



Portugal

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, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

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 2007) of 10.6 million. More than 80 percent of the population above the age of 12 identifies with the Roman Catholic Church; however, a large percentage states that it does not actively participate in church activities. Approximately 4 percent identifies with various Protestant denominations (including 250,000 evangelicals), and 1 percent with non-Christian religious groups. Less than 3 percent state that they have no religion.

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

Government estimates suggest that there are more than 200,000 immigrants from Eastern Europe in the country. More than half of these immigrants are from the Ukraine; many are Eastern Orthodox. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) reports 35,000 members. Brazilian syncretistic Catholic churches, which combine Catholic ritual with pre-Christian Afro-Brazilian ritual, such as Candomble and Umbanda, also operate in small numbers, as do 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 practices in the country. The Church of Scientology has approximately 200 active members, primarily in the Lisbon area.

Foreign missionary groups operate 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 30 years or those recognized internationally for at least 60 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 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 register religious entities.

The Catholic Church maintains a separate agreement with the Government under the terms of the 1940 Concordat as amended in 2004 to comply with the 2001 Religious Freedom Act. The 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 curriculums include an optional course called "Religion and Morals." This course functions as a survey of world religious groups and is taught by laypersons. It can be used to give instruction on the Catholic religion, although the Catholic Church must approve all teachers for this course. Other religious groups can set up such a course if they have 10 or more children of that religion in the particular school. For example, the Evangelical Alliance held 263 classes in schools during the 2005-06 school year. Under the 2001 Religious Freedom Act, representatives from each religious group may approve the course's respective instructors.

The Government established the Working Group for Interreligious Dialogue, which promotes 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 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, of which there are 7 of the country's 16 national holidays.

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 30 years in the country or at least 60 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 the July 2006 completion of the city's mosque. In 2004 the municipality provided matching funds for the restoration of Lisbon's 19th-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, chaplaincies for the military, prisons, and hospitals remain state-funded positions for Catholics only. In April 2007 the Health Ministry drew up and passed to the Government's Religious Freedom Committee (CLR), a bill proposal that would grant all non-Catholic hospital patients equal access to religious services in an interdenominational place of worship and to an interdenominational chaplain in hospitals. This proposal was cleared and returned to the Health Ministry on April 12, 2007, for final approval by the Government.

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 30 years or recognized internationally for 60 years, as required under the law. Scientology leaders were concerned that exclusion from the benefits accorded under the act might 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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

A number of government initiatives during the period covered by this report focused on the promotion of religious tolerance. On June 28, 2007, the Government approved legislation that allows religious groups established in the country for at least 30 years to perform marriages with equivalent legal status as civilian ceremonies. Religious groups such as Jews, Muslims, Baha'is, Evangelicals, and Adventists may now marry legally within their own religious communities without having to register in the Civil Registry. Previously, only Catholic marriages were automatically recognized as legal. Also on June 28, 2007, the Government appointed former president, and staunch agnostic, Mario Soares, chairman of the CLR, the first time the Government chose a non-Catholic for this position. On March 16-17, 2007, the CLR sponsored a conference on religious tolerance titled "Religion Outside of Places of Worship" at the Ismaili Center in Lisbon. This conference was attended by leaders of the major religious communities in the country.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote 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.

The European Commission on Racism and Intolerance issued its third report on the country in June 2006 and found little religious intolerance, Islamophobia, or anti-Semitism to report, but room for improvement in the treatment of the Roma, whose religious beliefs were not mentioned. On November 27, 2006, the European Union's Monitoring Center (EUMC) report on Muslims in the EU confirmed that Muslims did not perceive difficulties in integrating into society.

The residents of the Azores and Madeira archipelagos, although traditionally Catholic, are also quite tolerant of other religious groups. Missionaries, active on the islands, are well treated and participate in social life.

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. 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 19, 2006, the Ambassador hosted an iftar celebration at his residence for Muslim ambassadors and leaders in the Islamic community to show support for tolerance and religious freedom. Ambassadors from Iraq, Pakistan, Morocco, and Tunisia were in attendance, along with the head of the Ismaili Community and the chairman of the Aga Khan Foundation Portugal.

Released on September 14, 2007

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