance and religious freedom. Ambassadors from Iraq, Turkey, Morocco, and Egypt were in attendance, along with the general delegate from Palestine and the sheik from the country's only Islamic school. On June 2, 2006, Phra Raja Sumedhacariya, the First Occidental (Buddhist) Father, spoke to a group of academics, religious leaders, and other Portuguese and international guests. The Father's talk, together with the deputy chief of mission's remarks, showed support for a multicultural and religiously tolerant society.

Released on September 15, 2006

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