

## EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

### AUSTRALIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 282,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 19.3 million. According to the 1996 census, 71 percent of citizens consider themselves to be Christian, including 27 percent Roman Catholic, 22 percent who are Anglican, and 22 percent who are of other Christian denominations. During the first census in 1911, 96 percent of citizens identified themselves as Christian. Traditional Christian denominations have seen their total number and proportion of affiliates stagnate or decrease significantly since the 1950's. Of the Christian denominations, Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses showed the largest increase in members from 1991 to 1996, 16 percent and 12 percent respectively. In 1996 approximately 17 percent of citizens considered themselves to have no religion, a 35 percent increase from 1991.

At the time of the European settlement of the country, aboriginal inhabitants followed religions that were animistic in nature, involving belief in spirits behind the forces of nature and the influence of ancestral spirit beings. Aboriginal beliefs and spirituality, even among those aborigines who identify themselves as members of a traditional organized religion, are intrinsically linked to the land generally and to certain sites of significance in particular. According to the 1996 census, 2 percent of Aborigines and 0.04 percent of all citizens practice traditional indigenous religions. Almost 72 percent of Aborigines practice some form of Christianity, while 16 percent list no religion. The percentage of Aborigines who practice Christianity and who list no religion mirrors almost exactly the percentages in the wider community.

Recent increased immigration from Southeast Asia and the Middle East has expanded considerably the numbers of citizens who identify themselves as Buddhists and Muslims, about 200,000 and 68,000 respectively. Affiliates of non-Christian religions, while only 3.5 percent of the population, have shown the largest increases in members since the 1991 census. Stated affiliation with Hinduism increased by 55 percent, with Buddhism by 43 percent, with Islam by 36 percent, and with Judaism by 8 percent. These changes have resulted partly from trends in immigration. In 1996 approximately 48 percent of those who had arrived in the country since 1991 were Christians, 23 percent had no religion, 8 percent were affiliated with Buddhism, 8 percent with Islam, and 1 percent with Judaism.

Missionaries work in the country; however, there are no current statistics available on their number.

#### SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. A provision of the Constitution precludes the adoption of a state religion. Minority religions are given equal rights to land, status, and building of places of worship.

Religious groups are not required to register.

The Government has put in place extensive programs to promote public acceptance of diversity and multicultural pluralism, although none are focused specifically on religion.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

*Forced Religious Conversion*

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In a 1998 report on freedom of religion and belief in the country by the federally funded but independent Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), the Commission stated that "despite the legal protections that apply in different jurisdictions, many Australians suffer discrimination on the basis of religious belief or non-belief, including members of both mainstream and non-mainstream religions and those of no religious persuasion." Many non-Christian adherents have complained to the HREOC that the overwhelming dominance of traditional Christianity in civic life has the potential to marginalize large numbers of citizens. However, they have not presented any concrete evidence of such marginalization. Persons who suffer discrimination on the basis of religion may resort to the court system, which is an effective method of obtaining redress.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of the promoting of human rights.

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## BRUNEI

The Constitution states that, "The religion of Brunei Darussalam shall be the Muslim religion according to the Shafeite sect of that religion: Provided that all other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony by the person professing them in any part of Brunei Darussalam;" however, the Government imposes some restrictions on non-Islamic religions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The official religion is Islam, as practiced by the Shafeite School. Other religions, such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, also are practiced; however, non-Muslims are not allowed to proselytize, nor are parochial schools allowed to teach the religions of their respective faiths. The Government detained several Christians in late 2000 and early 2001 for alleged subversive activities.

The country's various religious groups coexist peacefully, although they do not interact regularly.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 2,100 square miles, and its resident population is approximately 340,000. The Government does not publish detailed data on religious affiliation; however, the majority of citizens are Muslim. About 20 percent of the population are ethnic Chinese, of which approximately half are Christians (Anglicans, Catholics, and Methodists) and half are Buddhists. There also is a large foreign-born workforce composed of Australian, British, Filipino, Indian, Indonesian, and Malaysian expatriates that include Muslims, Christians, and Hindus.

The Brunei-Muara district, including the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, has over 50 mosques and suraus (Islamic prayer rooms), but there are only 2 churches and 1 Buddhist temple. There is no Hindu temple.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution states that, "The religion of Brunei Darussalam shall be the Muslim religion according to the Shafeite sect of that religion: Provided that all other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony by the person professing them in any part of Brunei Darussalam;" however, the Government imposes some restrictions on non-Islamic religions. The official religion is Islam as practiced by the Shafeite School.

The Government describes the country as a Malay Islamic monarchy. The Government actively promotes adherence to Islamic values and traditions by its Muslim residents. The Ministry of Religious Affairs deals solely with Islam and Islamic laws, which exist alongside secular laws and apply only to Muslims.

Religious organizations are required to register with the Government, as are commercial and nonreligious associations.

In February 1998, the Government allowed the Roman Catholic Church to establish and install the first apostolic prefect in the country.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

In 1991 the Government began to reinforce the legitimacy of the hereditary monarchy and the observance of traditional and Muslim values by reasserting a national ideology known as the Malay Islamic Beraja (MIB) or "Malay Islamic Monarchy," the genesis of which reportedly dates from the 15th century. In 1993 the Government participated in issuing the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, which affirms the right of all persons to a wide range of human rights, including freedom of religion. Despite this and the constitutional provisions providing for the full and unconstrained exercise of religious freedom, the Government restricts the practice of non-Muslim religions by: Prohibiting proselytizing of Muslims; occasionally denying entry to foreign clergy or particular priests, bishops, or ministers; banning the importation of religious teaching materials or scriptures such as the Bible; and refusing permission to expand, repair, or build new churches, temples, or shrines.

The Government sporadically expressed concern about "outsiders" preaching radical Islamic fundamentalist or unorthodox beliefs. In 1995 the Government banned the Al-Arqam movement, a radical Islamic group; it remains banned. Citizens deemed to have been influenced by such preaching (usually students returning from overseas study) have been "shown the error of their ways" in study seminars organized by mainstream Islamic religious leaders. Moreover, the Government does not hesitate to investigate and to use its internal security apparatus against purveyors of radical Islam or "deviationist" Islamic groups.

The proselytizing by faiths other than the official Islam is not permitted. There are no missionaries working in the country.

The Government routinely censors magazine articles on other faiths, blacking out or removing photographs of crucifixes and other Christian religious symbols. Government officials also guard against the distribution and sale of items that feature undesirable photographs or religious symbols.

The Government requires residents to carry an identity card that states the bearer's religion; however, the Government no longer requires visitors to identify their religion on their landing cards.

Religious affairs authorities sometimes raid nightspots to confiscate alcoholic beverages and to monitor restaurants and supermarkets to ensure conformity with "halal" practices such as Islamic requirements covering the slaughter of animals and the ban on pork products. The majority of citizens generally regard the actions as a means of upholding Islam.

The Ministry of Education requires courses on Islam or the MIB in all schools. It prohibits the teaching of other religions.

The Ministry requires that all students, including non-Muslims, follow a course of study on the Islamic faith and learn the jawi (Arabic script). The International School of Brunei and the Jeurdong International School are exempt from these restrictions. Private mission schools are not allowed to give Christian instruction and are required to give instruction about Islam; however, the Government does not prohibit or restrict parents from giving religious instruction to children in their own homes. In January 2000, the Government responded to objections from parents and religious leaders and set aside tentative plans to require that more Islamic courses be taught in private, non-Islamic parochial schools. There were no indications that the Government would again propose these plans for non-Islamic schools.

Religious authorities encourage Muslim women to wear the tudong, a traditional head covering, and many women do so. However, some Muslim women do not, and there is no official pressure on non-Muslim women to do so. In government schools,

Muslim and non-Muslim female students must wear Muslim attire, including a head covering as a part of their "uniform." Muslim male students are expected to wear the songhok (hat).

In accordance with Koranic precepts, women are denied equal status with men in a number of important areas such as divorce, inheritance, and custody of children. Under the Brunei Nationality Act, citizenship is transmitted through the father. Female citizens who are married to foreigners or bear children by foreign fathers cannot transmit citizenship to their children, even when such children are born in the country.

In July 1999, a new Married Women's Law came into effect, improving significantly the rights of non-Muslim married women with respect to maintenance, property, and domestic violence. In November 1999, changes to the Islamic Family Law (in the section on Women's Position in Marriage and Divorce) came into effect and are expected to improve the marital rights of Muslim women.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

In general those adhering to faiths other than Islam are allowed to practice their beliefs, provided that they exercise restraint and do not proselytize. Those non-Muslims who do proselytize may expect to be arrested or detained, and possibly held without charges for extended periods of time.

In late 2000 and early 2001, the Government used the Internal Security Act to detain at least seven Christians for allegedly subversive activities; they were not charged with a crime. Government Brunei officials maintain that the detentions are a security, not a religious, matter.

In July 2000, the Government briefly detained for questioning local members of a small "deviationist" Islamic sect after the same sect in Malaysia reportedly was involved in military arms theft.

There were no reports, other than of the three Christians in detention for alleged subversive activities, of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country's various religious groups peacefully coexist, although they do not interact regularly.

The country's national philosophy, the Malay Islamic Beraja (MIB) concept, discourages open-mindedness to religions other than Islam, and there are no programs to promote understanding of other religions. The country's indigenous people generally convert either to Islam or Christianity but rarely to Buddhism. Consequently, Muslim officials view Christianity as the main rival to official Islam and there is little reported dialog among the country's religious leaders and their counterparts in the Christian and Buddhist religions.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of encouraging the growth of rudimentary democratic institutions. The Embassy has good relations with officials and members from the Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist faiths.

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## BURMA

Burma has been ruled since 1962 by highly repressive, authoritarian military regimes. Since 1998 when the armed forces brutally suppressed massive prodemocracy demonstrations, a junta composed of senior military officers has ruled by decree, without a constitution or legislature. The most recent Constitution, promulgated in 1974, permitted both legislative and administrative restrictions on religious freedom, stating that "the national races shall enjoy the freedom to profess their religion, provided that the enjoyment of any such freedom does not offend the laws or the public interest." Most adherents of all religions that are registered with the authorities generally are allowed to worship as they choose; however, the Government has imposed restrictions on certain religious activities and frequently abused the right to freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of the limited respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Through its pervasive internal security apparatus, the Government generally infiltrated or monitored the meetings and activities of virtually all organizations, including religious organizations. It systematically has restricted efforts by Buddhist clergy to promote human rights and political freedom, has discouraged or prohibited minority religions from constructing new places of worship, and, in some ethnic minority areas, has coercively promoted Buddhism over other religions, particularly among members of the minority ethnic groups. Christian groups have experienced increasing difficulties in obtaining permission to build new churches, while Muslims report that they essentially are banned from constructing any new mosques anywhere in the country. There also was a sharp increase in the level of anti-Muslim violence during the period covered by this report, some of which the Government may have tacitly supported, contributed to, or even instigated.

There are social tensions between the Buddhist majority and the Christian and Muslim minorities, largely due to colonial and contemporary government preferences. There is widespread prejudice against Muslims. A sharp increase in anti-Muslim violence significantly heightened tensions between the Buddhist and Muslim communities during the first 6 months of 2001, as it has done in the past when such violence occurred.

Since 1988 a primary objective of U.S. Government policy towards Burma has been to promote increased respect for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion. In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Burma a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The Secretary of State redesignated Burma in October 2000.

#### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 251,000 square miles and a population of approximately 50 million persons. The great majority of the country's population at least nominally follows Theravada Buddhism, although in practice popular Burmese Buddhism includes veneration of many indigenous pre-Buddhist deities called "nats," and coexists with astrology, numerology, and fortune-telling. Buddhist monks, including novices, number more than 300,000 persons, roughly 2 percent of the male Buddhist population, and depend for their material needs entirely on alms donated by the laity, including daily donations of food. The clergy also includes a much smaller number of nuns. There are minorities of Christians (mostly Baptists as well as some Catholics and Anglicans), Muslims (mostly Sunni), Hindus, and practitioners of traditional Chinese and indigenous religions. According to government statistics, almost 90 percent of the population practice Buddhism, 4 percent practice Christianity, and 4 percent practice Islam; however, these statistics may understate the non-Buddhist proportion of the population. A very small Jewish community, estimated to be less than 50 persons, exists in Rangoon.

The country is ethnically diverse, and there is some correlation between ethnicity and religion. Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religion among the majority Burman ethnic group, and among the Shan and Mon ethnic minorities of the eastern and southern regions. In much of the country there also is some correlation between religion and social class, in that non-Buddhists tend to be better educated in secular matters, more urbanized, and more business oriented than the Buddhist majority.

Christianity is the dominant religion among the Kachin ethnic group of the northern region and the Chin and Naga ethnic groups of the western region (some of which practice traditional indigenous religions); it also is practiced widely among the Karen and Karenni ethnic groups of the southern and eastern regions. Many other Karen and Karenni are Theravada Buddhists. Hinduism is practiced chiefly by Indians, mostly Tamils and Bengalis, who are concentrated in major cities and in the south-central region (although many Tamils are Catholic). Islam is practiced widely in Arakan State, where it is the dominant religion of the Rohingya minority, and among Indians and Bengalis and their descendants. The Chinese ethnic minorities practice traditional Chinese religions. Traditional indigenous religions are practiced widely among smaller ethnic groups in the northern regions and practices drawn from those indigenous religions persist widely in popular Buddhist rituals, especially in rural areas.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The country has been ruled since 1962 by highly authoritarian military regimes. The latest military regime, now called the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), has governed without a constitution or legislature since 1988. The most recent Constitution, promulgated in 1974, permitted both legislative and administrative restrictions on religious freedom, stating that "the national races shall enjoy the freedom to profess their religion provided that the enjoyment of any such freedom does not offend the laws or the public interest." Most adherents of all religions that were registered with the authorities generally have enjoyed the right to worship as they choose; however, the Government has imposed restrictions on certain religious activities and frequently abused the right to religious freedom.

There is no official state religion; however, in practice the Government continued to show a preference for Theravada Buddhism. Successive governments, civilian and military, have supported and associated themselves conspicuously with Buddhism.

Virtually all organizations must be registered with the Government. Although there is a government directive exempting "genuine" religious organizations from registration, in practice only registered organizations can buy or sell property or open bank accounts, which induces most religious organizations to register. Religious organizations register with the Ministry of Home Affairs with the endorsement of the Ministry for Religious Affairs. The State also provides some utility services, such as electricity, at preferential rates to recognized religious organizations.

Official public holidays include some Christian and Islamic holy days, as well as several Theravada Buddhist holy days.

The Government ostensibly promotes mutual understanding among practitioners of different religions. The Government maintains a multi-religion monument in downtown Rangoon. In 1998 the Government announced plans to build a new multi-religion Square on some of the land that it recovered in 1997 by relocating Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim cemeteries in Rangoon's Kyandaw neighborhood. At the end of the period covered by this report, the project still was under development; however, a dispute between the Government and Christian groups over whether a cross would be included in the project design remained one of several unresolved obstacles.

Since independence in 1948, many of the ethnic minority areas have been bases for armed resistance to the Government. Although the Government has negotiated cease-fire agreements with most armed ethnic groups since 1989, active Shan, Karen and Karenni insurgencies continue, and a Chin insurgency has developed since the late 1980's. Successive civilian and military governments have tended to view religious freedom in the context of threats to national unity.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government, which operates a pervasive internal security apparatus, generally infiltrates or monitors the meetings and activities of virtually all organizations, including religious organizations. Religious activities and organizations of all faiths also are subject to broad government restrictions on freedom of expression and association. The Government also subjects all publications, including religious publications, to control and censorship. The Government generally prohibits outdoor meetings, including religious meetings, of more than five persons. This monitoring and control undermines the free exchange of thoughts and ideas associated with religious activities.

The Government continued both to show preference for Theravada Buddhism, the majority religion, and to control the organization and restrict the activities and expression of its clergy ("sangha"). Beginning in late 1990, the Government banned any organization of Buddhist clergy other than the nine state-recognized monastic orders. These nine orders submit to the authority of a state-sponsored State Clergy Coordination Committee ("Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee"—SMNC), which is elected indirectly by monks. The Government also authorized military commanders to try Buddhist clergy before military tribunals for "activities inconsistent with and detrimental to Buddhism," and imposed on Buddhist clergy a code of conduct. Infractions of the code are punished by criminal penalties. In 1999 the regional military commander in Mandalay reportedly issued an order that forbade Buddhist clergy to leave their township of residence without first surrendering their identity cards and obtaining written permission from local authorities. Persons other than Buddhist clergy generally were not subject to such severe restrictions on movement.

Through the 1990's, the Government increasingly made special efforts to link itself with Buddhism as a means of boosting its own legitimacy. State-controlled news media continued frequently to depict or describe government members paying

homage to Buddhist monks; making donations at pagodas throughout the country; officiating at ceremonies to open, improve, restore or maintain pagodas; and organizing ostensibly voluntary “people’s donations” of money, food, and uncompensated labor to build or refurbish Buddhist religious shrines throughout the country. State-owned newspapers routinely featured, as front-page banner slogans, quotations from the Buddhist scriptures. The Government has published books of Buddhist religious instruction. The Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a government-sponsored mass organization in which participation often is not entirely voluntary, has organized courses in Buddhist culture attended by millions of persons, according to state-owned media reports.

The Government continued to fund two State Sangha Universities in Rangoon and Mandalay to train Buddhist clergy under the control of the SMNC. The State’s relations with the Buddhist clergy and Buddhist schools are handled chiefly by the Department for the Perpetuation and Propagation of the Sasana (DPPS—“Sasana” means Buddhist doctrine) in the Ministry of Religious Affairs. During the mid-1990’s, the Government funded the construction of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU) in Rangoon, which opened in December 1998. The ITBMU’s stated purpose is “to share Myanmar’s knowledge of Buddhism with the people of the world,” and the main language of instruction is English.

The Government continued to monitor closely the activities of members of all religions, including Buddhism, in part because clergy and congregation members in the past have become active politically. In 1995 the military Government prohibited the ordination as clergy of any member of a political party, and this measure remains in effect.

The Government continued to discriminate against members of minority religions, restricting the educational, proselytizing, and building activities of minority religious groups. There is a concentration of Christians among some of the ethnic minorities (e.g., the Karen and Kachin) against which the army has fought for decades, although groups that practice Buddhism (e.g., the Shan) also have waged many of the ethnic insurgencies.

Government authorities continued to prohibit Christian clergy from proselytizing in some areas, often in support of local Buddhist populations opposed to the spread of Christianity. In at least one instance, clergy were beaten to discourage proselytizing. Local military commanders, who often issue such orders, rarely cite any legal justification for their actions. In general the Government has not allowed permanent foreign religious missions to operate in the country since the mid-1960’s, when it expelled nearly all foreign missionaries and nationalized all private schools and hospitals, which were extensive and were affiliated mostly with Christian religious organizations. The Government is not known to have paid any compensation in connection with these extensive confiscations. However, the Government has allowed a few elderly Catholic priests and nuns who have worked in the country since before independence to continue their work. At times, religious groups, including Catholics and Protestants, bring in foreign clergy and religious workers as tourists but are careful to ensure that their activities are not perceived as proselytizing by the government. Some Christian theological seminaries established before 1962 also have continued to operate; however, during the period covered by this report, military authorities forced a Bible school, which had been operating in Tamu Township in Sagaing Division since 1976, to close.

Christian groups have experienced increasing difficulties in obtaining permission to build new churches, while Muslims report that they essentially are banned from constructing any new mosques anywhere in the country. Buddhist groups are not known to have experienced similar difficulties in obtaining permission to build pagodas or monasteries. In parts of Chin State, authorities reportedly have not authorized the construction of any new churches since 1997. The Government reportedly also has denied permission for churches to be built on main roads in cities such as Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State. In Rangoon authorities have instructed various Christian groups to call their worship facilities “social centers” rather than “churches.” In most regions of the country, Christian and Muslim groups that seek to build small churches or mosques on side streets or other inconspicuous locations sometimes have been able to proceed, but increasingly only based on informal, rather than formal, approval from local authorities. These groups report that formal requests encounter long delays and, especially for Muslims, generally are denied. However, obtaining an informal approval from local authorities creates a tenuous legal situation. For example, there were instances cited during the period covered by this report in which local authorities or conditions changed and the informal approval for construction was rescinded abruptly and construction halted.

Since the 1960’s, Christian and Islamic groups have had difficulties importing religious literature into the country. Religious publications, like secular ones, re-

mained subject to control and censorship. Translations of the Bible into indigenous languages can not be imported legally, although Bibles can be printed locally in indigenous languages with Government permission. In 1999 approximately 20,000 illegally imported Bibles were seized in Tamu Township in Sagaing Division. Countering rumors that the Bibles were destroyed, during the period covered by this report, authorities informed one religious group that the Bibles were in storage in Rangoon. One religious group reports that it received government permission to import 2,000 English-language Bibles, the first such import allowed in 20 years; however, by the end of the period covered by this report, the Bibles still had not been imported.

State censorship authorities continued to enforce restrictions on the local publication of the Bible, and Christian and Muslim publications in general. The most onerous restriction is a list of over 100 prohibited words that the censors would not allow in Christian or Islamic literature because they purportedly are indigenous-language terms long used in Buddhist literature. Many of these words have been used and accepted by some of the country's Christian and Muslim groups since the colonial period. Organizations that translate and publish non-Buddhist religious texts are appealing these restrictions. They reportedly have succeeded in reducing the number of prohibited words to around 12, but the issue still was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. In addition according to other reports, the censors have objected to passages of the Old Testament and the Koran that may appear to approve the use of violence against nonbelievers. Although possession of publications not approved by the censors is an offense for which persons have been arrested and prosecuted in the past, there have been no reports of arrests or prosecutions for possession of any traditional religious literature in recent years.

Non-Buddhists continued to experience employment discrimination at upper levels of the public sector. Only one non-Buddhist served in the Government at a ministerial level, and the same person, a brigadier general, is the only non-Buddhist known to have held flag rank in the armed forces during the 1990's. The Government discourages Muslims from entering military service, and Christian or Muslim military officers who aspire to promotion beyond middle ranks are encouraged by their superiors to convert to Buddhism.

Members of the Muslim Rohingya minority in Arakan State, on the country's western coast, continued to experience severe legal, economic, and social discrimination. The Government denies citizenship status to most Rohingyas on the grounds that their ancestors allegedly did not reside in the country at the start of British colonial rule, as required by the country's highly restrictive citizenship law. Members of the Muslim Rohingya minority returnees complained of severe government restrictions on their ability to travel and their ability to engage in economic activity. Unlike the practice for other foreign persons in the country, these Muslims are not issued a foreign registration card (FRC). They are required to obtain permission from the township authorities whenever they wish to leave their village area. Authorities generally do not grant permission to travel to Rangoon to Rohingya Muslims, but permission sometimes can be obtained through bribery. In addition because the Government reserves secondary education for citizens only, Rohingya do not have access to state run schools beyond primary education, and are unable to obtain most civil service positions.

The Government allowed members of all religious groups to establish and maintain links with coreligionists in other countries and to travel abroad for religious purposes, subject to restrictive passport and visa issuance practices, foreign exchange controls, and government monitoring that extends to all international activities for any purpose. The Government sometimes expedited its burdensome passport issuance procedures for Muslims making the Hajj.

Religious affiliation sometimes is indicated on government-issued identification cards that citizens and permanent residents of the country are required to carry at all times. There appear to be no consistent criteria governing whether a person's religion is indicated on his or her identification card. Citizens also are required to indicate their religions on some official application forms, e.g., on passports (which have a separate "field" for religion, as well as ethnicity).

Buddhist doctrine remained part of the state-mandated curriculum in all elementary schools. Individual children may opt out of instruction in Buddhism, and sometimes do so in practice; however, at times the Government also deals harshly with efforts to opt out.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

There continued to be reports that military officers killed villagers who refused to provide portering services to the Army. For example, on December 15, 2000, junta military officers allegedly shot and killed the local imam of a mosque in Karen State



for asking the authorities to spare him from portering, as it was the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan.

Government security forces continued to take actions against minority Christian groups, arresting clergy, destroying churches, and prohibiting religious services. In Chin State in the western part of the country in particular, the Government attempted to coerce members of the Chin ethnic minority to convert to Buddhism and prevented Christian Chin from proselytizing by, among other things, arresting and physically abusing Christian clergy and destroying churches. Until 1990 the Chin generally practiced either Christianity or traditional indigenous religions. (The Chin were the only major ethnic minority in the country that did not support any significant armed organization in active rebellion against the Government or in an armed cease-fire with the Government. However, Chin opposition groups emerged in 1988 and subsequently developed into active insurgencies against the Government.)

Authorities have attempted to prevent the Chin Christians from practicing their religion. Military units repeatedly located their camps on the sites of Christian churches and graveyards, which were destroyed to build these camps; local Chin Christians were forced to assist in these acts of desecration. In addition the Army reportedly also tends to take over churches to use for bases when in remote areas, thus desecrating the church. Since the early 1990's, security forces have torn down or forced villagers to tear down crosses that had been erected outside Chin Christian villages. These crosses often have been replaced with pagodas, sometimes built with forced labor. Some of these crosses had been erected in remembrance of former missionaries from the United States, while others merely are symbols of faith. During the period covered by this report, there are reports that, while the Government still bans most of these crosses, permission has been granted to erect at least one cross in Southern Chin State. It also was reported that in July 2000, Captain Khin Maung Myint forcibly ordered the closure of all Christian schools in Tamu Township. The authorities reportedly subjected Christian sermons to censorship. Government authorities repeatedly prohibited Christian clergy from proselytizing. In the past, soldiers beat Christian clergy who refused to sign statements promising to stop preaching to non-Christians. Since 1990 government authorities and security forces, with assistance from monks of the Hill Regions Buddhist Missions, coercively have sought to prevent Christian Chins from proselytizing to Chins who practice indigenous religions.

Since 1990 government authorities and security forces have promoted Buddhism over Christianity among the Chin ethnic minority in diverse and often coercive ways. This campaign, reportedly accompanied by other efforts to "Burmanize" the Chin, has involved a large increase in military units stationed in Chin State and other predominately Chin areas, state-sponsored immigration of Buddhist Burman monks from other regions, and construction of Buddhist monasteries and shrines in Chin communities with few or no Buddhists, often by means of forced "donations" of money or labor. Local government officials promised monthly support payments to individuals and households that converted to Buddhism. Government soldiers stationed in Chin State reportedly were given higher rank and pay if they induced Chin women to marry them and convert to Buddhism. The authorities reportedly supplied rice to Buddhists at lower prices than to Christians, distributed extra supplies of foodstuffs to Buddhists on Sunday mornings while Christians attended church, and exempted converts to Buddhism from forced labor. In the past, it credibly was reported that in Karen State's Pa'an Township army units repeatedly conscripted as porters young men leaving Sunday worship services at some Christian churches, causing young men to avoid church attendance. Soldiers led by officers repeatedly disrupted Christian worship services and celebrations. Chin Christians were forced to "donate" labor to clean and maintain Buddhist shrines. There also were a number of credible reports that the Army continued to force Chin to porter for it, both in Chin State and Sagaing Division. More specifically it was reported that the Army no longer takes rations with it, and rather lives off of local villagers, by force if someone refuses to help, although villagers reportedly were allowed to buy their way out of such work. Local government officials ordered Christian Chins to attend sermons by newly arrived Buddhist monks who disparaged Christianity. In addition during the period covered by this report, it was reported that many Christian Chin are pressured and some are forced to attend monk school and Buddhist monasteries and then encouraged to convert to Buddhism. Local government officials separated the children of Chin Christians from their parents under false pretenses of giving them free secular education and allowing them to practice their own religion, while in fact the children were lodged in Buddhist monasteries where they were instructed in and converted to Buddhism without their parents' knowledge or consent. Finally since 1990, government authorities and security

forces, with assistance from monks of the Hill Regions Buddhist Missions, coercively have sought to induce Chins, including children, to convert to Theravada Buddhism.

According to the Chin Human Rights Organization, during the period covered by this report, Lt. Colonel Biak To was fired from his military position and fined; allegedly his army and police superiors discriminated against him because of his religious (Christian) and ethnic (Chin) identity.

There were unconfirmed reports of governmental restrictions on the religious freedom of Christians among the Naga ethnic minority in the far northwest of the country. These reports suggested that the Government sought to induce members of the Naga to convert to Buddhism by means similar to those it used to convert members of the Chin to Buddhism. However, reports concerning the Naga, although credible, are less numerous than reports concerning the Chin. Consequently knowledge of the status of religious freedom among the Naga is less certain. During 1999 the first mass exodus of Naga religious refugees from the country occurred; more than 1,000 Christians of the Naga ethnic group reportedly fled the country to India. These Naga reportedly claimed that the army and Buddhist monks tried to force them to convert to Buddhism and had forced them to close churches in their villages, then desecrated the churches. A particularly harsh military commander in the Naga area reportedly was removed from command in late 2000 and imprisoned for rape.

There are credible reports that SPDC authorities have systematically repressed and relocated Muslims to isolate them into certain areas. For example, Rakhine Muslims have been forced to donate time, money, and materials toward buildings for the Buddhist community. There now are certain townships in the Rakhine State, Thandwe, Gwa, and Taung-gut, for instance, which are "Muslim-free zones." Muslims no longer are permitted to live in the areas, mosques have been destroyed, and lands confiscated. To ensure that the mosques are not rebuilt, they have been replaced with government owned-buildings, monasteries, and Buddhist temples. Authorities also have issued a court order in Rakhine stating that the killing of a Muslim will be punished with a minimal 3-month sentence while, in contrast, the sentence for a Muslim hitting a Buddhist will be 3 years. In northern Arakan State, there are credible reports that, by the end of the period covered by this report, the Government systematically was destroying mosques in some small villages. In one area, local authorities already had destroyed at least 10 of 40 mosques that had been designated for destruction. The mosques, which typically are little more than thatch huts, reportedly were constructed without proper authority by villagers who had difficulty getting to mosques in neighboring towns due to strict travel restrictions on Muslims.

There was a sharp increase in anti-Muslim violence in the country during the period covered by this report. In February 2001, riots broke out in the town of Sittwe, the capital of Arakan State. There were various, often conflicting, accounts of how the riots began, but reports consistently stated that government security and fire-fighting forces did little to prevent attacks on Muslim mosques, businesses, and residences. There also were credible reports that at least some of the monks that led attacks on Muslims were military or USDA instigators dressed as monks. After 4 days of rioting, security forces moved in and prevented any additional violence. There are estimates that over 50 Muslim homes burned to the ground and both Muslims and Buddhists were killed and injured. Since that time, the Government has tightened already strict travel restrictions for Muslims in the area, essentially preventing any Muslims from travelling between Sittwe and other towns in the region. There is an unconfirmed report that in late March or early April 2001, seven Arakanese politicians were sentenced to 7- to 12-year prison terms for inciting the riots.

On May 15, 2001, anti-Muslim riots broke out in the town of Taungoo in the Bago Division between Rangoon and Mandalay (an estimated 2,000 of 90,000 Taungoo inhabitants are Muslim). The riots followed the same pattern as those in Sittwe: there were varying accounts of what precipitated the fighting, security and firefighting forces did not intervene, and Muslim mosques, businesses, and residences were targeted. Again there were credible reports that the monks that appeared to be inciting at least some of the violence were USDA or military personnel dressed as monks. After 2 days of violence the military stepped in and the violence immediately ended, but not before there was widespread destruction of Muslim homes and businesses and, reportedly, several Mosques. An estimated 10 Muslims and 2 Buddhists were killed in this incident.

While there is no direct evidence linking the Government to these violent acts against Muslims, there are reports that the instigators were military or USDA personnel. There also are reports that local government authorities alerted Muslim elders in advance of the attacks and warned them not to retaliate to avoid escalating the violence. While the specifics of how these attacks began and who carried them

out may never be documented fully, it appears that the Government was, at best, very slow to protect Muslims and their property from destruction. The violence significantly heightened tensions between the Buddhist and Muslim communities during the period covered by this report (see Section III).

In 1991 tens of thousands (according to some reports as many as 300,000 persons) of members of the Muslim Rohingya minority fled from Arakan State into Bangladesh following anti-Muslim violence alleged, although not proven, to have involved government troops. Many of the 21,000 Rohingya Muslims remaining in refugee camps in Bangladesh have refused to return to Burma because they feared human rights abuses, including religious persecution. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that authorities cooperated in investigating isolated incidents of renewed abuse of repatriated citizens.

For example, according to the Muslim Information Center of Burma (MICB), a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), on September 1, 2000, four Muslim elders of Daing Win Gwan Block village, Moulmein Township in Mon State, filed an application with the authorities to allow the Muslim students not to continue learning Buddhism in school; the authorities arrested the four elders for their actions.

The Government continued to prevent Buddhist monks from calling for democracy and political dialog with prodemocracy forces. During the period covered by this report, government efforts to control these monks have included travel restrictions, arrests, pressure on Buddhist leaders to expel "undisciplined monks," and a prohibition on certain monasteries from receiving political party members as overnight guests. More than 100 monks credibly have been identified as having been imprisoned during the 1990's for supporting democracy and human rights; however, about half of these have been released, and there is no reliable estimate of the number of Buddhist clergy in prisons or labor camps by the end of the period covered by this report. Following a February 2000 letter from the Young Buddhist Monk Union advocating political actions, government authorities reportedly arrested approximately 40 monks in May or June 2001. By the end of the period covered by this report, the status of those arrested remained unknown. Monks serving sentences of life in prison reportedly included the venerable U Kalyana of Mandalay, a member of the Aung San Red Star Association, and the venerable U Kawiya of the Phayahyi monastery in Mandalay.

In July 2000, U Tay Zawata, a monk in Shan State, filed a complaint with the SPDC Secretary One Lt. General and the Attorney General stating that on August 23, 1999, government authorities in the town of Tachileik had destroyed 2 monasteries and dispersed over 50 monks without a proper court order and without compensation.

There continued to be credible reports from diverse regions of the country that government officials compelled persons, especially in rural areas, to contribute money, food, or uncompensated labor to state-sponsored projects to build, renovate, or maintain Buddhist religious shrines or monuments. The Government calls these contributions "voluntary donations" and imposes them on both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. In recent years, there had been credible reports that Muslims in Arakan State have been compelled to build Buddhist pagodas as part of the country's forced labor program. These pagodas often have been built on confiscated Muslim land. However, there were no known reports of such activity during the period covered by this report. There also were reports of forced labor being used to dismantle temples and monasteries. For example, on July 27, 2000, army troops from the 246th Infantry Division reportedly forced 54 men to dismantle several temples and monasteries in the forced relocation areas of Kun-Hing township; on August 10, 2000, the same troops again conscripted 87 workers from the same town and forced them to build a shelter for the lumber and tin sheets taken from the dismantled monasteries.

Government restrictions on speech, press, assembly, and movement, including diplomatic travel, make it difficult to obtain timely and accurate information on human rights in Burma, including freedom of religion. Information about abuses often becomes available only months or years after the events, from refugees who have fled to other countries, from released political prisoners, or from occasional travel inside the country by foreign journalists and scholars.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion*

Since 1990 government authorities and security forces, with assistance from monks of the Hill Regions Buddhist Missions, coercively have sought to induce Chins, including children, to convert to Theravada Buddhism.

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are social tensions between the Buddhist majority and the Christian and Muslim minorities, largely due to preferential treatment by the Government, both in hiring and other areas, in practice (although not in law) both for non-Buddhists during British colonial rule and for Buddhists since independence. There is widespread prejudice against Muslims, many of whom are ethnic Indians or Bengalis. The Government reportedly contributed to or instigated anti-Muslim violence in Arakan State in 1991, in Shan State and Rangoon in 1996, in cities throughout the country in 1997, and again during the period covered by this report (see Section II).

A book entitled "In Fear of Our Race Disappearing," which first appeared in 1997 or 1998 by an unknown author, has contributed to anti-Muslim sentiments among Burmese Buddhists. The book describes how Muslims will displace Buddhists in the country unless actions are taken against them. Distribution of the book appears to have increased during the period covered by this report, although it is not clear who has been publishing it. The book was cited as one factor which contributed to the rioting in early 2001 in Sittwe and Taungoo (see Section II).

Since 1994 when the progovernment Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) was organized, there has been armed conflict between the DKBA and the Karen National Union (KNU). Although the DKBA reportedly includes some Christians, and there are many Buddhists in the KNU, the armed conflict between the two Karen groups has had strong religious overtones. During the mid-1990's, it reportedly was common DKBA practice to torture Christian villagers and kill them if they refused to convert to Buddhism; however, DKBA treatment of Christians reportedly improved substantially after the DKBA settled down to administer the regions that it had conquered.

In June 2000, authorities claimed that on June 17, 2000, Karenni National Progressive Party insurgents shot and wounded a Catholic priest, Father Abe Lei, and took four other persons hostage in Kayah State. Other reports indicate that the priest was shot accidentally and the four persons taken hostage were not associated with him. The reports also indicate that the hostages have since been released.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Since 1988 a primary objective of U.S. Government policy towards Burma has been to promote increased respect for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion. The United States has discontinued bilateral aid to the Government, suspended issuance of licenses to export arms to the country, and suspended the generalized system of preferences and export-import bank financial services in support of U.S. exports to Burma. The U.S. Government also has suspended all Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) financial services in support of U.S. investment in Burma, ended active promotion of trade with Burma, and halted issuance of visas to high government officials and their immediate family members. It also has banned new investment in Burma by U.S. firms, opposed all assistance to the Government by international financial institutions, and urged the governments of other countries to take similar actions.

The U.S. Government actively supported the decision of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in November 2000 to implement sanctions against the Government of Burma, based on the Government's continued systematic use of forced labor for a wide range of civilian and military purposes.

The U.S. Embassy has promoted religious freedom in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. This has involved numerous contacts with government officials, private Burmese citizens, scholars, representatives of other governments, international media representatives, and international business representatives. Embassy staff have met repeatedly with leaders of Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic religious groups, members of the faculties of schools of theology, and other religious-affiliated organizations and NGO's as part of their reporting and public diplomacy activities.

In September 1999, the Secretary of State designated Burma as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The Secretary of State redesignated Burma in October 2000.

## CAMBODIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 the religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 67,000 square miles and a population of approximately 12 million. Approximately 93 percent of the population is Hinayana and Theravada Buddhist. The Buddhist tradition is widespread and active in all provinces, with an estimated 4,100 pagodas throughout the country. The vast majority of ethnic Cambodians are Buddhist, and there is a close association between Buddhism, Khmer cultural traditions, and daily life. Adherence to Buddhism generally is considered intrinsic to the country's ethnic and cultural identity. Most of the remainder of the population (5 million) is made up of ethnic Cham Muslims, who generally are located in Phnom Penh and in rural fishing villages in Kompong Cham, Kompong Chhnang, and Kampot provinces. There are four branches of Islam: The Malay-influenced Shafi branch, which constitutes 90 percent of the Cham Muslims; the Saudi-Kuwaiti influenced Wahabi branch (6 percent); the traditional Iman-San branch (3 percent); and the Kadiani branch (3 percent). The country's small Christian community, although growing, constitutes less than 1 percent of the population. Over 100 separate Christian organizations or denominations operate freely throughout the country and include over 1,000 congregations. Other religious organizations with small followings in Cambodia include the Vietnamese Cao Dai religion and the Baha'i Faith, with about 2,000 practicing members in each group.

### SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by government or private actors. Buddhism is the state religion. The Government promotes national Buddhist holidays, provides Buddhist training and education to monks and others in pagodas and modestly supports an institute that performs research and publishes materials on Khmer culture and Buddhist traditions. The law requires all religious groups, including Buddhists, to submit applications to the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs in order to construct places of worship and to conduct religious activities. Religious groups have not encountered significant difficulties in obtaining approvals for construction of places of worship, but some Muslim and Christian groups report delays by some local officials in acknowledging that official permission has been granted to conduct religious meetings in homes. Such religious meetings generally take place unimpeded despite delay or inaction at the local level, and no significant constraints on religious assembly were reported during the period covered by this report.

Monks can move internally without restriction.

Government officials organize meetings for representatives of all religious groups to discuss religious developments and to address issues of concern.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Foreign missionary groups generally operated freely throughout the country and have not encountered significant difficulties in performing their work; however, there reportedly are occasional local constraints on evangelization by Christians in public places—especially in areas of new Christian religious activity—but these generally are resolved satisfactorily by intervention with provincial or central government authorities. Government officials expressed appreciation for the work of many foreign religious groups in providing much needed assistance in education, rural development, and training. However, government officials also expressed some concern that foreign groups use the guise of religion to become involved in illegal or political affairs.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

*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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations generally are amicable between the various religious communities. The Constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion, and minority religions experience little or no societal discrimination in practice. Adherents of the minority Muslim or Christian faiths reported few societal problems on issues of religion. The Cham Muslims generally are integrated well into society, enjoy positions of prominence in business and in the Government, and face no reported persecution.

In previous years, occasional tensions have been reported among the various branches of Islam, which receive monetary support from groups in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, or Indonesia depending on the tenets of the particular branch. Some Buddhists also have expressed concern about the Cham Muslim community receiving financial assistance from foreign countries.

In addition occasional tensions have been reported when Christian evangelists attempted to remove Buddhist images or religious items from private homes; however, during the period covered by this report there were no reports of tension between Cambodian Christians and non-Christians.

There are ecumenical and interfaith organizations, which often are supported by funding from foreign public or private groups.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy representatives met with some religious leaders and are in contact with representatives of religious nongovernmental organizations and other groups representing the Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian faiths. Embassy representatives have discussed religious freedom with officials from the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs.

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**CHINA**

*(Note: The Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) is discussed in a separate annex at the end of this report.)*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups. Membership in many faiths is growing rapidly; however, while the Government generally does not seek to suppress this growth outright, it tries to control and regulate religious groups to prevent the rise of groups or sources of authority outside the control of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and cracks down on groups that it perceives to pose a threat.

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for freedom of religion and freedom of conscience worsened, especially for some unregistered religious groups and spiritual movements such as the Falun Gong. The Government intensified its repression of groups that it determined to be "cults" in general, and of the Falun Gong. Various sources report that thousands of Falun Gong adherents have been arrested, detained, and imprisoned, and that approximately 100 or more Falun Gong adherents have died in detention since 1999. The atmosphere created by the nationwide campaign against Falun Gong had a spillover effect on unregistered churches, temples, and mosques in many parts of the country. Separately, under the guise of urban renewal and cracking down on unregistered places of worship, authorities in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province razed an unknown number of churches and temples in late 2000. However, official persecution of underground Catholic and Protestant groups in southeastern China eased somewhat over the previous year.

In general unregistered religious groups continued to experience varying degrees of official interference, harassment, and repression. Some unregistered religious groups, including Protestant and Catholic groups, were subjected to increased restrictions, including, in some cases, intimidation, harassment, and detention; however, the degree of restrictions varied significantly from region to region. In some

localities, authorities forced “underground” churches, temples and mosques to close. In other localities, officials worked closely with Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant groups building schools, medical facilities, and retirement centers for poor communities. In the latter cases, local officials frequently encouraged Western religious groups to work in their communities to provide much needed social services, provided that the groups did not openly proselytize, and kept their religious work low-key.

Nevertheless, the basic policy of permitting apolitical religious activity to take place relatively unfettered in Government-approved sites remained unchanged. Many religious adherents report that they are able to practice their faith in officially registered places of worship and to maintain contacts with coreligionists in other parts of the world without interference from the authorities. Official sources, religious professionals, and members of both officially sanctioned and “underground” places of worship all report that the numbers of believers in the country continued to grow.

The communities of the five official religions—Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Catholicism, and Protestantism—coexist without significant friction; however, in some parts of the country, relations between registered and unregistered Christian churches are tense.

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Despite the Government’s decision to suspend the U.S.-China bilateral human rights dialog in May 1999, the Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the U.S. Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang made concerted efforts to encourage religious freedom. In Washington and in Beijing, in public and in private, U.S. officials repeatedly urged the Government to respect citizens’ rights to religious freedom. U.S. officials protested and asked for further information about numerous individual cases of abuse.

In September 2000, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

#### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 3.5 million square miles, and its population is approximately 1.3 billion. According to an official government white paper, there are over 200 million religious adherents, representing a great variety of beliefs and practices. Official figures from late 1997, the year for which most recent figures are available, indicate that there are at least 3,000 religious organizations, 300,000 clergy, and 74 training centers for clergy. There also are more than 85,000 approved venues for religious activities. Most religious adherents profess eastern faiths, but tens of millions adhere to Christianity. Approximately 8 percent of the population are Buddhist, approximately 1.4 percent are Muslim, an estimated 0.4 percent belong to the official Catholic Church, an estimated 0.4 to 0.8 percent belong to the unofficial Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church, an estimated 0.8 to 1.2 percent are registered Protestants, and an estimated 2.4 to 6.5 percent worship in Protestant house churches that are independent of government control. There are no available estimates on the number of Taoists; however, according to a 1997 government publication, there are over 10,000 Taoist monks and nuns and over 1,000 Taoist temples.

Widespread traditional folk religions (worship of local gods, heroes, and ancestors) have been revived and are tolerated to varying degrees as loose affiliates of Taoism or ethnic minority cultural practice. However, at the same time, folk religions have been labeled as “feudal superstition” and are sometimes repressed.

Buddhists make up the largest body of organized religious believers. The Government estimates that there are more than 100 million Buddhists, most of whom are from the dominant Han ethnic group. However, it is difficult to estimate accurately the number of Buddhists because they do not have congregational memberships and often do not participate in public ceremonies. The Government reports that there are 13,000 Buddhist temples and monasteries and more than 200,000 nuns and monks.

According to government figures, there are 20 million Muslims, 35,000 Islamic places of worship, and more than 45,000 imams nationwide.

The unofficial, Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church claims a membership far larger than the 5 million persons registered with the official Catholic Church. Precise figures are difficult to determine, but Vatican officials have estimated that there are as many as 10 million adherents. According to official figures, the government-approved Catholic Church has 69 bishops, 5,000 clergy, and approximately 5,000 churches and meeting houses. There are thought to be some 37 bishops operating

“underground,” 10–15 of whom may now be in prison or under house arrest. There are approximately 60,000 Catholic baptisms each year.

The Government maintains that there are between 10 and 15 million registered Protestants, 18,000 clergy, over 12,000 churches, and approximately 25,000 registered Protestant meeting places. According to foreign experts, approximately 30 million persons worship in Protestant house churches that are independent of government control.

Estimates of the number of Falun Gong practitioners vary widely; the Government claims that there may be as many as 2.1 million adherents of Falun Gong (or Wheel of the Law), also known as Falun Dafa. Followers of Falun Gong estimate that there are over 100 million adherents worldwide. Some experts estimate that the true number of Falun Gong adherents in China is in the tens of millions. Falun Gong blends aspects of Taoism, Buddhism, and the meditation techniques and physical exercises of qigong (a traditional Chinese exercise discipline) with the teachings of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi, (a native of China who currently is living abroad). Despite the spiritual content of some of Li’s teachings, Falun Gong does not consider itself a religion and has no clergy or places of worship.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship, and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups.

The Criminal Law states that government officials who deprive citizens of religious freedom may, in serious cases, be sentenced to up to 2 years in prison; however, there are no known cases of persons being punished under this statute.

The State reserves to itself the right to register and thus to allow to operate particular religious groups and spiritual movements. There are five officially recognized religions: Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism. For each faith there is a government-affiliated association that monitors and supervises its activities. The State Council’s Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) is responsible for monitoring and judging the legitimacy of religious activity. The RAB and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) United Front Work Department (UFWD), both of which are staffed by officials who rarely, if ever, are religious adherents, provide policy “guidance and supervision” on the implementation of government regulations on religious activity, including the role of foreigners in religious activity.

There are six requirements for the registration of “venues for religious activity”: possession of a physical site; citizens who are religious believers and who regularly take part in religious activity; an organized governing board; a minimum number of followers; a set of operating rules; and a legal source of income. The Government officially permits only those churches affiliated with either the Catholic Patriotic Association or the (Protestant) Three-Self Patriotic Movement/Chinese Christian Council to operate legally. Some groups register voluntarily, some register under pressure, and the authorities refuse to register others. Unofficial groups claimed that authorities often refuse them registration without explanation. The Government contends that these refusals are mainly the result of these groups’ lack of adequate facilities. Some religious groups have been reluctant to comply with the regulations out of principled opposition to state control of religion or due to fear of adverse consequences if they reveal, as required, the names and addresses of church leaders. In some areas, efforts to register unauthorized groups are carried out by religious leaders and civil affairs officials. In other regions, police and RAB officials, concurrently with other law enforcement agencies, perform registration.

The Government has banned all groups that it has determined to be cults, including the Falun Gong and the Zhong Gong movements. After the Criminal Law came into effect in 1997, offenses related to membership in unapproved religious groups were classified as crimes disturbing the social order. Most experts attribute the subsequent sharp rise in trials for this category of crimes to the new classification.

The Government took some steps during the period covered by this report to show respect for the country’s Muslims, such as offering congratulations on major Islamic holidays. The Government permits, and in some cases subsidizes, Muslim citizens who make the Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. According to official government statistics, more than 45,000 Muslims have made the trip to Mecca via neighboring countries, especially Pakistan, in recent years; 5000 in 1998, the last year for which such statistics are available. There have been nongovernmental reports that fewer persons participated in 1999 and 2000; according to some estimates, less than 2,500 persons made the Hajj in each of those years. According to some reports, the major



limiting factors for participation in the Hajj were the cost and controls on passport issuance.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for religious freedom and freedom of conscience worsened, especially for members of some unregistered religious groups and spiritual movements such as the Falun Gong. The Government intensified its repression of the Falun Gong spiritual movement and "cults" in general. The atmosphere created by the nationwide campaign against Falun Gong had a spillover effect on unregistered churches, temples, and mosques in many parts of the country. The Government tends to perceive unregulated religious gatherings or groups as a potential challenge to its authority. During the period covered by this report, the Government also moved against houses of worship outside its control that grew too large or espoused beliefs that it considered threatening to "state security." Police closed "underground" mosques, temples, and seminaries, as well as large numbers of Catholic churches, and Protestant "house churches," many with significant memberships, properties, financial resources, and networks, and banned groups that it considered to be "cults." An unknown number of places of worship and roadside shrines were destroyed, primarily in Wenzhou.

Overall, the basic policy of permitting apolitical religious activity to take place relatively unfettered in government-approved sites remained unchanged. Official sources, religious professionals, and members of both officially sanctioned and "underground" places of worship all report that the number of religious adherents in the country continued to grow. While the Government generally does not seek to suppress this growth outright, it attempts to control and regulate religious groups to prevent the rise of groups or sources of authority outside the control of Government and the CCP. The Government also makes demands on the clergy or leadership of registered groups, requiring, for example, that they publicly endorse government policies, or denounce Falun Gong.

The Government officially permits only those churches affiliated with either the Catholic Patriotic Association or the (Protestant) Three-Self Patriotic Movement/Chinese Christian Council to operate legally. Official tolerance for religions considered to be traditionally Chinese, such as Buddhism and Taoism, has been greater than that for Christianity, and these faiths often face fewer restrictions than the other recognized religions. However, as these non-Western faiths have grown rapidly in recent years, there are now signs of greater government concern and new restrictions, especially on syncretic sects (sects that blend tenets from a number of beliefs).

In 1999 the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a decision to ban all groups the Government determined to be "cults," including the Falun Gong, under Article 300 of the Criminal Law. The Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate also provided "explanations" on applying existing criminal law to the Falun Gong. The law, as applied following these actions, specifies prison terms of 3 to 7 years for "cult" members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications. Under the law, cult leaders and recruiters may be sentenced to 7 years or more in prison.

During the period covered by this report, government restrictions on the Falun Gong spiritual movement continued. There were many thousands of cases throughout the year of individuals receiving criminal, administrative, and extrajudicial punishment for practicing Falun Gong, admitting that they believed in Falun Gong, or simply refusing to denounce the organization or its founder.

Authorities and experts also wrote many articles characterizing the rise of religious groups that failed to register and "cults" such as Falun Gong as part of a plot by the West to undermine Chinese authority. In February, Zhang Xinying, vice chairman of the Chinese Society of Religious Studies, said that the rise of "cults" was due to the frequent abuse of the concept of "religious freedom" by "some people with ulterior motives." Senior Chinese leaders made similar comments, in the context of condemning Falun Gong.

The Authorities also continued their general crackdown on other groups considered to be "cults," such as Xiang Gong, Guo Gong, and Zhong Gong Qigong groups, some of which reportedly had a following comparable to that of the Falun Gong.

The Government continued, and in some places intensified, a national campaign to enforce 1994 State Council regulations and subsequent provincial regulations that require all places of religious activity to register with government religious affairs bureaus and come under the supervision of official, "patriotic" religious organizations. There is a great deal of variation in how local authorities deal with unregistered religious groups. In certain regions, government supervision of religious activity is minimal, and registered and unregistered churches are treated similarly by

the authorities, existing openly side by side. In such areas, many congregants worship in both types of churches. In other regions, particularly where considerable unofficial and official religious activity takes place, local implementing regulations call for strict government oversight of religion, and authorities have cracked down on unregistered churches and their members. Implementing regulations, provincial work reports, and other government and Party documents continued to exhort officials to enforce vigorously government policy regarding unregistered churches.

Underground Protestants and Catholics in the northern and central parts of the country, especially in Beijing, Henan, Hebei, Shaanxi, and Shanxi, reported an increase in efforts to force them to register. Police continued their efforts to close down an underground evangelical group called the "Shouters," an offshoot of a pre-1949 indigenous Protestant group. However, the situation in the southern province of Guangdong improved somewhat during the second half of 2000, following a period of harassment of house churches earlier in the year. Harassment of underground Catholic Churches that occurred in late 1999 and early 2000 in the southeastern province of Fujian, subsided during the period covered by this report.

Local officials destroyed some unregistered places of worship during the year. In late 2000, in the central coastal city of Wenzhou, in Zhejiang Province, officials razed or closed an unknown number of unregistered places of worship. NGO's report that hundreds of places of worship were demolished. Local officials claimed that they had destroyed the churches as part of an urban renewal campaign and a crack-down on unregistered places of worship. However, a government notice posted at the site of at least one church demolition cited the Government's anti-cult law for the action. Authorities maintained that properly registered places of worship would be rebuilt elsewhere. However, observers have noted that a number of the razed churches and temples were not in areas undergoing urban renewal and that many of the buildings had existed for more than 50 years. In addition, local authorities have destroyed thousands of local shrines dedicated to traditional folk religion.

There are reports that, despite the rapidly growing religious population, it is difficult to register new places of worship even for the five officially recognized faiths. The Government has restored or rebuilt churches, temples, mosques, and monasteries damaged or destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and allowed the reopening of some seminaries, although implementation of restoration activity has varied from locality to locality. However, there are far fewer temples, churches, or mosques than existed 35 years ago. Some observers cite the lack of adequate meeting space in registered churches as an explanation for the rapid rise in attendance at house churches and "underground" churches.

Many family churches, which generally are made up of family members and friends, conduct activities similar to those of home Bible study groups, and are tolerated by the authorities as long as they remain small and unobtrusive. Family churches reportedly encounter difficulties when their memberships become too large, when they arrange for the use of facilities for the specific purpose of conducting religious activities, or when they forge links with other unregistered groups. However, official harassment of underground Catholic and Protestant groups in South China eased somewhat in 2001.

In some areas there are reports of harassment of churches by local religious affairs bureau officials, attributed, at least in part, to financial issues. For example, although regulations require local authorities to provide land to registered church groups, some local officials may try to avoid doing so by denying registration. Official churches also may face harassment if local authorities wish to acquire the land on which a church is located. In addition to refusing to register churches, there also are reports that religious affairs bureau officials have requested illegal "donations" from churches in their jurisdictions as a means of raising extra revenue.

The Government permitted limited numbers of Catholic and Protestant seminarians, Muslim clerics, and Buddhist clergy to go abroad for additional religious studies. In most cases, funding for these training programs is provided by foreign organizations. Both official and unofficial Christian churches have problems training adequate numbers of clergy to meet the needs of their growing congregations. Due to the restrictions on religion between 1955 and 1985, no priests or other clergy in the official churches were ordained during that period; most priests and pastors were trained either before 1955 or after 1985. The shortfall is most severe for persons between the ages of 35 and 65. Those deemed too independent reportedly have their budgets cut. Due to government prohibitions, unofficial churches have particularly significant problems training clergy or sending students to study overseas, and many clergy receive only limited and inadequate preparation. Most religious institutions depend on their own resources. Frequently religious institutions run side businesses selling religious items, and at times they run strictly commercial businesses such as restaurants. Contributions from parish members are common among both

Catholics and Protestants. Sometimes the State funds repairs for temples or shrines having cultural or historic significance; however, there are some reports that government funds are allocated only to registered churches, depending upon how independent they are perceived to be.

In 1999 the Party's Central Committee issued a document calling upon the authorities to tighten control over the official Catholic Church and to eliminate the underground Catholic Church if it did not bend to Government control. There has been increasing pressure by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association on underground Catholic bishops to join the official church, and authorities have reorganized dioceses without consulting church leaders. The Government has not established diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and there is no Vatican representative in the country. The Government's refusal to allow the official Catholic Church to recognize the authority of the Papacy in matters of faith and morals has led many Catholics to reject joining the official Catholic Church on the grounds that this denies one of the fundamental tenets of their faith. Catholic priests in the official church also face dilemmas when asked by parishioners whether they should follow Church doctrine about birth control or State family planning policy. This dilemma is particularly acute when discussing abortion.

Tensions between the Vatican and the Government have caused leadership problems for the Catholic Church in the country because of tension between some bishops who have been ordained with secret Vatican approval (or who obtained such secret approval after their ordination) and others ordained without such approval. While both Chinese and Vatican authorities say that they would welcome an agreement to normalize relations, problems concerning the role of the Pope in selecting bishops and the status of "underground" Catholic clerics have frustrated efforts to reach this goal. Some "underground" Catholic priests have indicated they are unwilling to accept the authority of bishops ordained without Vatican approval. Newly nominated bishops seeking unofficial Papal approval frequently find themselves at odds with other church leaders who are sympathetic to the Central Government, and who insist that ordinations of new bishops be conducted by more senior bishops not recognized by the Vatican.

Priests or bishops who served in seminaries were disciplined if they did not overtly support official criticism of the Pope's October 1, 2000, canonization of 120 saints with ties to the country, many of whom had been killed during the Boxer Rebellion. The canonization, which occurred on the anniversary of the founding of the PRC, was seen by the Government as an affront. As disagreements between the Government and the Vatican intensified in 2000, there were reliable reports that the official Catholic seminary in Beijing forced most of its students to attend political training courses in lieu of theology courses. A number of Catholic seminarians who sided with the Vatican in the dispute have resigned in opposition. In addition, foreign teachers at the official Catholic seminary in Xian were forced to leave the country after the head of the seminary criticized the Government's position in its dispute with the Vatican. However, many Catholic teachers at other sites continued to work as teachers.

There are thriving Muslim communities in some areas, but government sensitivity to Muslim community concerns is varied. In areas where ethnic unrest has occurred, particularly among Central Asian Muslims (and especially the Uighurs) in Xinjiang, officials continue to restrict the building of mosques. However, in other areas, particularly in areas traditionally populated by the non-Central Asian Hui ethnic group, there is substantial religious building construction and renovation. After a series of violent incidents in Xinjiang beginning in 1997 and continuing into 2000, including reported bombings in Xinjiang and other parts of the country attributed to Uighur separatists, police crackdown on Muslim religious activity and places of worship accused of supporting separatism in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

Nevertheless, provincial-level Communist Party and Government officials also repeatedly called for stronger management of religious affairs and for the separation of religion from administrative matters. For example, the official Xinjiang Legal Daily newspaper reported in 2000 that in recent years a township in Bay (Baicheng) County had found cases of "religious interference" in judicial, marriage, and family planning matters. In response the authorities began conducting monthly political study sessions for religious personnel and the authorities began to more vigorously implement restrictions on the religious education of youths under the age of 18. In addition they required every mosque to record the numbers and names of those attending each day's activities. The official Xinjiang Daily newspaper reported in 2000 that Yining County had reviewed the activities of 420 mosques, and had implemented a system of linking ethnic minority cadres to mosques in order to improve vigilance against "illegal religious activities." The story reported that the county's persistent propaganda efforts had led a group of 24 women to shed their veils and

raise their level of “civilization.” The educational campaign reportedly also had led young ethnic couples who had married illegally in an Islamic betrothal ceremony to seek legal marriage certificates.

Tibetan Buddhists outside of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) generally appear to have growing freedom to practice their faith. Diplomats have seen pictures of a number of Tibetan religious figures, including the Dalai Lama, openly displayed in parts of Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu. Abbots and monks in those predominately Tibetan areas outside the TAR report they have greater freedom to worship and conduct religious training than their coreligionists within the TAR. However, in June 2001, Chinese authorities ordered thousands of monks and nuns to leave the Larung Gar monastic encampment (also known as the Serthar Tibetan Buddhist Institute), located in the Ganze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province. As monks and nuns left, many of their residences were destroyed to prevent them from returning to the site. As many as 7,000 monks and nuns, including approximately 1,000 Han Chinese, resided at Serthar, although the population grew to more than 10,000 during special teachings. Authorities have declared that only 1,400 will be allowed to remain after October 2001. The TIN reported that at the time of their expulsion, many monks and nuns were pressured to sign documents containing three points: a promise not to return, a denunciation of the Dalai Lama, and a commitment to follow official policies. Serthar founder Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, a charismatic and widely revered Buddhist teacher, is in poor health and partially blind. His whereabouts could not be confirmed by the end of the reporting period. (A discussion of government restrictions on Tibetan Buddhism in the TAR can be found in the Tibet annex to this report.)

In a growing number of areas, authorities have displayed increasing tolerance of religious practice by foreigners. Weekly services of the foreign Jewish community in Beijing have been held uninterrupted since 1995, and High Holy Day observances have been allowed for more than 15 years. The Shanghai Jewish community has received permission from authorities to hold services on several occasions, most recently in April 2001, in a historic Shanghai synagogue, which had been restored as a museum. Local authorities remain committed to allowing the use of the synagogue on a case-by-case basis for major holidays. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) meets regularly in a number of Chinese cities, but its membership is strictly limited to the expatriate community.

The authorities permit officially sanctioned religious organizations to maintain international contacts that do not involve “foreign control.” What constitutes “control” is not defined. Regulations enacted in 1994, and expanded in September 2000, codified many existing rules involving foreigners, including a ban on proselytizing by foreigners. However, for the most part, the authorities allow foreign nationals to preach to other foreigners, bring in religious materials for personal use, and preach to Chinese citizens at churches, mosques, and temples at the invitation of registered religious organizations. Foreigners legally are barred from conducting missionary activities, but foreign Christians currently teaching English and other languages on college campuses openly profess their faith with minimum interference from authorities, as long as their proselytizing is low key. Many Christian groups throughout the country have developed close ties with local officials, in some cases operating schools and homes for the care of the aged. In addition, Buddhist-run private schools and orphanages in central China also offer professional training courses to teenagers and young adults.

The increase in the number of Christians in the country has resulted in a corresponding increase in the demand for Bibles. In 2000 one printing company, a joint venture with an overseas Christian organization, commemorated printing its 25 millionth Bible since its founding in 1987. The organization has printed Bibles in Braille and minority languages, such as Korean, Jingbo, Lisu, Lahu, Miao, and Yao. Although Bibles can be purchased at some bookstores, they are not readily available and cannot be ordered directly from publishing houses by individuals. However, they are available for purchase at most officially recognized churches, in which many house church members buy their Bibles without incident. Nonetheless some underground Christians hesitate to buy Bibles at official churches because such transactions sometimes involve receipts that identify the purchaser. Foreign experts confirm reports of chronic shortages of Bibles, mostly due to logistical problems in disseminating Bibles to rural areas. The situation has improved due to improved distribution channels, including to house churches. Customs officials continued to monitor for the “smuggling” of Bibles and other religious materials into the country. There have been credible reports that the authorities sometimes confiscate Bibles in raids on house churches.

The law does not prohibit religious believers from holding public office; however, most influential positions in government are reserved for Party members, and Com-

munist Party officials state that Party membership and religious belief are incompatible. Party membership also is required for almost all high-level positions in government and in state-owned businesses and organizations. The Communist Party reportedly has issued two circulars since 1995 ordering Party members not to adhere to religious beliefs and ordering the expulsion of Party members who belong to religious organizations, whether open or clandestine. High-ranking Communist Party officials, including President and CCP Party Secretary Jiang Zemin, also have stated that Party members cannot be religious adherents. For example, in October 2000, Wang Lequan, secretary of the Xinjiang Party Committee restated to Party members that “cadres at all levels should consciously adhere to Marxist atheism. Do not believe in religion, do not take part in religious activities.” Muslims allegedly have been fired from government posts for praying during working hours. The “Routine Service Regulations” of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) state explicitly that servicemen “may not take part in religious or superstitious activities.” In addition Party and PLA military personnel were expelled for adhering to the Falun Gong spiritual movement.

However, according to government officials, many local Communist Party officials engage in some kind of religious activity; in certain localities, up to 20 to 25 percent of Party officials engage in religious activities. Most officials who practice a religion are Buddhist or practice a folk religion. Religious figures, who are not members of the CCP, are included in national and local government organizations, usually to represent their constituency on cultural and educational matters. The National People’s Congress (NPC) includes several religious leaders, including Pagbalha Geleg Namgyai, a Tibetan “living Buddha,” who is a vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC. Religious groups also are represented in the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, a forum for “multiparty” cooperation and consultation led by the CCP, which advises the Government on policy.

The Government teaches atheism in schools. The participation of minors in religious education is prohibited by regulation. However, enforcement varies dramatically from region to region, and in some areas large numbers of young people attend religious services at both registered and unregistered places of worship. Official religious organizations administer local Bible schools, 54 Catholic and Protestant seminaries, 9 institutes to train imams and Islamic scholars, and institutes to train Buddhist monks. Students who attend these institutes must demonstrate “political reliability” and all graduates must pass an examination on their theological and political knowledge to qualify for the clergy. Some young Uighur Muslims study outside of the country in Muslim religious schools. The Government has stated that there are 10 colleges conducting Islamic higher education and 2 other Islamic schools in Xinjiang operating with government support.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

During the period covered by this report, unapproved religious and spiritual groups came under greater scrutiny and, in many cases, harsh repression—even as officially sanctioned and government-controlled religious activity largely went unaffected. Although there was no significant change in the central government’s official policy toward religious freedom, the unremitting campaign against Falun Gong and other “heretical cults,” plus frequent statements by senior leaders on the need to “strengthen religious work,” had an inevitable spillover effect.

Police killed a number of religious adherents. In December, six Hui Muslims were killed by members of Shandong’s paramilitary People’s Armed Police when they tried to march into Yangxin county to protest anti-Muslim activity there. Central government authorities reacted quickly, punishing several local officials and ordering a number of forums to discuss tolerance. Local Muslim leaders publicly expressed their appreciation for the Government’s intervention, but tensions remain high between Hui and non-Hui members of the community.

In some areas, security authorities used threats, demolition of unregistered property, extortion of “fines,” interrogation, detention, and at times beatings and torture to harass unofficial religious figures and followers. Authorities particularly targeted unofficial religious groups in Beijing and the provinces of Henan and Shandong, in which there are rapidly growing numbers of unregistered Protestants, and in Hebei, a center of unregistered Catholics.

Offenses related to membership in unapproved religious groups are classified as crimes of disturbing the social order. According to the Law Yearbook of China, arrests for disturbing the social order increased dramatically between 1998 and 1999, from 76,500 persons to over 90,000. Most experts agree that this the increase primarily was due to the Government’s crackdown, begun in mid-1999, on qigong groups like Falun Gong, evangelical Christian groups, and localized Buddhist groups such as the Society of Disciples (Mentu Hui) and the Guan Yin (Guanyin

Famin) sect, Protestant house churches, and the clandestine Roman Catholic Church. Leaders of unauthorized groups in particular often are the targets of harassment, interrogations, detention, and physical abuse. For example, in August 2000, police in Jiangsu arrested Shen Chang, the leader of a qigong group, and charged him with tax evasion and organizing gatherings aimed at disturbing social order. Religious groups that preach beliefs outside the bounds of officially approved doctrine (such as imminent coming of the Apocalypse, or holy war) or that have charismatic leaders often are singled out for particularly severe harassment. Some observers have attributed the unorthodox beliefs of some of these groups to under-trained clergy. Others acknowledge that some individuals may be exploiting the re-emergence of interest in religion for personal gain.

Some Protestant house church groups reported in mid-2000 that police raids of worship services and detentions were more frequent than in previous years. In early August 2000, police detained 31 members of an underground Protestant church in Hubei's Guangshui City. A week later, 12 members of an underground Protestant church in Henan were arrested. In late August 2000, police arrested 130 members of a house church headquartered in Fangcheng City, Henan, after they had held services with 3 American members of a Protestant fellowship organization.

Local authorities also use extrajudicial means to punish members of unregistered religious groups. Many religious detainees and prisoners were held. Citizens can be sentenced administratively by a nonjudicial panel of police and local authorities to up to 3 years in prison-like facilities called reeducation-through-labor camps. Qin Baocai and Mu Sheng, colleagues of Protestant house church leader Xu Yongze, continue to serve reeducation-through-labor sentences. The Government's 1997 White Paper on Religious Freedom stated that Xu had promoted a cult, preaching that the Apocalypse was near and asking worshipers to wait in public spaces for several consecutive days. Group members deny these allegations.

In Hebei where an estimated half of the country's Catholics reside, friction between unofficial Catholics and local authorities continued. Hebei authorities have been known to force many underground priests and believers to choose between joining the Patriotic Church or facing punishment such as fines, job loss, periodic detentions, and, in some cases, having their children barred from school. Some Catholics have been forced into hiding. The whereabouts of Roman Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin, whose followers reported that he was arrested in 1997, remained unclear, despite repeated inquiries from the international community on his status. Underground Catholic sources in Hebei claimed that he still was under detention, while the Government denied having taken "any coercive measures" against him. Reliable sources reported that Bishop An Shuxin, Bishop Zhang Weizhu, Father Cui Xing, and Father Wang Quanjun remained under detention in Hebei. According to several NGOs, a number of Catholic priests and lay leaders were beaten or otherwise abused during the period covered by this report. Underground Catholic Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang of Shanghai remained under surveillance and often had his movements restricted. Roman Catholic Bishop Zeng Jingmu, released from a labor camp in 1998, reportedly was arrested in Jiangxi in September 2000, although the Government denied those reports. The Authorities detained underground bishop Shi Enxiang on Palm Sunday in Beijing, although they later claimed that he had been released. On February 10, 2000, in Fuzhou, Fujian province, a large group of police arrested underground Catholic Bishop Yang Shudao. The Government denied that the elderly Bishop was being detained; in response to official inquiries, they stated that he was receiving medical treatment. By the end of the period covered by this report there had been no new information on his whereabouts or physical condition.

According to some reports, the Government intensified its harsh and comprehensive campaign against the Falun Gong during the early spring of 2001. Since the Government banned the Falun Gong in 1999, the practice of Falun Gong or possession of its literature has been sufficient grounds for practitioners to receive punishments ranging from loss of employment to imprisonment. Some Falun Gong members have been tortured in custody and some have died.

In July 1999, the Government officially declared Falun Gong illegal and began a nationwide repression of the movement. Throughout the country, tens of thousands of practitioners were rounded up and detained for several days—often in open stadiums under poor and overcrowded conditions, with inadequate food, water, and sanitary facilities. Many Falun Gong practitioners lost their jobs or were expelled from universities; Falun Gong practitioners continued to experience discrimination in job and educational opportunities. Falun Gong members who "disrupt public order" or distribute publications can be sentenced to three-seven years and leaders up to seven years or more in prison.

Although the vast majority of practitioners detained later were released, those identified by the Government as "core leaders" were singled out for particularly

harsh treatment. In August 2000, the Director of the Religious Affairs Bureau stated that 151 Falun Gong practitioners had been convicted of leaking state secrets, creating chaos, or other crimes. Although more than a dozen Falun Gong members have been sentenced to prison for the crime of “endangering state security,” the great majority of Falun Gong members convicted of crimes by Chinese courts since 1999 have been sentenced to prison for “organizing or using a sect to undermine the implementation of the law,” a less serious offense. Human rights organizations estimate that as many as 300 practitioners have been sentenced to prison terms of up to 18 years for their involvement in Falun Gong. According to the local press, in November several persons accused of printing and distributing Falun Gong literature were arrested in Chaoyan, Liaoning Province. However, the great majority of practitioners have been punished administratively. Although firm numbers are impossible to obtain, many thousands of individuals are serving sentences in reeducation-through-labor camps. Other practitioners have been sent to facilities specifically established to “rehabilitate” practitioners who refuse to recant their belief voluntarily.

According to the Falun Gong, hundreds of its practitioners have been confined to mental hospitals. There have been numerous credible reports of unrepentant Falun Gong practitioners being confined in psychiatric institutions.

Police often used excessive force when detaining peaceful Falun Gong protesters, including some who were elderly or who were accompanied by small children. During the period covered by this report, there were numerous credible reports of abuse and even killings of Falun Gong practitioners by the police and other security personnel, including police involvement in beatings, detention under extremely harsh conditions, and torture (including by electric shock and by having hands and feet shackled and linked with crossed steel chains). Various sources report that since 1997 approximately 100 or more Falun Gong adherents have died while in police custody; many of their bodies reportedly bore signs of severe beatings and/or torture. Others reportedly were cremated before relatives could examine them. Practitioners Li Zaiji and Wang Paisheng died in custody during the first 2 weeks of July 2000, according to one NGO. On June 16, several Falun Gong adherents died under mysterious circumstances at the Wanjila Labor Camp in Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province.

Falun Gong practitioners continued their efforts to overcome government attempts to restrict their right to free assembly, especially in Beijing. However, the number of protests by individuals or small groups of practitioners at Tiananmen Square decreased considerably during the period covered by this report. Demonstrations also continued throughout the country. Most protests were small and short-lived as expanded police units quickly and sometimes violently detained anyone who admitted to being, or appeared to be, a practitioner. Hundreds of Falun Gong practitioners were detained after peaceful protests in Tiananmen Square during the week of July 22, 2000, the anniversary of the Government’s ban on the group. Despite a heavy security presence, on October 1—the anniversary of the founding of the PRC—hundreds, and perhaps more than 1,000, peacefully-protesting practitioners again were arrested in Tiananmen Square, forcing a brief closure of the square. The Government later labeled Falun Gong a reactionary group attempting to subvert the State. On October 26, another mass protest marking the anniversary of the 1999 decision of the National People’s Congress to ban “cults,” including Falun Gong, was held at Tiananmen Square; more than 100 Falun Gong practitioners reportedly were detained. Many allegedly were beaten. Over the next few days, many more practitioners were arrested in Tiananmen Square.

According to press reports, after the January 23 self-immolations of five purported Falun Gong practitioners at a Communist Party work conference, the Government initiated a comprehensive effort to round up practitioners not already in custody, and sanctioned the use of high pressure indoctrination tactics against the group in an effort to force them to renounce Falun Gong. Neighborhood committees, state institutions (including universities), and companies reportedly were ordered to send all known Falun Gong practitioners to intensive anti-Falun Gong study sessions. Even practitioners who had not protested or made other public demonstrations of belief reportedly were forced to attend such classes. Those who refused to recant their beliefs after weeks of intensive anti-Falun Gong instruction reportedly were sent to reeducation-through-labor camps, where in some cases, beatings and torture were used to force them to recant their beliefs; some of the most active Falun Gong practitioners were sent directly to reeducation-through-labor camps. These tactics reportedly resulted in large numbers of practitioners pledging to renounce the movement.

Authorities also briefly detained foreign practitioners, although it remains unclear whether the authorities were aware that such persons were foreigners. For example,

on November 23, Falun Gong practitioner and U.S. resident Teng Chunyan was tried on charges of providing national security information to foreigners, reportedly for providing foreigners with information about the Government's campaign against Falun Gong. On December 12, she was sentenced to 3 years of reeducation-through-labor. Several foreign reporters also were detained briefly on April 25, after having taken photographs of police detaining Falun Gong demonstrators on Tiananmen Square. Foreign tourists routinely had their film and videotape confiscated after recording (often inadvertently) Falun Gong detentions.

The tactic used most frequently by the central government against Falun Gong practitioners has been to make local officials, family members, and employers of known practitioners responsible for preventing Falun Gong activities by individuals. In many cases, practitioners are subject to close scrutiny by local security personnel and their personal mobility is restricted tightly, particularly on days when the Government believes public protests are likely.

#### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The communities of the five official religions—Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Catholicism, and Protestantism—coexist without significant friction. However, in some parts of the country, there is a tense relationship between registered and unregistered Christian churches. There were reports of divisions within both the official Protestant church and the house church movement over issues of doctrine; in both the registered and unregistered Protestant churches there are conservative and more liberal groups. Credible reports indicated that senior officials at Protestant seminaries are attempting to purge their schools of younger professors sympathetic to more fundamentalist teachings. Defenders of the senior officials characterize the move as an attempt to maintain a more liberal and tolerant approach to church membership. Critics state that senior officials are out of touch with the majority of Chinese Protestants, who tend to be fundamentalist. In other areas, the two groups coexist without problems. In general the majority of the population shows little interest in the affairs of the religious minority beyond visiting temples during festivals or churches on Christmas Eve. Religious/ethnic minority groups such as Tibetans and Uighurs experience societal discrimination, but this is not based solely upon their religious beliefs. Traditionally there also has been tension occasionally between the Han and the Hui, a Muslim ethnic group.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Department of State, U.S. officials in Beijing, and the Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang make a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in the country, using both focused external pressure on abuses and support for positive trends within the country. In exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, diplomatic personnel consistently urge both central and local authorities to respect citizens' rights to religious freedom. U.S. officials protest vigorously whenever there are credible reports of religious harassment or discrimination in violation of international laws and standards; and request information in cases of alleged mistreatment in which the facts are incomplete or contradictory. At the same time, U.S. officials make the case to the country's leaders that freedom of religion can strengthen, not harm, the country. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates also collect information about abuses and maintain contacts in the country's religious communities with a wide spectrum of religious leaders, including bishops, priests, ministers of the official Christian churches, and Taoist, Muslim, and Buddhist leaders. U.S. officials also meet with leaders and members of the unofficial Christian churches. The Department of State's nongovernmental contacts include experts on religion in China, human rights organizations, and religious groups in the United States. The Department of State has sent a number of Chinese religious leaders and scholars to the U.S. on international visitor programs to see firsthand the role that religion plays in the U.S. The Embassy also brings experts on religion from the U.S. to the country to speak about the role of religion in American life and public policy.

In May 1999, the Chinese Government suspended the official U.S. China bilateral human rights dialog. However, in July, the U.S. and China agreed to resume this dialogue.



Nonetheless, government officials occasionally have refused to grant meetings to U.S. Embassy officials who intended to raise religious freedom or other human rights issues. In March government officials refused to meet with U.S. diplomats from the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom. The two diplomats visited the country anyway; however, the Government did not permit religious figures to meet with them. During the same month, members of the independent governmental agency International Religious Freedom Commission were denied visas to visit the country to meet with officials. Despite these limitations, U.S. officials in Washington and Beijing have continued to protest individual incidents of abuse. On numerous occasions, both the Department of State and the Embassy in Beijing protested government actions to curb freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, including the destruction of unregistered churches in Wenzhou, the arrests of Falun Gong followers, the crackdowns on Tibetan Buddhists and on Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, and the arrests of Christian ministers and believers. The lack of improvement in religious freedom in the country was a key factor in the U.S. decision to introduce, once again in 2001, a resolution critical of China's human rights record at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

In September 2000, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

## Tibet

*(This section of the report on China has been prepared pursuant to Section 536(b) of Public Law 103-236. The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)—hereinafter referred to as "Tibet"—to be part of the People's Republic of China. Preservation and development of Tibet's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage and protection of its people's fundamental human rights continue to be of concern.)*

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief; however, the Government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibet. Although the authorities permit some traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, they promptly and forcibly suppress those activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent, such as religious activities that are perceived as advocating Tibetan independence or any form of separatism (which the Chinese Government describes as "splittist").

The Government strictly controls access to and information about Tibet, and it is difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations. Nevertheless, repression of religious freedom in Tibet reached severe levels during the summer of 2000, with serious restrictions imposed on lay practices. However, these restrictions apparently were not enforced as strictly by the end of 2000. The overall level of repression in Tibet remained high, and the Government's record of respect for religious freedom remained poor during the period covered by this report.

In the aftermath of the "patriotic education" campaign begun in the mid-1990s, patriotic education activities continued but at a lower level of intensity as the Government declared "success" in increasing control over the Tibetan Buddhist establishment. However, many persons, including monks and nuns, were arrested for attempting to protest peacefully or for refusing to abide by rules imposed by government authorities in Buddhist monasteries. These rules include the renunciation of the Dalai Lama and the acceptance of Tibet as a part of China. Many other monks and nuns remain in detention, some serving long prison terms, for similar offenses. There were reports of the death of religious prisoners, as well as the imprisonment and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism.

Although the Christian population in Tibet is extremely small, there is societal pressure aimed at converts, some of whom reportedly have been disinherited by their families.

The U.S. Government continued to make a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibet, by urging the central government and local authorities to respect religious freedom, by protesting credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination, by discussing cases with the authorities, and by requesting information about specific incidents.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Tibet has a total land area of 471,700 square miles, and according to Government figures, its population is approximately 2.62 million. Most persons practice Tibetan Buddhism to some degree. Many ethnic Tibetan government officials and some eth-

nic Tibetan Communist Party members quietly practice Buddhism. While officials state that there is no Falun Gong activity in the TAR, reports indicate that there are small numbers of practitioners in the region among the ethnic Han population. Small numbers of Tibetan Muslims and Christians also live in the region.

Chinese officials state that Tibet has more than 46,300 Buddhist monks and nuns and approximately 1,787 monasteries, temples, and religious sites. Officials have used these same figures for several years, although the numbers of monks and nuns have dropped at many sites, especially since the beginning of the “patriotic education” campaign in the mid-1990s, which resulted in the expulsion from monasteries and nunneries of many monks and nuns who refused to denounce the Dalai Lama or who were found to be “politically unqualified” to be monks or nuns. These numbers represent only the Tibet Autonomous Region; over 100,000 monks and nuns live in other Tibetan areas of China, including parts of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai Provinces.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China provides for freedom of religious belief and the freedom not to believe; however, the Government seeks to restrict religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations and registered places of worship and to control the growth and scope of the activity of religious groups. The Government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibet. Although the authorities permit some traditional religious practices and public manifestations of belief, they promptly and forcibly suppress those activities viewed as vehicles for political dissent, such as religious activities that are perceived as advocating Tibetan independence or any form of separatism (which the Government describes as “splittist”). The authorities also regularly require monks and nuns to make statements overtly supporting government or party policies on religion and history, to pledge themselves to support officially approved religious leaders and reincarnations, and to denounce the Dalai Lama.

The Government continued its harsh rhetorical campaign against the Dalai Lama and his leadership of a “government-in-exile.” The official press continued to criticize vehemently the “Dalai clique,” and in an attempt to undermine the credibility of his religious authority, repeatedly described the Dalai Lama as a “criminal” who was determined to split China. Both the central government and local officials often insist that dialog with the Dalai Lama is essentially impossible, and claim that his actions belie his repeated public assurances that he does not advocate independence for Tibet. Nonetheless the Government asserts that the door to dialog and negotiation is open provided that the Dalai Lama publicly affirms that Tibet is an inseparable part of China. Since 1998, the Government also has required the Dalai Lama to affirm publicly that Taiwan is a province of China.

The Government claims that since 1976 it has contributed sums in excess of \$40 million (approximately 300 to 400 million RMB) toward the restoration of tens of thousands of Buddhist sites, which were destroyed before and during the Cultural Revolution. Government funding of restoration efforts ostensibly was done to support the practice of religion, but also was done in part to promote the development of tourism in Tibet. Most recent restoration efforts were funded privately, although several large religious sites also were receiving government support for reconstruction projects at the end of the period covered by this report.

### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Buddhist monasteries and pro-independence activism are closely associated in Tibet, and the Government has moved to curb the proliferation of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, which it charges are a drain on local resources and a conduit for political infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. The Government states that there are no limits on the number of monks in major monasteries, and that each monastery’s democratic management committee (DMC) decides on its own how many monks the monastery can support. However, these committees are government-controlled, and in practice, the authorities impose strict limits on the number of monks in major monasteries. The Government has the right to disapprove any individual’s application to take up religious orders, although these restrictions are not always enforced.

Monasteries continue to house and train young monks. Although by regulation monks are prohibited from joining a monastery prior to the age of 18, many younger boys in fact continue the tradition of entering monastic life. However, in some large monasteries young novices, who traditionally served as attendants to older monks while receiving a basic monastic education and awaiting formal ordination, have

been expelled in recent years for being underage. The fact that these novices were not regular members of the monasteries has allowed authorities to deny that there has been a significant decline in the numbers at those sites.

The Government continued to oversee the daily operations of major monasteries. The Government, which does not contribute to monasteries' operational funds, retains management control of the monasteries through the DMC's and the local religious affairs bureaus. In many areas, regulations restrict leadership of the DMC's to "patriotic and devoted" monks and nuns and specify that the Government must approve all members of the committees. At some major monasteries, government officials also sit on the committees. Despite these efforts to control the Buddhist clergy and monasteries, antigovernment sentiment remains strong.

In recent years, DMC's at several large monasteries have begun to collect all funds generated by sales of entrance tickets or donated by pilgrims. These funds previously were disbursed to monks engaged in full-time religious study for advanced religious degrees. Such "scholar monks" must now engage in income-generating activities at least part of the time. Several experts are concerned that fewer monks will be qualified to serve as teachers in the future as a result.

In the aftermath of the Government's "patriotic education" campaign, which began in the mid-1990s, patriotic education activities continued but at a lower level of intensity as the Government declared "success" in increasing control over the Tibetan Buddhist establishment. It did this by enforcing compliance with government regulations, and either cowing or weeding out monks and nuns who refuse to adopt the Party line and remain sympathetic to the Dalai Lama. During the period covered by this report, the Government continued to dispatch work teams to religious sites where they conducted mandatory lessons for monks and nuns. The work teams, which have been largely unsuccessful in changing Tibetans' attitudes, require monks to be "patriotic," and to demonstrate this by signing a declaration agreeing to reject independence for Tibet; rejecting Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama; rejecting and denouncing the Dalai Lama; recognizing the unity of China and Tibet; and not listening to the Voice of America or Radio Free Asia. According to some reports, monks who refused to sign were expelled from their monasteries and were not permitted to return home to work. Others were forced to leave their monasteries after failing to pass political exams associated with the campaigns, and still others left "voluntarily" rather than denounce the Dalai Lama. Monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists deeply resented the Government's efforts. Although there has been some reduction of patriotic education activities throughout the region, religious activities in many monasteries and nunneries were disrupted severely, and monks and nuns have fled to India to escape the campaigns. Approximately 3,000 Tibetans enter Nepal each year to escape conditions in Tibet, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees; one third of these refugees claim that they left because of the "patriotic reeducation" campaigns.

In June 2001, authorities ordered thousands of monks and nuns to leave the Larung Gar monastic encampment (also known as Serthar Tibetan Buddhist Institute), located in the Ganze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province. Of the more than 7,000 monks and nuns who resided at Serthar, only 1,400 will be allowed to remain after October 2001 (for more information about this incident, see Section II of the China International Religious Freedom Report).

After the Karmapa, the leader of Tibetan Buddhism's Karma Kargyu school and one of the most influential religious figures in Tibetan Buddhism, escaped to India in December 1999, authorities increased efforts to exert control over the process for finding and educating reincarnated lamas. The Government approved the selection of 2-year-old Sonam Phuntsog on January 16, 2000, as the seventh reincarnation of the Reting Rinpoche. However, the Dalai Lama, who normally must approve the selection of important religious figures such as the Reting Rinpoche, did not recognize the choice. Many of the monks at Reting Monastery reportedly did not accept the child as the Reting Rinpoche, and he now lives with his family under heavy guard in his residence near the monastery; authorities tightly controlled access to the area. Another young reincarnate lama, Pawo Rinpoche, also lives under house arrest at Nenang Monastery; Pawo Rinpoche, who is approximately seven years of age, was recognized by the Karmapa as the 18th reincarnation of an important Karma Kargyu lineage. He has been denied access to his religious tutors, and authorities reportedly are requiring that he attend a regular Chinese school. Foreigners, including foreign officials, were repeatedly denied permission to visit his monastery.

The Government continued to insist that Gyaltzen Norbu, the boy it selected in 1995, is the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation. The authorities tightly control all aspects of his life, and he has appeared publicly in Beijing and Tibet only on rare

occasions. His public appearances were marked by a heavy security presence. At all other times, the authorities strictly limited access to the boy. The Panchen Lama is Tibetan Buddhism's second most prominent figure, after the Dalai Lama.

The ban on the ownership or public display of photographs of the Dalai Lama continued, and such pictures were not readily available except through illegal means. In the spring of 2000, Lhasa area neighborhood committees began sending teams to the homes of ordinary citizens to confiscate books about and pictures of the Dalai Lama. By the end of 2000, these searches no longer were taking place on a regular basis, and a few pictures of the Dalai Lama were again seen in public areas. Similar bans were in effect in Tibetan areas outside the TAR, although by the spring of 2001 the Dalai Lama's portrait was reappearing in shops and religious sites in several regions. However, the Government still banned pictures of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama.

Some 1,000 religious figures hold positions in local people's congresses and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. However, the Government continues to insist that Communist Party members and senior government employees adhere to the Party's code of atheism. A 3-year drive to promote atheism and science, first announced in January 1999 and originally aimed at government workers, continued and was extended to more government offices and to schools. The drive was launched to promote economic progress, strengthen the struggle against separatism, and stem "the Dalai clique's reactionary infiltration." Government officials confirmed that all RAB officers are members of the Communist Party, and that Party members are required to be atheists. However, not all lower level members of the local RAB's are atheists.

During the spring and summer of 2000, in Lhasa and other areas, the authorities increased restrictions on religious activities, prohibiting Communist Party officials and government employees (including such groups as teachers and medical workers) from going into monasteries, visiting the Jokhang Temple, having altars in their homes, participating in religious activities during the Tibetan New Year (Losar), such as placing new prayer flags on their roofs, burning incense and making the traditional "lingkor" (pilgrimage circuit around the sacred sites of Lhasa during the festival of Sagadawa—the most important religious holiday in Tibetan Buddhism). In some areas, many private citizens were also pressured to comply with these restrictions. Some government employees were forbidden to make donations to monks and nuns in Lhasa. Authorities in some parts of Lhasa also searched private homes for religious objects or pictures of the Dalai Lama.

In February 2001, the Tibet Information Network (TIN), an independent news and research service, reported that government workers, cadres and schoolchildren were told to celebrate Losar at home and were not permitted to attend prayer festivals at the monasteries or make financial donations to temples or monasteries. However, despite the clampdown, many pilgrims and other Tibetans still made religious offerings at the main temples in Lhasa. In June 2001, the TIN also reported that Lhasa authorities issued a public notice reinforcing the ban on celebrations of the Dalai Lama's birthday. In recent years Tibetans have been forbidden to hold traditional incense-burning ceremonies anywhere in Lhasa, and some places of worship were closed on that day. Despite these reports, however, many private citizens and government officials were again participating in religious practices that had been banned six months earlier, such as visiting monasteries, making the "lingkor," and changing the prayer flags on the roofs of their homes during Losar.

Travel restrictions also were reported during the period covered by this report. The Government tightly controlled visits by foreign officials to religious sites, and official foreign delegations had few opportunities to meet monks and nuns not previously approved by the local authorities.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The Government strictly controls access to and information about Tibet, and it is difficult to determine accurately the scope of religious freedom violations. Nevertheless, repression of religious freedom in Tibet reached severe levels during the summer of 2000, with serious restrictions imposed on lay practices. However, these restrictions apparently were not enforced as strictly by the end of 2000. The overall level of repression in Tibet remained high, and the Government's record of respect for religious freedom remained poor during the period covered by this report.

According to the TIN, at least 26 monks and nuns have died while in detention since 1989, of whom at least 17 had been held in Lhasa's Drapchi Prison. During the period covered by this report, there were additional accounts of prisoner deaths, either while in detention or soon after release. According to unconfirmed reports, Lobsang Sherab, a monk from Sera Monastery, died soon after his release from Lhasa's Sitru detention center in the fall of 2000. He reportedly had been tortured

while in detention, and also was poorly treated when imprisoned in the Trisam re-education center from 1996 to 1998.

Ngawang Lochoe (or Dondrub Drolma), a nun at Sandrup Dolma Lhakang temple, reportedly died in February after serving 9 years of a 10 year sentence for counterrevolutionary propaganda and instigation.

In February 2001, the TIN published a comprehensive study that listed a total of 197 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns detained in China, a majority of whom were imprisoned in the TAR. In April 2000, the director of the TAR Prison Administration Bureau told a visiting foreign delegation that there were over 100 monks and nuns imprisoned in the TAR's three prisons, of whom 90 percent were incarcerated for "endangering state security." There were reports of imprisonment and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism. Prisoners who resisted political reeducation imposed by prison authorities, particularly demands to denounce the Dalai Lama and accept Gyaltzen Norbu, the boy recognized by the Government as the Panchen Lama, were beaten. The TIN reported severe beatings of several nuns serving long prison sentences, including Ngawang Choezom and Phuntsog Nyidrol, imprisoned in 1989 for singing pro-independence songs. Government officials stated that because Phuntsog Nyidrol has shown repentance, her sentence has been reduced by one year. She is scheduled to be released in 2005. Nun Ngawang Sangdrol also was beaten severely on multiple occasions and held in solitary confinement for an extended period. Her prison sentence was extended for a third time in 1998, for taking part in demonstrations in prison, to a total of 21 years. Ngawang Sangdrol's health continues to be of concern, despite government officials' assertions that her health is fine.

The Government continued to control the movements of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama, along with his family. He first disappeared in 1995 when he was six years old. Government officials have claimed that the boy is under government supervision for his own protection and that he lives in Tibet and attends classes as a "normal schoolboy." The location of Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his family remains unknown, and all requests from the international community for access to the boy to confirm his whereabouts and his well-being have been refused. In November 1999, the Government denied press reports that Gendun Choekyi Nyima had died and had been cremated secretly; however, the Government continued to refuse international observers access to the boy. In October 2000, Government officials showed members of a foreign delegation two photographs that purportedly depicted the boy. Although the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize the boy identified by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama, Tibetan monks have claimed that they were forced to sign statements pledging allegiance to the boy the Government selected. The Communist Party also urged its members to support the "official" Panchen Lama.

According to credible reports, Chadrel Rinpoche, who was accused by the Government of betraying state secrets while helping the Dalai Lama choose the incarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama, was imprisoned in a secret compound of a Sichuan prison in 1995. In 2000, the Government told a visiting foreign delegation that he was "fine physically." Chadrel Rinpoche's original prison sentence ended in May 2001, but he remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report.

Following the December 1999 flight of the Karmapa, Ugyen Trinley Dorje, to India, authorities restricted access to the Tsurphu Monastery, the seat of the Karmapa, and reportedly increased "patriotic education" activities there. In several public statements, the Karmapa stated that he left because of controls on his movements and the refusal either to allow him to go to India to be trained by his spiritual mentors or to allow his mentors to come to him. Following his flight, the TIN reported that at least two Tsurphu monks were arrested and that the Karmapa's parents were placed under surveillance. Government officials denied that there were any arrests or that the Karmapa's parents have faced restrictions of any kind. Nonetheless, in January 2001 the TIN reported that conditions at Tsurphu remain tense, with a permanent police presence and intensified restrictions on monks that appear to be aimed at discouraging them from following their spiritual teacher into exile. The TIN also reported that no new monks are being permitted to enter the monastery. In December 2000, foreign officials were allowed to visit the Tsurphu Monastery, where approximately 325 monks were said to be in residence. There were few other visitors at the time; however, religious activity was observed.

There were reports that a few practitioners of Falun Gong have been detained in Tibet since Falun Gong was banned in July 1999. The official press reported that steps were also taken to stop the practice of Zhong Gong among PLA troops stationed in the TAR.

*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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism. Although the Christian population in Tibet is extremely small, there is societal pressure aimed at converts, some of whom reportedly have been disinherited by their families.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu made a concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibet. In regular exchanges with the Government, including with religious affairs officials, U.S. diplomatic personnel consistently urged both central government and local authorities to respect religious freedom in Tibet. Embassy officials protested and sought further information on cases whenever there were credible reports of religious persecution or discrimination. U.S. diplomatic personnel stationed in the country also regularly applied for permission to travel to Tibet to monitor conditions, including the status of religious freedom; however, the authorities were increasingly unwilling to allow such travel during the period covered by this report. U.S. officials maintain contacts with a wide spectrum of religious figures, and the U.S. Department of State's nongovernmental contacts include experts on religion in Tibet and religious groups in the United States. The U.S. Embassy, including the Ambassador and other senior officers, raised the cases of religious prisoners and reports of religious persecution with government officials. Senior embassy officials met regularly with the head of the Religious Affairs Bureau and raised cases during those discussions; including those of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, Abbot Chadrel Rinpoche, Ngawang Sangdrol, and other Tibetan monks and nuns. Other embassy officers raised specific cases in meetings with officials from the State Council's Religious Affairs Bureau and the Party's United Front Work Department.

**Hong Kong**

The Basic Law (Hong Kong's mini-constitution) provides for freedom of religion, Hong Kong's Bill of Rights Ordinance prohibits religious discrimination, and the Government generally respects these provisions in practice. Although part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) since its July 1, 1997, reversion to PRC sovereignty, Hong Kong enjoys autonomy in the area of religious freedom under the "one country, two systems" concept that defines Hong Kong's relationship to the rest of China.

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 mainland Government and its representatives in Hong Kong opposed the activities of some Hong Kong religious and spiritual groups and individuals; however, Hong Kong authorities adhered to Hong Kong law and did not restrict those groups' activities. The Hong Kong Government's study of possible "anti-sect" legislation has raised concerns about possible Hong Kong Government action against the Falun Gong.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Six of the largest religious groups long have collaborated in a collegium on community affairs and make up a joint conference of religious leaders.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Consulate General officers meet regularly with religious leaders.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Hong Kong occupies 422 square miles on more than 200 islands and the mainland, and its population is approximately 6.8 million. Approximately 43 percent of the population participate in some form of religious practice. The two largest religions are Buddhism and Taoism. Approximately 5 percent of the population are Protestant, 4 percent are Roman Catholic, and 1 percent are Muslim. There also are small numbers of Hindus, Sikhs, and Jews. Falun Gong representatives in Hong Kong state that their practitioners number approximately 500.

There are 1,300 Protestant congregations representing 50 denominations. The Baptists are the largest Protestant denomination, followed by the Lutherans. Other major denominations include Seventh-Day Adventists, Anglicans, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of Christ in China, Methodist, Pentecostal and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

There are approximately 600 Buddhist and Taoist temples, approximately 800 Christian churches and chapels, 4 mosques, a Hindu temple, a Sikh temple, and a synagogue. The Catholic population is served by 337 priests, 89 monks, and 530 nuns with traditional links to the Pope. More than 290,000 children are enrolled in 322 Catholic schools and kindergartens. The Assistant Secretary General of the Federation of Asian Bishops' conference has his office in Hong Kong. Protestant churches run 3 colleges and over 700 schools. Religious leaders tend to focus primarily on local spiritual, educational, social, and medical needs. However, some religious leaders and communities maintain active contacts with their mainland and international counterparts. Catholic and Protestant clergy have been invited to give seminars on the mainland, to teach classes there, and to develop two-way student exchanges; however, some mainland students have had difficulty obtaining approval from PRC authorities to depart mainland China. Numerous foreign missionary groups operate in and out of Hong Kong.

There has been marked growth in the number of independent churches since the 1970's.

A wide range of faiths is represented in the government, the judiciary, and the civil service. A large number of influential non-Christians receive Christian education.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Basic Law (Hong Kong's mini-constitution, which spells out the "one country, two systems" concept) provides for freedom of religion, the Bill of Rights Ordinance prohibits religious discrimination by the Government, and the Government generally respects these provisions in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects religious freedom in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. Although part of the PRC since its July 1, 1997, reversion to PRC sovereignty, Hong Kong enjoys autonomy in the area of religious freedom under the "one country, two systems" concept that defines Hong Kong's relationship to the rest of China. The Government does not recognize a state religion, and a wide range of faiths is represented in the Government, the judiciary, and the civil service.

Religious groups are not required to register with the Government and are exempted specifically from the Societies Ordinance, which requires the registration of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). Catholics recognize the Pope as the head of the Catholic Church. The spiritual movement widely known as Falun Gong, which does not consider itself a religion, is registered, practices freely, and holds regular public demonstrations against PRC policies. For example, Falun Gong practitioners held an international conference in a government-owned facility in January, held a number of public protests during President Jiang Zemin's visit in May, and regularly organized public demonstrations outside PRC offices. Other qigong groups, including Zhong Gong (which was banned in the PRC in late 1999), Xiang Gong, and Yan Xin Qigong, also are registered and practice freely in Hong Kong. Another group allegedly listed as an "evil cult" by the PRC, the Taiwan-based Guan Yin Method, also is registered legally and practices freely as well.

The Home Affairs Bureau is responsible for religion-related policy, but functions basically as a contact point for liaison and exchange of views. If a religious group wants to purchase a site to construct a school or hospital, it works with the Lands Department; otherwise, church-affiliated schools work with the Education and Manpower Bureau and church-affiliated hospitals work with the Health and Welfare Bureau. Draft educational reforms still under public discussion would require management committees of government-subsidized schools, including religious-sponsored ones, to allow broader community participation. Some religious groups that run schools have expressed concern over a required reduction, from 100 to 60 percent, of the committee members who can be named by the sponsoring body, thereby reducing a church's control over a given school's management.

Representatives of 6 of the largest religious groups (Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, Roman Catholic, Muslim, and Anglican) comprise 40 members of the 800-member Election Committee, which chooses Hong Kong's Chief Executive and a number of Legislative Council members.

The Government grants public holidays to mark numerous special days on the traditional Chinese and Christian calendars, as well as Buddha's birthday.

Religious groups have a long history of cooperating with the Government on social welfare projects. For example, the Government often funds the operating costs of schools and hospitals built by religious groups.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Although under the Basic Law the PRC Government has no say over religious practices in Hong Kong, its leaders, official PRC representatives in Hong Kong and the two PRC-owned newspapers in Hong Kong have criticized some Hong Kong religious and other spiritual groups and individuals. One Basic Law provision calls for ties between Hong Kong religious organizations and their mainland counterparts to be based on “nonsubordination, noninterference and mutual respect.” Hong Kong religious leaders have noted that this provision could be used to limit such ties. In April 2000, mainland authorities reportedly accused a Hong Kong religious leader with violating this noninterference clause by criticizing mainland religious policies; since then, that leader has not been able to secure permission from PRC authorities to visit China. Many of the Hong Kong Catholic Church’s contacts and exchanges with its mainland counterparts in the official Catholic church remained on hold because of tight restrictions on religious groups imposed by the PRC government. However, the traditional ties of the Hong Kong Catholic Church to the Vatican have not precluded its contacts with the official Catholic Church in the PRC.

In September 2000, Hong Kong-based Chinese officials urged Hong Kong’s Catholic Church to keep “low key” its celebrations of the October 1 canonization by the Pope of 120 foreign missionaries and Chinese Catholics who had been martyred in China. However, the Hong Kong Catholic Church stated that it would not alter its fairly extensive plans to mark the occasion.

Although Falun Gong remains free to practice, organize, and conduct public demonstrations, concern about pressure from mainland authorities and their supporters to limit the group’s activities increased during the period covered by this report. Articles critical of the group were published in PRC-owned Hong Kong newspapers. In December 2000 in Macau, PRC President Jiang Zemin stated that the Macau Government should not allow anyone to stage any activities in Macau against the Central Government or to split the country in any way; in his speech he made it clear that his comments applied equally to Hong Kong and Macau. The number of Falun Gong practitioners in Hong Kong is said to have dropped from around 1,000 to about 500 since the mainland crackdown began in mid-1999. Some Hong Kong publishing houses owned by mainland Chinese interests declined to continue publishing Falun Gong materials after the movement was banned on the mainland in July 1999, and some bookstores run by Chinese enterprises removed Falun Gong books from their shelves. In addition, Falun Gong organizers have reported reluctance on the part of some hotels, cultural centers, and other venues to lend or lease space for Falun Gong exhibitions or other activities. An international Falun Gong conference held at a Government-owned facility in January drew intense criticism by pro-PRC organizations.

Since the conference, there have been concerns about the possibility of the Hong Kong government taking action against the Falun Gong. Senior Hong Kong leaders have stated that the group is “no doubt an evil cult,” and stated that the Government would not let the Falun Gong “abuse Hong Kong’s freedoms and tolerance to affect public peace and order” in Hong Kong or in the mainland. Officials also have labeled the group “fanatical, superstitious, and devious.” In the period prior to President Jiang Zemin’s visit to Hong Kong for a major international business conference in May, the Hong Kong Government claimed that the local Falun Gong practitioners’ plan for demonstrations during the visit was “a deliberate move to undermine the relationship between Hong Kong and the central government.” The Hong Kong Government also barred entry into Hong Kong of approximately 100 Falun Gong practitioners, most of whom were from the United States, Australia, the UK and Taiwan. The Government cited undefined “security reasons” for the entry bans and denied that its actions were based on the individuals’ religious beliefs or membership in any particular organization. Nonetheless, several hundred local and foreign Falun Gong practitioners were allowed to demonstrate freely on numerous occasions and at numerous venues during President Jiang’s visit. Immediately following the May conference, concerns arose when press reports cited unnamed officials who claimed that the Hong Kong Government planned to propose “anti-cult” legislation. The Hong Kong Government confirmed that it was studying the possibility, but stated that it had “no plans at present” to introduce such legislation.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.



*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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are amicable; however, a few Hong Kong Buddhist leaders and one evangelical Christian leader have issued statements critical of Falun Gong and warned against the danger of "cults."

Two ecumenical bodies facilitate cooperative work among the Protestant churches and encourage local Christians to play an active part in society. Six of the largest religious groups (Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Muslim) long have collaborated in a collegium on community affairs and make up the joint conference of religious leaders.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Consulate General officers at all levels have made clear U.S. Government interests in the full protection and maintenance of freedom of religion, conscience, expression, and association. Consulate General officers meet regularly with religious leaders and community representatives.

**Macau**

On December 20, 1999, Macau reverted from Portuguese to Chinese administration (the handover) and became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) with a high degree of autonomy. The Basic Law (mini-constitution) and 1998 Religious Freedom Ordinance provide for freedom of religion and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religious practice, and the Macau SAR Government generally respects these rights in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. While in general the Government does not interfere with the practices of Falun Gong, a spiritual movement that does not consider itself a religion, police harassed some practitioners in public parks during the period covered by this report. During the handover anniversary ceremonies in December 2000, police prevented foreign (i.e. non-Macau), practitioners of Falun Gong from entering Macau.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. American officials assigned to the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong, which has responsibility for covering Macau, meet regularly with Macau religious leaders.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Macau, on the south China coast, has a total area of 13 square miles and its population is approximately 450,000. According to 1996 census figures, of the more than 355,000 persons surveyed, 60.9 percent had no religious affiliation, 16.8 percent were Buddhist, 6.7 percent were Roman Catholic, 1.7 percent were Protestant, and 13.9 percent were "other" (a combination of Buddhists, Taoists, and followers of Confucianism). The number of active Falun Gong practitioners declined from approximately 100 persons to about 20 after the movement was banned in the PRC in July 1999.

Members of the Government, the judiciary, and the civil service belong to a wide range of faiths.

Missionaries are active in Macau, and represent a wide range of faiths with a majority being Catholic.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

On December 20, 1999, Macau reverted from Portuguese to Chinese sovereignty and became a SAR of the PRC. The Basic Law—the mini-constitution—provides for freedom of conscience, freedom of religious belief, and freedom to preach and to con-

duct and participate in religious activities. The July 1998 Freedom of Religion Ordinance, which continued to apply after the handover, provides for freedom of religion, privacy of religious belief, freedom of religious assembly, freedom to hold religious processions, and freedom of religious education. The Macau SAR Government generally respects these rights in practice although there was at least one exception. There is no state religion.

The Religious Freedom Ordinance requires the registration of religious organizations. This is handled by the SAR's Identification Services Office. There have been no reports of discrimination in the registration process.

Missionaries are free to conduct missionary activities and are active in Macau. More than 30,000 children are enrolled in Catholic schools, and a large number of influential non-Christians have received a Christian education. Religious entities may use electronic media to preach.

The Freedom of Religion Ordinance stipulates that religious groups may maintain and develop relations with religious groups abroad.

The Catholic Church recognizes the Pope as the head of the Church. In April 2001, the Holy See appointed a coadjutor Bishop for the Macau diocese. Editorials in the local Catholic newspaper noted this as an example of the SAR's Government's independence and respect for religious freedom as provided for in the Basic Law.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Practitioners of Falun Gong have not applied for registration with the Identification Services Office because a Macau lawyer advised them that their application for registration would not be approved as the Falun Gong was banned in the PRC in July 1999. The Identification Services Office has not issued any instructions regarding the Falun Gong, and senior SAR Government officials have reaffirmed that local practitioners of Falun Gong may continue their legal activities without government interference.

According to Falun Gong practitioners, the group's materials, available for sale in two Macau stores before Falun Gong was banned on the mainland in July 1999, were removed from the shelves by store management. However, the Government has taken no action to limit their availability.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

During the period covered by this report, Falun Gong practitioners continued their daily exercises in public parks; however, they were subjected to periodic harassment by the police. Police photographed practitioners and occasionally checked their identification documents. On at least one occasion, the police took a practitioner to the police station to check his documents rather than conducting the check on site.

In December 2000, Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited Macau to celebrate the 1-year anniversary of Macau's return to Chinese sovereignty. During his visit, Jiang stated that the Macau Government should not allow anyone to stage any activities in Macau against the Central Government or to split the country in any way. Dozens of Falun Gong practitioners and democracy activists from Hong Kong, Australia and the United Kingdom were barred from entering the SAR during the visit. Macau authorities claimed that this was because they were planning to participate in an illegal demonstration. The Public Assembly Law grants Macau residents, but not foreigners or PRC nationals resident outside of Macau, the right to demonstrate. Police at the port of entry allegedly beat one Australian practitioner. A government investigation into the incident rejected allegations of police brutality, and the practitioner did not appeal the results. Local practitioners were allowed to demonstrate at a park about a mile from the anniversary celebrations in December 2000.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are amicable. Citizens generally are very tolerant of other religious views and practices. Public ceremonies and dedications often include prayers by both Christian and Buddhist groups.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Officers from the Consulate General in Hong Kong protested the harassment of Falun Gong practitioners in December 2000 and January 2001, stating that the ability of Falun Gong practitioners in Macau to practice without restriction is an important element of religious freedom, civil liberties and autonomy. Officers from the Consulate General in Hong Kong meet regularly with Macau religious leaders.

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**TAIWAN**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the authorities generally respect 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The American Institute in Taiwan discusses religious freedom issues with the authorities in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Taiwan is a group of islands with a total land area of approximately 13,800 square miles located in the Western Pacific Ocean off the east coast of mainland China. It has a population of approximately 22.5 million. While reliable statistics are not available, it can be estimated from registration statistics that of the population approximately 22 percent are Buddhist; 22 percent are Taoist; 4 percent follow I Kuan Tao; 2 percent are Protestants; 1.5 percent are Roman Catholics; 1 percent follow Tien Li Chao (Heaven Reason Religion); 1 percent follow Tien Ti Chiao (Heaven Emperor Religion); 1 percent follow Tien Te Chiao (Heaven Virtue Religion); 0.7 percent follow Li-ism; 0.6 percent follow Hsuan Yuan Chiao (Yellow Emperor Religion); and 0.02 percent are Sunni Muslim. Statistics are not available for other religious groups present in Taiwan including Confucianism, Ta I Chao (Great Changes Religion), and Hai Tzu Chiao (Innocent Child Religion). It also has been estimated by knowledgeable observers that almost 14 percent of the population are atheist. Among the Protestants, the following denominations are represented among the population: Presbyterians; True Jesus; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons); Baptists; Lutherans; Seventh-Day Adventists; Episcopalians; and Jehovah's Witnesses. There also are small numbers of adherents of Judaism, the Baha'i Faith, and the Mahikari religion. More than 70 percent of the indigenous population are Christian. The majority of religious adherents either are Buddhist or Taoist, but a large percentage consider themselves both Buddhist and Taoist. Approximately 50 percent of the population regularly participates in some form of organized religious practice.

In addition to practicing another religion, many persons also follow a collection of beliefs that are deeply ingrained in Chinese culture, and which can be referred to as "traditional Chinese folk religion." These beliefs include, but are not limited to, shamanism, ancestor worship, magic, ghosts and other spirits, and aspects of animism. This folk religion may overlap with an individual's belief in Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, or other traditional Chinese religions. There also may be an overlap with the practitioners of Falun Gong, the numbers of which have grown rapidly during the period covered by this report to as many as 100,000. Observers have estimated that as many as 80 percent of the population believes in some form of traditional folk religion.

Religious beliefs cross political and geographical lines. Members of Taiwan's political leadership practice various faiths, including minority religions.

Foreign missionary groups are active in Taiwan, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses).

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the authorities generally respect this right in practice. The authorities at all levels generally protect this

right in full, and do not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Sixteen religious organizations have registered with the Ministry of the Interior, although registration is not mandatory. Religious organizations may register with the central authorities through their island-wide associations under the Temple Management Law, the Civic Organizations Law, or the chapter of the Civil Code that governs foundations and associations. While individual places of worship may register with local authorities, many choose not to register and operate as the personal property of their leaders. Registered organizations operate on a tax-free basis and are required to make annual reports of their financial operations. In the past, concern over abuse of tax-free privileges or other financial misdeeds occasionally prompted the authorities to deny registration to new religions whose doctrines were not clear, but there were no reports that the authorities sought to deny registration to new religions during the period covered by this report.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely.

The Ministry of the Interior promotes interfaith understanding among religious groups by sponsoring symposiums, or helping to defray the expenses of privately sponsored symposiums on religious issues.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The authorities' policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

Religious instruction is not permitted at the elementary, middle, or high school levels in public or private schools which have been accredited by the Ministry of Education. Religious organizations are permitted to operate schools, but religious instruction is not permitted in those schools if they have been accredited by the Ministry of Education. If the schools are not formally accredited by the Ministry of Education, then they may provide religious instruction. High schools may provide general courses in religious studies, and universities and research institutions have religious studies departments. Religious organizations operate theological seminaries.

There are no religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *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 authorities' refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### *Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom*

In July 2000, the authorities implemented legislation providing for a civilian alternative to military service for conscientious objectors. The law benefited members of the Watchtower Society and others who previously had been imprisoned for failing to follow orders while in military service. In December 2000, the President granted a special amnesty to, and released, 19 conscientious objectors who had been imprisoned for refusing military service on religious grounds.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious communities are generally amicable. The Taiwan Council for Religion and Peace, the China Religious Believers Association, and the Taiwan Religious Association are private organizations that promote greater understanding and tolerance among adherents of the different religions. These associations and various religious groups occasionally sponsor symposiums to promote mutual understanding.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The American Institute in Taiwan is in frequent contact with representatives of human rights organizations and occasionally meets with leaders of various religious communities.

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## EAST TIMOR

During the period covered by this report, East Timor was governed by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). Elections for a constituent assembly charged with producing East Timor's first constitution were scheduled for August 30, 2001; however, by the end of the period covered by this

report, the date of independence remained uncertain. UNTAET regulations provide for freedom of religion, and UNTAET generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and UNTAET's policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The Catholic Church is the dominant religious institution in East Timor. Attitudes toward the small Protestant and Muslim communities vary, given the previous association of these groups with the occupying Indonesian military forces.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with UNTAET in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

East Timor, which comprises approximately 5,406 square miles, shares the island of Timor with Indonesia's bordering Nusa Tenggara province. Based on the civil registration carried out by UNTAET from March to June 2001, the population of the territory was 739,652. According to the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, as many as 50,000 to 80,000 East Timorese remained across the border in West Timor by the end of the period covered by this report. The population of East Timor overwhelmingly is Catholic. According to statistics issued by the former Indonesian administration in 1992, approximately 90 percent of East Timorese were registered officially as Catholics, approximately 4.0 percent as Muslim, 3.0 percent as Protestant, and approximately 0.5 percent as Hindu. There are no figures available on the number of Buddhists in the country. However, the above statistics may not be completely accurate because under the Indonesian administration, every resident was required to register as an adherent to one of Indonesia's five recognized religions (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism). A significant percentage of those registered as Catholics probably were better described as animists, a category not recognized by the Indonesian government.

It is likely that the number of Protestants, Muslims, and Hindus has declined markedly since September 1999, since these groups were associated strongly with the prointegration side. The Indonesian military forces formerly stationed in East Timor included a significant number of Protestants in their ranks, who played a major role in establishing Protestant churches in the territory. Less than half of those congregations still existed after September 1999, and many East Timorese Protestants remained in West Timor at the end of the period covered by this report. East Timor also had a significant Muslim community during the Indonesian occupation, mostly comprised of ethnic Malay immigrants from Indonesian islands. Only a few hundred of these Muslims returned to East Timor following the September 1999 devastation after the vote for autonomy from Indonesia, and most of them reside at or in close proximity to the mosque in Dili. In addition there is a small community of East Timorese Muslims of Arabic descent that has been integrated well into East Timorese society since Portuguese times.

A small number of Christian missionary groups operate in the country.

#### SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

UNTAET regulations provide for freedom of religion and UNTAET generally respects this right in practice. The administration at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

UNTAET Regulation no. 1999/1 establishes the overall legal structure that protects religious freedom and all other human rights in the territory. Section Two of this regulation stipulates that all persons undertaking public duties or holding public office in East Timor shall observe internationally recognized human rights standards and adds that "they shall not discriminate against any person on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national community, property, birth or all other status." The provision specifically references the human rights standards reflected in a number of international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Until replaced by UNTAET regulations or subsequent legislation by democratically elected institutions of East Timor, the laws applied in East Timor prior to October 25, 1999, i.e., the Indonesian laws, remain in effect, insofar as they do not conflict with the observance of internationally recognized standards as outlined above. (The requirements of Indonesian law that each citizen be a member of one

of Indonesia's officially recognized religion does violate the freedom of religion provisions of the UDHR and the ICCPR, and thus no longer is applicable in East Timor.)

Catholicism is the dominant religion of East Timor and the list of designated public holidays reflects this, including Good Friday, Assumption Day, All Saint's Day, Day of the Immaculate Conception, and Christmas Day.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

UNTAET's policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion; however, there were no arrests in cases related to societal religious violence or attacks against churches and mosques (see Section III). UNTAET's ability to respond to such attacks was hindered by insufficient prison space and judicial and police resources. In addition UNTAET's tendency to encourage local reconciliation rather than punishing offenders was an additional factor behind its decision not to charge perpetrators of religious attacks.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *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 UNTAET's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The Catholic Church is the dominant religious institution in East Timor and its priests and bishops are accorded the highest respect in local society. Attitudes toward the small Protestant and Muslim communities vary, given the previous association of these groups with the occupying Indonesian forces. Resentment of Muslims is based on ethnic and economic differences, in addition to the religion.

In March 2001, a mob burned the mosque in Baucau during a wave of general unrest and destruction in that city. It was believed that residents might have targeted the mosque as a result of local animosity toward a Jordanian Rapid Reaction Unit based nearby. On December 31, 2000, local gangs attacked and vandalized the area around the mosque that harbors Dili's small Malay Muslim community, injuring three persons. The mosque members' resistance to the gang's demand for a car apparently precipitated the violence.

At times Protestants also have been harassed; however, during the period covered by this report, there were no further attacks on Protestant churches such as those that occurred in June 2000, in Aileu district.

A lack of prison space, inadequate judicial and police resources, and a tendency to encourage local reconciliation rather than punishment of offenders were factors behind the decision of UNTAET authorities not to charge perpetrators of violence or attacks on churches and mosques (see Section II). In the case of the June 2000 Aileu incidents, the authorities and local churchmen promoted reconciliation between the local Protestant and Catholic communities, and the local Catholic Church took the lead in a project to rebuild three destroyed Protestant churches.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discussed religious freedom issues with UNTAET in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

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## FIJI

The 1997 Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the caretaker Government generally respected this right in practice. In February 2001, the Court of Appeals found that the Constitution remains in force, despite its purported abrogation by insurgent forces in mid-2000.

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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country consists of over 300 islands, 100 of which are inhabited, with most of the population concentrated on the main island of Viti Levu. The country's total land area is approximately 6,800 square miles, and its population is approximately 800,000 persons, according to information from the Bureau of Population in 2001. Among the three major religions, there are 449,482 Christians, 264,173 Hindus, and 54,323 Muslims. The largest Christian denomination is the Methodists, claiming 218,000 members. The Roman Catholic Church and Protestant denominations also have significant followings. The Methodist Church is supported by the majority of the country's chiefs and remains influential in the ethnic Fijian community, particularly in rural areas.

Religion runs largely along ethnic lines. The population is split largely between two main ethnic groups: Indigenous Fijians constitute approximately 51 percent, and Indo-Fijians constitute 44 percent. Most Indo-Fijians practice Hinduism; most indigenous Fijians follow Christianity. The European community is predominantly Christian. Other ethnic communities include Chinese and European persons.

The Hindu faith is predominant within the Indo-Fijian community. The Muslim (Sunni) minority makes up approximately 10 percent of the Indo-Fijian community. Both the Hindu and Muslim communities have a number of active religious and cultural organizations. There are a number of small cult-like organizations.

There are numerous Christian missionary organizations that are active nationally and regionally in social welfare, health, and education. Many major Christian denominations and notably the Methodist Church have missionaries in the country; they operate numerous religious schools, including colleges, which are not subsidized by the Government.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The 1997 Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the present caretaker Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse. There is no state religion, although the Methodist Church is working to establish a Christian state. Religious groups are not required to register. The Government does not restrict foreign clergy and missionary activity or other typical activities of religious organizations.

Major observances of all three major religions are celebrated as national holidays, including Christmas, Easter, Diwali, and Mohammed's birthday. The Government partly sponsors an annual ecumenical prayer festival.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion; however, the role of religion continues to be a political issue. Methodist Church authorities and allied political parties continue to work for the establishment of a Christian state. The Church has displayed strong nationalist sympathies, and a letter of support from the head of the Methodist Church, Reverend Tomasi Kanilagi, to George Speight, the leader of the May 19, 2000 armed takeover of Parliament, was made public in the press in June 2001. In the letter, Reverend Kanilagi publicly expressed his intention to use the Methodist Church as a forum under which to unite all ethnic Fijian political parties for the elections scheduled for August 2001. The meetings held for this purpose have not been subjected to the same stringent permit restrictions as other political gatherings. Those parties dominated by Indo-Fijians do not support the establishment of a Christian state and insist that church and state should remain separate.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

*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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While in general relations are cordial between the two major religious communities (Christian and Hindu), there were two incidents of vandalism directed against Hindu places of worship, in May and June 2001. The Hindu religious group Sanatan indicated that it believes that these attacks were isolated incidents and not indic-

ative of greater intolerance. A Muslim Indo-Fijian community exists within the Indo-Fijian community.

Civil society is heavily Christian, and the New Testament is quoted frequently in letters to newspaper editors. Christian religious sources have stated several times that their view on religious tolerance is that it is “not a matter of being Christian, but instead accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior.”

#### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy has disseminated public diplomacy materials related to political and religious freedom across a wide spectrum of society. The Embassy continued to make religious freedom an important part of its effort to promote democracy and human rights.

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### INDONESIA

The Constitution provides for religious freedom for members of officially recognized religions and belief in one supreme God, and the Government generally respects these provisions; however, there are some restrictions on certain types of religious activity and unrecognized religions. The law officially “embraces” five religions—Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism; however, on June 1, 2001, the Government lifted its remaining ban on the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and in January 2000, President Abdurrahman Wahid lifted the ban on the practice of Confucianism that had existed since 1967. While only these religions are recognized officially, the law also states that other religions are not forbidden.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Christians complained that it was difficult to obtain the necessary permits to build new churches or to expand existing churches. The Government failed to respond effectively to violence perpetrated and encouraged by radical groups claiming to represent certain religious views. Despite the Government’s reputation for promoting religious tolerance, the Government was not able to halt the sectarian violence or rein in religious extremism. Religious violence and the lack of an effective government response to punish perpetrators and prevent further attacks continued to lead to allegations that officials were complicit in some of the incidents or, at a minimum, allowed them to occur with impunity. In the Moluccas, where numerous churches were attacked, the Government only investigated a few cases thoroughly, and there were no reports that any perpetrators were punished.

Religious intolerance, especially on the part of extreme Muslims towards religious minorities, including Christians, increasingly was evident and became a matter of growing concern to many religious minority members and Muslim moderates. The violence included repeated attacks on entertainment centers in Jakarta by Islamic groups during the Muslim fasting month on the grounds that such centers promoted “vice” and violated Muslim values and law. The lack of religious tolerance continued to manifest itself in scores of violent incidents in the Moluccas, including forced conversions and killings of individuals because of their religious affiliations. There were credible reports that several hundred Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity in North Maluku in early 2000 and thousands of Christians were forced to convert to Islam in North Maluku and Maluku provinces during the period covered by this report and in previous reporting periods. Religious intolerance also manifested itself in numerous attacks on churches in various locations throughout the country, ranging from minor damage to total destruction. Mosques also were attacked in Maluku Province. While in the past the victims in the Moluccas conflict were equally divided between Christians and Muslims, most of the estimated 1,200 victims during the period covered by this report were Christian.

The United States discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. During the period covered by this report, the U.S. Government actively engaged with religious leaders and the Ministry of Religion and facilitated a number of interfaith seminars, dialogs, and workshops. These activities involved Indonesian government officials and civil society organizations and addressed mutual concerns, in particular, the forced conversions of Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas, and the importance of religious freedom and tolerance in a pluralistic society and democracy.



## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country is an archipelago of 17,000 islands covering a total area of approximately 1.8 million square miles (approximately 0.7 million miles are land mass) and its population is 203 million according to 2000 Indonesian census data. Two-thirds of the population resides on the island of Java. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had not yet released its 2000 census data on the breakdown of religious affiliations in the country, but according to the 1990 census, 87 percent of the population professed Islam, 6.0 percent were Protestant, 3.6 percent Catholic, 1.8 percent Hindu, 1.0 percent Buddhist, and 0.6 percent "other," which includes traditional indigenous religions, other Christian groups, and Judaism. There is evidence that suggests that since 1990—and particularly with the recent lifting of restrictions on such faiths as Confucianism—the number of persons professing a religion other than Islam or Christianity may have increased slightly. There is no information available on the number of atheists in the country; however, the numbers are believed to be minuscule.

Muslims are the majority population in most regions of Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, West Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, and North Maluku and they constitute over one-half of Maluku Province's population. Muslims are distinct minorities only in Irian Jaya/Papua, Bali, East Nusa Tenggara, and North Sulawesi. The vast majority of Muslims are Sunni, although there also are adherents of Shi'a, Sufi, Ahmadiyah, and other branches of Islam.

The mainstream Muslim community is roughly divided into two groups: urban "modernists" who closely adhere to orthodox Sunni theology; and rural, predominantly Javanese "traditionalists" who incorporate elements of Javanese mysticism, Hinduism, and Buddhism into their practice of Islam. The "modernists," represented by the 35-million strong Muhammadiyah social organization, are the majority in Aceh, East and North Sumatra, East and South Kalimantan, and South and Central Sulawesi. The "traditionalists" are the majority in West, Central and East Java, and in West Nusa Tenggara/Lombok and are represented by the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) social organization, which has 40 million members. Muhammadiyah, but not NU, also is represented in East Nusa Tenggara and Irian Jaya/Papua.

There also are small numbers of messianic Islamic groups, including the Malaysian-affiliated Jamaah Salamulla (or Darul Arqam), and the Indonesian Jamaah Salamulla (or Salamulla Congregation). Darul Arqam companies operate in Riau and West Java Provinces and in Jakarta. Led by a woman who claims to have been appointed by the Angel Gabriel to lead the group, the Indonesian Salamulla Congregation has approximately 100 members. Amadiyah followers claim that their leader Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was an Indian Muslim prophet and that anyone can become a prophet. Amadiyah has 242 branches spread throughout much of the country; there are 8 Amadiyah mosques in Jakarta. There also are approximately 50 Shi'a groups in the country, since the fall of President Soeharto in May 1998.

Most Christians reside in the eastern part of the country. Roman Catholicism is predominant in East Nusa Tenggara Province and in southeast Maluku Province, while Protestantism is predominant in central Maluku Province and in North Maluku and in North Sulawesi Provinces. In the easternmost province of Irian Jaya/Papua, Protestants predominate in the north, and Catholics in the south. (This is due primarily to the Dutch policy—continued by the Indonesian Government—of dividing the territory between foreign Catholic and Protestant missionaries who remain active in many areas of Irian Jaya/Papua.) Other significant Christian populations are located in North Sumatra, the seat of the influential Batak Protestant Church, which in early 1999 reunited after a government-manipulated division in 1993. There also are significant Christian populations in West (mostly Catholic) and Central Kalimantan (mostly Protestant) and on Java. Many urban Sino-Indonesians adhere to Christian faiths or combine Christianity with Buddhism or Confucianism.

Over the past 3 decades, internal migration, both government-sponsored and spontaneous, has altered the demography of the country. In particular it has increased the percentage of Muslims in the heretofore predominantly Christian eastern part of the country. By the early 1990's, Christians became a minority for the first time in some areas of the Moluccas. Some Christians believe that the Government intentionally sought to alter the demographic balance of the eastern part of the country by resettling Muslims in the area and providing various subsidies for those who settled spontaneously. While government-sponsored transmigration of citizens from heavily populated Java, Madura and Bali to more sparsely populated areas of the country contributed to the increase in the Muslim population in the areas of resettlement, there is no evidence to suggest that creating a Muslim majority in Christian areas was the objective of this policy, and most Muslim migration was spontaneous.

Most Hindus live in Bali, where they form over 90 percent of the population. Balinese Hinduism has developed various local characteristics that distinguish it from Hinduism as practiced on the Indian subcontinent. There also is a significant Hindu minority (called Keharingan) in Central Kalimantan and East Kalimantan, East Java, Lampung (Sumatra), Medan (North Sumatra), South and Central Sulawesi, and Lombok (West Nusatenggara). Many of these Hindus left Bali for these areas as part of the Government's transmigration program. The Hindu Association Pansada Hindu Dharma estimates that approximately 4,000 Chinese Hindus reside in Medan. Hindu groups such as Hare Krishna also are present in the country. In addition there are some indigenous faiths, including the "Keharingan" in Central Kalimantan (site of the first Hindu Kingdom in the country) and the Naurus on Seram Island (Maluku Province). The Naurus practice a combination of Hindu and animist beliefs, and many also have adapted some Protestant principles. Several hundred Hare Krishna followers live in Bali.

Eight schools of Buddhism are practiced in the country: Mahayana, Buddhayana, Theravada, Tridharma, Tantrayana, Kasogatan, Nichiren, and Maitreya (a branch of Mahayana). Mahayana has the largest number of followers, followed by Theravada, and Tantrayana. Most, but not all, Buddhists are of ethnic Chinese origin. Like the Sino-Indonesian population, most Buddhists are located in or near major urban and trading centers, rather than rural areas. The largest Maitreya Buddhist temple in the country is on Batam Island, Riau Province (Sumatra).

There are two national-level Buddhist organizations in the country, one a splinter group from the other: WALUBI (the Indonesian Buddhist Council) is the older organization and has affiliates from all the schools but Buddhayana, while members of the organization KASI (Indonesian Great Sangha Conference) primarily are Buddhayana. Buddhayana is an Indonesian school that was created by a monk in 1956. It combines Mahayana, Theravada, and Tantrayana teachings. WALUBI followers celebrated the annual May Waisak festival at Borobudur temple in Yogyakarta (Central Java), while KASI members celebrated the holiday in Jakarta.

There are approximately 2.5 million adherents of Confucianism (also known as "Chinese religion" and "Konghucu") in the country, and while most are Sino-Indonesians, other citizens also practice Confucianism. According to the Supreme Council for Confucian Religion in Indonesia (MATAKIN) there are approximately 2 million followers in the country. The majority of Confucians are located on Java, Bangka Island, North Sumatra, North Sulawesi, West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, and North Maluku. Many Confucians also practice Buddhism and some Christianity. Before the ban on Confucianism was lifted in 2000 (see Section II), Confucian temples usually were located inside Buddhist temples.

Animism and other types of traditional belief systems, sometimes generically termed "Aliran Kepercayaan" (meaning beliefs) and "Kebatinan" (meaning spirituality), still are practiced in Central and East Java, Kalimantan, and in many of the eastern parts of the country, including isolated areas in Irian Jaya/Papua, the Moluccas, Flores, and Sumba. Many animists combine their beliefs with one of the recognized religions.

No verifiable data on the number of practicing Jehovah's Witnesses are available, although some leaders estimate that there are approximately 40,000 followers in the country spread throughout a number of provinces. Many adherents are Sino-Indonesians, but there also are followers from other ethnic groups, including Javanese, Dayak, and Batak.

There is a small population of citizens who practice Judaism. There is one synagogue, in Surabaya, East Java.

Falun Gong claims approximately 1,500 followers. Although most Indonesian followers are of Chinese descent, Falun Gong leaders claim that among their members are Muslims, Christians, and persons from other religious denominations.

There are no data available on the religious affiliations of foreign nationals and immigrants.

A limited number of foreign, primarily Christian, missionaries operate in predominantly Christian areas in regions such as Irian Jaya/Papua and Kalimantan.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion for members of officially recognized religions and belief in one supreme God, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, despite recent changes in Government regulations promoting freedom of religion, there are some restrictions on certain types of religious activity and on unrecognized religions. In addition the Government at times has tolerated society's abuse of religious freedom, claiming that it does not

have the capacity or authority to deal with the “emotions” of private individuals or groups who target others because of their beliefs. Article 29 of the country’s 1945 Constitution provides for religious freedom for members of officially recognized religions, in particular Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Presidential Decree No. 6, promulgated in January 2000, lifted legal restrictions on the practice of Confucianism that had existed since 1967; however, Confucianism does not enjoy the degree of freedom accorded to the other official religions. During the period covered by this report, the Government lifted its remaining ban on the Jehovah’s Witnesses (Attorney General Decision No. 255–06/2001), by revoking Attorney General Decision No. 129–12–1976, which had banned the group from openly practicing their faith.

While the law formally “embraces” only five officially recognized religions and to a more limited degree, Confucianism and Jehovah’s Witnesses, it explicitly states that other religions, including Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, and Taoism are not forbidden. The Government permits the practice of the mystical, traditional beliefs of “Aliran Kepercayaan” and “Kebatinan.” Some religious minorities—specifically the Baha’i and Rosicrucians—were given the freedom to organize by Presidential Decree 69/2000 (May 2000), which revoked Presidential Decree 264/1962 banning their activities. In 1998 the highest law-making body, the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR), adopted a Human Rights Charter that provides citizens the freedom to practice their religion and does not specify particular religions. Article 22 of the country’s 1999 Human Rights Law mandates that individuals are free to practice one’s religion, and provides that the Government will protect these freedoms. The law allows conversion between faiths, and such conversions do occur, although converts to minority religions feel constrained not to publicize the event. However, there is a legal requirement to adhere to the official state ideology, Pancasila; because the first tenet of Pancasila is belief in one supreme God, atheism is forbidden.

Although Islam is the religion of the vast majority of the population, the country is not an Islamic state. In the past 50 years fundamentalist Islamic groups sporadically have sought to establish an Islamic state (see Section III), but the country’s mainstream Muslim community continued to reject the idea. Proponents of an Islamic state argued unsuccessfully in 1945 and throughout the parliamentary democracy period of the 1950’s for the inclusion of language (the so-called “Jakarta Charter”) in the Constitution’s preamble making it obligatory for Muslims to follow the dictates of Shari’a. During the Soeharto regime, advocacy of an Islamic state was forbidden. With the loosening of restrictions on freedom of speech and religion that followed the fall of Soeharto in May 1998, proponents of the “Jakarta Charter” have resumed their advocacy efforts. Inclusion of the language became an issue during the August 2000 People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR) discussions of constitutional amendments. President Wahid voiced strong opposition to the proposal at the 2000 MPR session, arguing that its implementation would threaten national unity. Nevertheless, most government officials and parliamentarians are Muslim, and many have become increasingly responsive to their predominantly Muslim constituencies’ needs and interests. Furthermore much of the marriage and inheritance laws either are based on or compatible with Shari’a law. One Muslim interlocutor estimated that over 70 percent of these laws are derived from Shari’a principles.

Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism are the only religions that are registered officially with the Ministry of Religion, despite the lifting of bans on Confucianism and Jehovah’s Witnesses. While other religions are not banned, they only are able to register as social not religious organizations with the Ministry of Home Affairs. Followers of “Aliran Kepercayaan” must register with the Ministry of Education’s Department of National Education.

The registration and activities of official religions must be in compliance with a number of Ministry of Religion and other ministerial directives. Among these are the Regulation on Building Houses of Worship (Joint-Ministerial Decree No. 1/1969); the Guidelines for the Propagation of Religion (Ministerial Decision No. 70/1978); Overseas Aid to Religious Institutions in Indonesia (Ministerial Decision No. 20/1978); and Proselytizing Guidelines (No. 77/1978).

Religious groups and other social organizations must obtain permits to hold religious concerts and other types of public events. Permits usually are granted in an unbiased manner, unless there is concern that the activity could draw the anger of members of another faith who live in the area of the proposed venue.

According to the Government’s current 5-year Broad Outline of State Policy the central Government should: ensure all laws and regulations are in accordance with religious principles; increase religious harmony and interfaith dialog; encourage descriptive rather than dogmatic religious education; and increase the role and func-

tion of religious institutions to overcome the difficulties of social transition in the country and to strengthen interreligious and interethnic harmony.

New election laws permitted religiously oriented parties, predominantly those affiliated with Islam but also with Christianity, to participate in the June 1999 parliamentary elections, the first representative elections since 1955 judged to be free and fair. There are 15 political parties directly or partially affiliated with Islam: Islamic Development Party (KAMI); Islamic Members' Party (PU); People's Development Party (PKU); Masyumi Islamic Political Party (PPIM); New Masyumi Party (Masyumi Baru); United Development Party (PPP); 2 United Islamic parties (PSII); Crescent Star Party (PBB); Justice Party (PK); Nahdlatul Members Party (PNU); Unity Party (PP); Democratic Islamic Party (PID); National United Solidarity Party (PSUN); and the People's Development Party (PKB). The country has three Christian parties: KRISNA, or the National Indonesian Christian Party, Catholic Democratic Party (PKD), and the Democratic People's Devotion Party (PDKB). The members of the Buddhist group KASI have taken an interest in political participation and reportedly plan to form a party called the Buddhist Democratic Party of Indonesia (Partai Buddha Demokrat Indonesia). In the June 1999 elections the 3 Christian parties received relatively few votes, while the 15 Muslim parties together garnered approximately 30 percent of the vote. Of the Muslim parties, those with moderate views on the role of Islam in government and society dominated. Parties that strongly advocated an Islamization of government policy won a small percentage of the vote and few parliamentary seats.

All military major commands have religious facilities and programs for five official religions (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism). There are organized religious services and prayer meetings for each religion. Christians often have their own prayer groups that meet on Fridays, coinciding with the Muslim prayer day. In the past, there was a dedicated Religious Corps in the military, with all faiths represented, but it was eliminated during the Soeharto regime. Some officers are qualified as preachers and perform this function as a voluntary additional duty, but civilian religious leaders conduct most religious services on military posts.

Religious speeches are permitted if they are delivered to coreligionists and are not intended to convert persons of other faiths. However, televised religious programming is not restricted, and viewers can watch religious programs offered by any of the recognized faiths. In addition to many Muslim programs, ranging from religious instruction to talk shows on family issues, there also are a number of Christian programs, including televangelists, as well as programming by and for Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, and Hindus.

Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist holidays are celebrated as national holidays. Muslim holidays celebrated during the period covered by this report included: the Ascension of Muhammad (October 25); Idul Fitri (December 27 to 28); Idul Adah (March 5); the Muslim New Year (March 26); and Mohammed's Birthday (June 4). Nationally celebrated Christian holidays were Christmas Day, Good Friday (April 13), and the Ascension of Christ (May 24). Two other national holidays were the Hindu holiday, Nyepi (March 25) and the Buddhist holiday, Waisak (May 7). The Chinese New Year, celebrated by Confucians, is not a national holiday.

A number of government officials, as well as prominent religious and political leaders, were involved directly in, or supported, a number of interfaith groups, including the Society for Interreligious Dialog (MADIA), the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace (also ICRP), the Institute for Interfaith Dialog (Interfidei), and the Indonesian Peace Forum (FID), which was formed by political, religious, and grassroots leaders in response to the December 2000 Christmas Eve bombings and bombing attempts. President Wahid continued to emphasize harmony, tolerance, and mutual respect among different religious communities. Other highlevel officials made public statements and emphasized the importance of respect for religious diversity.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Some laws, policies, and actions continued to restrict and discriminate against the religious freedom of religious groups, at times including officially recognized groups, and the Government (i.e., the police) tolerated discrimination and abuse against religious groups by private actors.

On June 1, 2001, the Ministry of Justice revoked the 1976 decision by the Attorney General, reinforced by a separate decision by the same office in 1978, which banned Jehovah's Witnesses from practicing their faith. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Trinitarian Christians instigated the Government bans and that perhaps some mainstream Christian leaders have influenced government bias against the group. Jehovah's Witnesses report that they continued to experience difficulty registering marriages, enrolling children in school, and in other civil matters in some but not

all areas of the country. However, over the last few years, adherents have been able to obtain police permits to hold meetings in hotels and other public sites.

Historically the Government has tried to control Muslim groups whose practices deviate from mainstream Islamic beliefs because of pressure by nongovernmental leaders of mainstream Muslim groups and out of concern for national unity. In 1994 the Government banned the activities of the messianic Islamic group Darul Arqam; however, the Government has not enforced the ban, permitting the organization in practice to circumvent the ban by forming commercial companies, which distribute "halal" goods through food stalls and retail businesses. The Government has banned, in some provinces, the messianic Islamic group Darul Arqam and the Al-Ma'Unah school. The Government closely monitors Islamic groups considered to be deviating from orthodox tenets, and in the past has dissolved some groups. During the period covered by this report, the National Ulemas Council (MUI), which receives government recognition and funding for its activities, continued to oppose a small Islamic spiritual group, the Jamaah Salamulla (Salamulla Congregation) (see Section III). The Jamaah Salamulla believes in reincarnation, employs meditation, and resorts to self-flagellation and burning of the body to achieve spirituality. In May 2001, a mob vandalized the group's retreat in West Java (see Section III). The local village head had issued orders for group followers to vacate the area because their beliefs were "deviant," and they were disturbing the neighborhood.

The Ministry of Religion occasionally monitors the attendance of followers of minority faiths at their places of worship. In a few reported cases, Ministry officials asked the leaders of churches why their membership was low, suggesting that perhaps the church should close down if it had few members. However, many of the restrictions or bans on minority religions or on non-mainstream subsets of leading religions occurred at the provincial or district (kabupaten) level. In some cases, local religious organizations issued the bans on minority religions or groups (see Section III); however, the Government did nothing to challenge these bans. Some religious minority leaders expressed concern that the onset of decentralization and enhanced regional autonomy in the country, which will empower provincial and district governments, might result in issuance of regulations by local officials that could erode the right of minorities to practice their religions. For example, during the period covered by this report the Central Sulawesi branch of the National Ulemas Council (MUI), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) issued an edict banning Hare Krishna in the province. The chief public prosecutor's office in Bali issued a ruling in January 2001 that the local ban on Hare Krishna would remain in place because Hare Krishna practices "disturbed the peaceful lifestyle of Balinese Hindus" (see Section III). Some mainstream Balinese Hindus had lobbied the local public prosecutor's office to reinforce the ban on Hare Krishna.

Because the first tenet of the country's national doctrine, Pancasila, is the belief in one supreme God, atheism is forbidden; however, there were no reports of the persecution of atheists.

The Government prohibits proselytizing by recognized religions on the grounds that such activity, especially in areas heavily dominated by another recognized religion, potentially is disruptive. Ministry of Religion Decision No. 70/1978 (Proselytizing Guidelines) and the Guidelines for Proselytizing and Foreign Assistance to Indonesian Religious Organizations (No. 1/1979) forbid proselytizing by one recognized religion among the followers of another recognized religion. A 1979 Joint Ministry of Religion/Interior Decree (No. 1/1979) stipulates that the members of one religion are not allowed to try to convert members of other religions, including through bribes, persuasion, or distribution of religious materials (pamphlets, magazines, and other printed materials) to persons of other faiths. Door-to-door proselytizing to persons of other faiths also is proscribed. However, the law allows conversion between faiths, and such conversions do occur. Converts to religions other than Islam usually are silent about their change in faith, and there is no data on the numbers of conversions. Independent observers note that it has become increasingly difficult to obtain official recognition for interfaith marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims. Persons who are not members of one of the accepted religions also have difficulty in obtaining official recognition of their marriages.

Citizens must indicate their religion on the national identification cards; however, application of the regulation has been subject to local interpretation, and in some local areas, citizens must list one of the officially recognized religions regardless of whether or not they adhere to one of those religions. In other parts of the country where there are large Confucian populations, citizens can list their religion as Confucianism, and in parts of Java and Kalimantan, citizens can list "Aliran Kepercayaan" or "Kebatinan" as their faith. However, all citizens must specify a religion. It is obligatory to list a religion to receive a national identification card, and failure to identify a religion can make it impossible to obtain the identity card that

is required for employment. Marriage and birth registrations also require citizens to list their religion from among those officially recognized and native spiritual groups (including "Aliran Kepercayaan" and "Kebatinan"). In order to register the birth of a child, a parent must present a valid marriage certificate. As a result, adherents of nonrecognized religions have difficulty registering and obtaining marriage and birth certificates. Even though the Government lifted the ban on the practice of Confucianism in 2000, followers still have difficulties registering their marriages in many parts of the country. There are some interfaith groups that are lobbying to remove the requirement to list one's religion on national identification cards. However, many Muslim organizations oppose the change, arguing that it is important to know if a deceased person is Muslim in order to prepare the body for proper religious burial.

According to Guidelines on International Aid for Indonesian Religious Organizations (Ministry of Religion Decree No. 77/1978), foreign religious entities must obtain permission from the Ministry of Religion to provide any type of assistance (in-kind, personnel, and financial) to Indonesian religious groups. Although these guidelines are not enforced always, some Christian groups allege that when they are, they usually are applied to restrict the religious activities of minority groups, including Christians, and rarely are applied to Muslim groups, unless they are non-mainstream Islamic groups.

Since 1985 foreign missionaries must obtain work permit visas, and laws and decrees from the 1970's and 1980's limit the duration of the visas. These visas are difficult to obtain, as are visa extensions, although some extensions have been granted for remote areas like Irian Jaya/Papua. Ministerial Decision No. 49/1980 on Recommendations for Employment Applications of Foreign Religious Workers stipulates that all foreign religious workers must receive a recommendation from the Ministry of Religion (written by the Ministry's Legal and Human Resources Department and signed by the Ministry's Secretary General). To obtain ministry permission, the applicant must obtain and submit: a letter from his/her sponsor; a letter from the Indonesian Embassy in the applicant's country allowing the applicant to obtain a temporary stay visa (VBS); a curriculum vitae; evidence demonstrating that the applicant has skills that a citizen cannot offer; a letter of approval from the Ministry of Religion's provincial director; a letter of support from the Director General of the Ministry of Religion who handles matters concerning the applicant's religion; a letter from the receiving religious institution in the country confirming that the applicant will work no more than 2 years in the country before he/she will be replaced by a citizen, if one can be found; statistical information on the number of followers of the religion in the community; permission from regional security authorities; and approval from district and local Ministry of Religion authorities. Foreign missionaries who obtain visas are able to work relatively unimpeded, although there have been restrictions imposed in conflict areas such as Irian Jaya/Papua and the Moluccas. Foreign missionary work is subject to the funding stipulations of the Social Organizations Law.

There are no restrictions on religious publications, but the dissemination of these materials to persons of other faiths, especially by non-Muslims to Muslims, is not permitted under Ministry of Religion Decision No. 70/1978 and Joint Ministry of Religion/Ministry of Interior Decision No. 1/1979. Religious literature may be printed and religious symbols employed, but the public dissemination of these materials to persons of other faiths is not permitted according to Ministry of Religion Decision No. 70/1979. In previous years, the Government banned some books because of their religious content; however, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report.

The law does not discriminate against any religious group in employment, education, housing, and health; however, some minority groups allege that there is de facto discrimination that limits minority faith access to top government jobs and slots at public universities. Some minority groups also contend that promotion opportunities for non-Muslims in the military and the police are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. There also is pressure by Muslim groups to accord the best positions to Muslims, the majority group. Vocal segments of the Muslim community have called for a form of affirmative action for "Islamic" civil servants and businessmen to correct the discrimination against them during the Soeharto regime, when a very small minority of Sino-Indonesians were given preferential economic treatment, and many politically active Muslims (or Islamicists) were discriminated against in access to civil service employment and business opportunities.

Ethnoreligious representation in the general officer corps generally is proportional to the religious affiliation of the population at large; Javanese Muslims (the largest single ethnic group) dominate, but Christians are well represented in the general officer ranks (perhaps reflecting generally higher educational standards among the

Christian communities). However, promotion to the most senior ranks for Christians and other minorities is limited by a “glass ceiling.” Many Christian officers complain openly about this glass ceiling.

Government employees must swear their allegiance to the nation and to the country’s national ideology, Pancasila, the first tenet of which is the belief in one supreme God.

Elementary and secondary public schools require students to enroll in a religious studies class covering one of five official religions (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism). Students are free to choose which of these five religions to study, but enrollment is mandatory. Interdenominational courses are not offered, although some interfaith groups are lobbying for inclusion of this option in the educational curriculum. There still are no courses on Confucianism in the public schools.

The Ministry of Religion through a joint Ministerial Decree issued in 1969 restricts the building and expansion of houses of worship and prohibits the use of private dwellings for worship unless a license is obtained from the regional office of the Ministry of Religion and the community approves. This decree has been used to prohibit the construction and expansion of churches and to justify the closure of churches in predominantly Muslim areas. Although these regulations apply to all recognized religions, minority—especially Protestant—groups claim that the law is enforced only on minority groups, and that minority groups have difficulty obtaining the proper licenses and permits to build houses of worship. Christians claim that the law is not enforced on Muslim communities, which often do not apply for the permits before constructing a mosque. Even when the proper permits are obtained, some Christian groups encounter difficulties in constructing or reconstructing churches. For example, during the period covered by this report a Muslim mob attacked and destroyed a Pentecostal church that was under construction in North Jakarta, even though the church had all the required permits. The local authorities did nothing to redress the situation or resolve the problem, except to suggest that the church be relocated elsewhere. In November 2000, the director of the local government Social-Political Affairs (Kakansospol) office on Lombok Island ordered the closure of eight churches in Mataram on the grounds that the churches had not obtained the proper permits, and the activities of the churches disturbed the peace in what were predominantly Muslim neighborhoods. Another church in West Jakarta was closed and ordered to move under the written instruction of the Governor of West Jakarta during the period covered by this report. The governor claimed that the presence of the church had disturbed Muslim neighbors, and that a youth group from a nearby mosque opposed the idea of having the church so close to the mosque (see Section III). In some cases, even when the building or expansion permits were obtained, Muslim mobs attacked the church grounds, forcing the Christian worshippers to close their building project (see Section III).

President Wahid has supported the implementation of Shari’a (Islamic law) in Aceh Province. Law 44/1999 on Special Autonomy for Aceh gives Aceh authority to apply Shari’a law in the province to religion, education, culture, civil law, and policy-making spheres. At the end of the period covered by this report, more comprehensive legislation (Special Autonomy for Aceh Nanggroe Darussalam) was under consideration in the parliament, the People’s Representative Assembly (DPR). The bill would allow Aceh to establish a court system based on Shari’a law. Individuals sentenced under the new Acehnese Shari’a law would not have the right of appeal to the Supreme Court. The new law also would allow the Acehnese to restrict the freedom to choose one’s religion; for example, Muslims would be forbidden to convert. Extreme sanctions, such as the amputation of limbs, are not mentioned in the draft, and President Wahid has assured the public that these types of sanctions would not be practiced. However, some Muslim scholars argue that there is nothing in the draft legislation that would forbid the application of Shari’a punishments (hudud) to any crimes. The Government also has assured the public that Shari’a law would not apply to non-Muslims in Aceh, but debate in the DPR continues over whether Shari’a law would apply to all Acehnese residents, or only to Muslims.

In light of the Government’s decision to allow Aceh to apply aspects of Shari’a law and the implementation of national legislation granting greater regional autonomy (Law 22/1999 on Regional Autonomy and Presidential Decree 25/2000), a number of provincial parliaments were deliberating whether to impose Shari’a law in their provinces. In October 2000, Muslim leaders in South Sulawesi issued a statement that Muslims in the province were ready to accept Shari’a law, and they formed a committee (the KPPSI) to prepare for its implementation (see Section III). On April 24, 2001, the KPPSI issued the “Makassar Declaration” announcing the enactment of Shari’a law in South Sulawesi and forwarded the document to the DPR Chairman, Akbar Tandjung, for parliamentary consideration and approval. The declara-

tion was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. Provincial legislatures in Banten (Java), Gorontalo (Sulawesi), Maluku, North Maluku, Riau (Sumatra), and South Kalimantan provinces also were considering implementation of Shari'a. A number of Christians and Muslim moderates have expressed serious concern that these efforts to implement Shari'a foreshadow a growing Islamic fundamentalism.

Marriage law for Muslims is based on Shari'a (Islamic law) and allows men to have up to four wives if the husband is able to provide equally for each of them. Court permission and the consent of the first wife is required, but reportedly most women cannot refuse subsequent marriages. Cabinet officials and military personnel customarily have been forbidden from taking second wives, although reportedly a few ministers in President Wahid's Cabinet have second wives. During 2000 Government Regulation 10/1983, which stipulates that a male civil servant must receive the permission of his superior to take a second wife, came under considerable attack and renewed scrutiny. The Minister of State for Women's Empowerment, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, proposed that the regulation be revoked or modified, arguing that supervisors often use the regulation as leverage over subordinates, and that the regulation is an embarrassment to women. She also asserted that many men avoid the regulation by establishing illicit relationships. Other women, including First Lady Sinta Nuriyah Abdurrahman Wahid, opposed revoking the regulation, arguing that it protects women. Some women's groups urged the Government to ban polygyny altogether.

In divorce cases, women often bear a heavier evidentiary burden than men in obtaining a divorce, especially in the Islamic-based family court system. Divorced women rarely receive alimony, and there is no enforcement of alimony payment. According to Shari'a, a divorced wife is entitled to only 3 months of alimony, and even alimony for this brief period is not always granted.

In some areas of the Moluccas where Islamic militia groups (Laskar Jihad) are in control, freedom of religion is restricted. Laskar Jihad militants have forced Christians in some areas of the Moluccas either to convert to Islam, leave the area, or be executed.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Religious violence and the lack of an effective government response to punish perpetrators and prevent further attacks continued to lead to allegations that officials were complicit in some of the violence or, at a minimum, allowed it to occur with impunity. Although the President and other officials repeatedly have criticized instances of interreligious violence, the Government's efforts to end or reduce such violence generally continued to be ineffective. The Government at times has tolerated the abuse of freedom of religion, claiming that it does not have the capacity or authority to deal with the "emotions" of private individuals or groups who target others because of their beliefs.

According to credible reports, individual members of the security forces in the Moluccas, especially on the centrally located island of Ambon, were responsible for some of the shooting deaths that occurred during widespread riots and communal clashes throughout the period covered by this report (see Section III).

Witnesses testified to human rights groups of incidents when active duty and retired military personnel participated in or stood by during the torture or executions of Christians who refused to convert to Islam in the Moluccas. These incidents reportedly occurred during the period covered by this report in Ambon, Keswui, Buru, Seram and other parts of Maluku Province, as well as in February 2000 in Lata Lata, North Maluku Province. Witnesses and victims also testified to human rights organizations that active duty military and police officials stood by while members of one religious group raped or mutilated members of another faith. Mass forced conversions and circumcisions of Christians in the Moluccas occurred during the period covered by this report, and witnesses and victims alleged that active duty military and police personnel were present, but did nothing, during some of these incidents.

During the period covered by this report, there were reports of beatings of Christians by Muslim police officers and of Muslims by Christian police officers in Maluku Province. There also were reports of Muslim military personnel beating Christians in the Moluccas. For example, on October 16, 2000, in the Christian area of Susupu, Halmahera (North Maluku) the leader of the army unit stationed there allegedly hit a Christian leader in the head with a pistol, fired warning shots into the air, and threatened to kill him and other Christians if they did not cooperate with the security forces.

In the Moluccas, both Christians and Muslims alleged that police and military personnel were not always neutral and often sided with coreligionists in the com-



munal conflict. In Maluku Province, Christian sources continued to allege that Muslim security forces often would fail to intervene to protect Christian areas that were attacked by Muslim militia. For example, predominantly Muslim units dispatched from Java and Sulawesi allegedly sided with Muslim vigilantes and used excessive force against Christians. In other instances, Muslims claimed that Christian security forces would not defend Muslim areas attacked by Christian militia. Muslims in Ambon claimed that members of the predominantly Christian police force sided with their coreligionists. However, there was no evidence to suggest that the security forces, as an institution, supported either group. Some individuals and some units occasionally sided with their coreligionists, but their actions appeared to be random and contrary to orders. On January 21 and 22, 2001, a joint military/police force created to deal with “rogue” police officers and militia members clashed with Muslims in Ambon, killing 10 Muslims, including three Muslims that had attacked a military patrol; two police officers also were killed. Muslim leaders criticized the joint force for acting in response to pressure by domestic and foreign Christians. Several hundred police officers themselves have been attacked, and some were killed because of their religion; hundreds of police members and their families and numerous other government officials are among the country’s internally displaced persons (IDP’s).

From July to November 2000, the Government largely was ineffective in deterring interreligious violence that led to over 1,000 deaths, thousands of injuries, and tens of thousands of displaced persons in the Moluccas. Enforcement of the law against criminal violence deteriorated, encouraging religious groups purporting to uphold public morality to act with growing impunity. In some incidents security forces took sides in the conflict and participated in the violence; in others the forces stood by while Christian and Muslim civilians battled one another. According to many Christian leaders, the anti-Christian sentiment behind the violence in the Moluccas and elsewhere is not new (see Section III), but the failure of the Government to punish the perpetrators associated with such acts is new. They claim that such impunity has contributed significantly to the continuation and spread of the violence. However, starting in December 2000, the security forces in Ambon started to act more objectively, often stemming attacks by one militant religious group against a civilian population of another faith. However, perpetrators—Laskar Jihad members in particular—rarely were detained and when they were, they typically were released after supporters rallied in demand of their release and threatened police. In addition the Government failed to suppress or respond to most cases of violence and did not resolve fully the many cases of attacks on religious facilities that occurred during riots. In many cases, the Government did not investigate such incidents at all.

Despite the imposition of a state of civil emergency in June 2000 and promises to deport all non-resident provocateurs, the Government failed to halt the violence in Maluku Province, largely because of weak local government leadership and inter-service rivalry between elements of the security forces. In May and June 2001, there was renewed violence, incited by the continued presence and activity of armed militant Muslims from outside the province (see Section III). However, the situations in North Maluku and Central Sulawesi Provinces stabilized during the period covered by this report due in large part to effective local government leadership that enforced the ban on entry by outsiders and administered justice to the perpetrators. In February 2001, some Christians who had fled were resettled in their homes on Halmahera Island.

In February 2001, North Maluku Province authorities detained, questioned and then expelled three foreign Christian missionaries and several Muslim teachers of Pakistani nationality. The province was under a state of civil emergency at the time (and throughout the period covered by this report). The Governor required both foreign and domestic groups from outside the province to obtain prior permission to enter the province and forbade entry if he believed the presence of an outside group might trigger more sectarian violence.

In April 2001, local courts sentenced to death three Christian prisoners who were found guilty of killing hundreds of Muslims and inciting religious hatred in Poso, Central Sulawesi in May to June 2000. Confessions and evidence supported the prosecution’s case that the three prisoners, who were Christian militia leaders, were guilty; however, the prisoners and some of their supporters alleged that the trials were religiously motivated because while they were sentenced to death, Muslim militia who had killed Christians and been arrested were released from detention under pressure from Muslim groups. In May 2001, a man was arrested in Luwu, Central Sulawesi for attempting to bomb three Christian churches.

There were no reports that the Government was directly involved in the forced resettlement of individuals because of their religious affiliations; however, the Government did urge many Christian and Muslim IDP’s in the Moluccas to relocate

temporarily to designated IDP camps or other facilities. The Government's urging of IDP's to relocate to safer areas is standard policy and appears to have been driven by concerns for IDP safety and welfare. Victims and witnesses reported that some active duty and retired military and police stood by while militia groups forced non-coreligionists out of their communities if they were unwilling to convert. Most of the incidents involved Muslim militia expelling Christians; however, there also were some reports of Christian militia expelling Muslims from certain areas (on Halmahera Island, North Maluku, and on Saparua Island, Maluku).

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

The police made some effort to crack down on radical Islamic groups conducting sweeps and raids from October to December 2000 (see Section III). But police were reluctant to appear anti-Islamic and the efforts were halfhearted and largely ineffective. There were no reports of any of the perpetrators being tried for assault and vandalism, and most raids on nightspots went unchecked. Bowing to the sensitivities of a growing number of increasingly vocal Muslims, many city governments including Jakarta's, ordered night clubs, bars, and other entertainment centers to close down during the Ramadhan holy season from November to December 2000 as well as during other Muslim religious holidays.

The Laskar Jihad ("holy war troops"), which formed in 2000 and underwent paramilitary training, continued its crusade against the Moluccan Christian populations, allegedly in reaction to a Christian conspiracy to turn Maluku Province into an independent Christian nation. Many of its recruits, some of whom were children, were deployed to Maluku and North Maluku Provinces beginning in late April 2000, where they reportedly joined in fighting against Christians. The Government generally failed to prevent their activities.

In July 2000, the acting governor of North Maluku started expelling militant Laskar Jihad troops from the province. However, the governor of Maluku took no similar action, claiming that it was the responsibility of Jakarta to order the expulsion of the militants. A major factor contributing to the continuation of violence in these two provinces was the failure of the Government and security forces to bring the perpetrators to justice or to prevent (and then deport) several thousand armed Laskar Jihad militants from Java who had joined forces with Muslims in various parts of the two provinces (see Section III).

On May 5, 2001, the Laskar Jihad leader in Maluku Province accused the Indonesian National Police (INP) of detaining him under false charges when he was arrested for having ordered the execution by stoning of a member of the Laskar Jihad found guilty of rape and adultery. In his defense, he asserted that he was within his rights to follow Shari'a law, not national criminal law, in this case. The police rejected his defense and, as of June 30, 2001, were investigating the case.

On Christmas Eve 2000, unknown terrorists bombed or attempted to bomb 34 Christian churches in 10 cities in 8 provinces and special districts. Nineteen citizens died from the blasts, including Muslims guarding the churches, and 84 persons were injured. The Government formed a special interagency team to investigate the bombings, and the NGO Indonesian Forum for Peace (FID) formed a joint fact-finding team with the Government to investigate the Christmas Eve church bombings. On June 28, 2001, the Bandung District Court sentenced Agus Kurniawan to 9 years in prison for his role in the bombings. Another suspect also was on trial for involvement in the bombings at the end of the period covered by this report. President Wahid and various religious leaders publicly stated their belief that the coordinated bombings were politically, not religiously, motivated to destabilize the country and undermine Wahid's government and reform efforts.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion*

According to multiple sources, including direct testimony from victims and witnesses in early 2001, thousands of Christians underwent forced conversions in the Moluccas from December 1999 to January 2001. There also were several hundred Muslims forced to convert to Christianity in North Maluku and Maluku Provinces in early to mid-2000. President Wahid conceded in late December that hundreds of Christians on Keswui and Teor Islands in Maluku converted to Islam in November and December 2000 to save their lives. By February 2001, over 700 converts had been able to leave the 2 islands. There also have been credible reports of forced conversions occurring in other parts of Ambon/Maluku and North Maluku (see Section II). Estimates range from over 3,500 to 8,000 cases. Many of these conversions, especially those in North Maluku, occurred in early 2000; however, confirmation of the conversions was not available until late 2000 and early 2001. For example, on Keswui and Teor Islands in Maluku Province, hundreds of Christians converted to Islam in November and December 2000 under threat of execution. While most documented cases involve Christians who converted to Islam, there have been reports

of Muslims who were forced to convert to Christianity in Halmahera, North/Maluku (Lata Lata, Bacan). There is credible evidence that 200 to 800 Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity in the Moluccas. Many of these conversions occurred during the period covered by this report.

There were allegations that local government officials, largely village heads, were complicit in some of the mass conversions. The governor of Maluku Province argued that most persons only were “pressed” and not coerced to convert.

Christian IDPs from Keswui and Teor who had undergone conversion said in media interviews that Muslim militants ordered Christians to convert to Islam or face probable death at the hands of Muslim militias. According to these sources, Christians were forced into mosques and converted to Islam en masse. Both male and female converts later were forced to undergo circumcision to prove that they were genuine Muslims, despite the fact that Muslim women in the Moluccas were not customarily circumcised. The victims suffered considerable pain and some developed infections as a result of the forced circumcisions.

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### *Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom*

On June 1, 2001, the Government lifted the 24-year-old ban on Jehovah’s Witnesses; this step toward greater respect for religious freedom and diversity continued an earlier trend when, in the previous reporting period, the Government lifted the ban on Confucianism and the Baha’i Faith (see Section II).

In late 2000, the Falun Gong obtained a license to operate as a social organization in the country, and Falun Gong members practiced freely without government interference.

During the period covered by this report, Gadjadara University in Yogyakarta, with the assistance of other local universities and institutes, opened a graduate level program on comparative religion. Courses on Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism are taught. State-run institutes of Islamic religion offer undergraduate comparative religion programs, but most of the lecturers are Muslims.

Government officials took steps to address the deterioration of religious tolerance in the country and the rise in sectarian violence along religious lines. During the period covered by this report, Government officials and domestic NGO’s assisted the U.S. Embassy in bringing Moluccan Christian and Muslim victims of forced conversion to Jakarta to testify (see Section IV). Indonesian government officials also participated in a U.S. Embassy-sponsored digital videoconference on Religious Freedom in a Democracy.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious intolerance, especially on the part of extreme Muslims towards religious minorities, including Christians, increasingly was evident and became a matter of growing concern to many religious minority members and Muslim moderates. There was continued interreligious violence in the Moluccas, and religious intolerance also manifested itself in numerous attacks on churches in various locations throughout the country.

Citizens generally tend to identify themselves and to interact with others on the basis of ethnicity, religion, race, or social class, and civil society is in a very nascent stage. The country is a multiethnic, multireligious society that, historically, has experienced outbursts of religious intolerance and violence.

The economic crisis that began in mid-1997 and continued through the period covered by this report, severely affected millions of citizens, pushing many below the poverty line and reversing the gains of the newly emerging middle class. With the weakening of central leadership and control—Soeharto stepped down in May 1998—ethnically and religiously based communal conflict reemerged in the late 1990’s. In 1997 ethnic/religious conflict broke out in West Kalimantan, and the tempo of violence increased after 1998, breaking out and continuing in pockets all over the archipelago (e.g., the Moluccas, Java, Kalimantan, Sumatra, Lombok, Irian Jaya/Papua, and Sulawesi); this violence continued during the period covered by this report. Most of the violence was attributable to unaddressed grievances and frustration with arbitrary central government development and migration policies that had, in many areas, upset delicate ethnic and religious balances. In the absence of a healthy civil society and democratic culture to arbitrate differences peacefully, this frustration was provoked easily and often took the form of extrajudicial violence under the banner of an ethnic/religious crusade. Despite the Government’s general

religious tolerance, it was unable to stop the sectarian violence or rein in religious extremism, particularly for the Muslim majority.

In the Moluccas, over 1,500 persons were killed, half a million internally displaced, and thousands forced to convert to another faith, largely because of their religious affiliation. While the underlying causes of the conflict were attributable largely to unresolved grievances and resentment over the distribution of economic and political power between local residents and more recently arrived migrants, the competition quickly took on religious overtones and resulted in the segregation and displacement along religious lines of the population in both provinces. A major factor contributing to the continuation of violence in these two provinces was the failure of the Government and security forces to bring the perpetrators to justice, and to prevent the influx of or deport several thousand armed Muslim militants (Laskar Jihad) from Java who joined forces with Muslims in various parts of the two provinces (see Section II). The presence of these outside forces hindered local reconciliation efforts and peaceful resolution of the conflict. While in the previous reporting period, the victims were divided approximately equally between Christians and Muslims, most of the 1,500 victims during the period covered by this report were Christians.

The Government failed to halt the violence in Maluku Province. Religious violence and the lack of an effective government response to punish perpetrators and prevent further attacks led to allegations that officials were complicit in some of the incidents or, at a minimum, allowed them to occur with impunity (see Section II). In May and June 2001, there was renewed violence, particularly in the area of Poso in Central Sulawesi, which resulted in numerous deaths and widespread destruction. The violence was engendered by the continued presence and activity of armed militant Muslims from outside the province. However, the situations in North Maluku and Central Sulawesi Provinces stabilized by the end of the period covered by this report largely due to effective local government leadership (see Section II).

There were numerous attacks on churches and some attacks on mosques in various locations throughout the country, ranging from minor damage to total destruction; only a few cases, if any, were investigated thoroughly, and there were no reports of perpetrators being punished (see Section II). According to the Indonesian Christian Communication Forum, from January 1999 to April 2001, 327 churches were closed or destroyed, while the Ministry of Religion reports that 254 mosques were attacked or destroyed during the same period. Most of the attacks and destruction occurred in the Moluccas. From July 1, 2000 to May 31, 2001, there were 108 reported incidents of destruction of churches (compared to 163 incidents reported in the previous period) including 21 attacks on churches in Java; 20 in Sumatra, 10 in Lombok; 9 in South, Central, and Southeast Sulawesi; and 5 in North Sumatra (Medan).

In late May 2001, three churches in Pasuruan, East Java were attacked by mobs who allegedly were supporters of President Wahid and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Muslim organization. NU leaders and President Wahid denied that NU members were responsible and ordered the police to investigate. Authorities charged 2 persons with attacking churches and 132 persons with rioting.

Attacks on mosques in the conflict-torn Moluccas continued. The Maluku provincial government reported that four mosques had been attacked or destroyed during the period covered by this report, while the North Maluku provincial government reported no attacks on mosques during the same time period. On May 30, 2001, a mob of allegedly pro-President Wahid supporters associated with the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) torched a mosque associated with rival Muhammadiyah followers in Pasuruan, East Java. On May 22, 2001, a mob of 400 persons vandalized the retreat of Jamaah Salamulla (an Islamic group) in Bogor, West Java (see Section II).

Attacks on places of worship reflect religious intolerance, but other contributing factors include general underlying socioeconomic and political competition and tensions. Non-Muslims in general—and Sino-Indonesians in particular—tend to be economically better off than the majority of Muslims. Similarly in the Moluccas, Central Sulawesi, Irian Jaya/Papua and Kalimantan, economic tensions between local or native peoples (predominantly non-Muslim) and more recently arrived migrants (predominantly Muslim) were a significant factor in incidents of interreligious and interethnic violence.

Islam is undergoing a renaissance in the country, as evidenced by a growing number of religious schools (*pesantrens*), mosques, banks and other businesses, civic groups, media outlets, and political parties associated with Islam (see Section II). According to a 1999 study released by the U.S. Department of State in Fall 2000, approximately 75 percent of the country's Muslims wanted Islam to play a very large role in society and government policy, and 54 percent wanted religious leaders to become more politically active. There are 15 Islamic political parties; Muslims

continued to seek greater political empowerment and economic opportunity through these political parties as well as through religious organizations. The number of stores selling Islamic attire and religious objects increased greatly during the period covered by this report; more women donned the head covering, the "jilbab." Since the early 1990's, a growing number of Muslims have undertaken the Hajj. In 2001 approximately 205,000 persons (or 24,000 more than in 2000) made the pilgrimage, despite the continuing economic crisis in the country. The Islamic publication, *Sabili*, which advocates obligatory adherence of Muslims to Shari'a law, was one of the country's top five magazines in circulation during the period covered by this report.

In general Islam in the country traditionally has been moderate. According to leading Muslim scholars and leaders, the Muslim community still is predominantly (80 percent) moderate; however, with the removal of Soeharto-era restrictions on religious organization and expression, there has been a resurgence—or a greater vocalization—of advocacy for an Islamic state. An estimated 20 percent of the country's Muslims consider themselves to be fundamentalists and advocate establishment of an Islamic state, which would make it obligatory for Muslims to follow Shari'a law. The majority of these Muslims (16 to 18 percent) pursue their goal through peaceful political and educational means. A small, but vocal minority (2 to 4 percent) condones coercive measures and has resorted to violence. Fundamentalist groups advocating coercion and resorting to violence include: Laskar Jihad, Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Hizbullah Front, Laskar Mujahidan, and the Campus Association of Muslim Students (HAMMAS). Many of the country's religious minorities expressed growing concern over what they perceived to be increasing demands by certain Muslim groups to impose Shari'a law in the country; however, during the period covered by this report, a proposal to implement Islamic law failed (see Section II).

Anti-Christian sermons and publications continued during the period covered by this report. In the early part of 2000, a movement known as the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) emerged on university campuses in Java. There were sporadic reports from some Jakarta neighborhoods that student followers of the NII movement set up roadblocks, checked identification cards, and harassed passing non-Muslims, in some cases forcing them to recite passages from the Koran. Similar incidents occurred in Makassar, South Sulawesi. In October 2000, Muslim students attacked several hotels allegedly operating prostitution and gambling businesses in Riau Province.

In December 2000, over 500 armed Laskar Jihad militants attacked cafes in Solo and demanded that they close during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadhan. Also in December 2000, the Laskar Hizbullah raided a number of nightspots in an elite Jakarta neighborhood. In early May 2001, radical Muslim groups raided a number of bookshops in urban areas of Java and Sulawesi and destroyed books that they claimed had Communist content, even books whose authors criticized Communism. Protests from Islamic groups prompted a publisher to remove books by the religious philosopher Anand Krishna from bookstores. Extremist Muslim groups also targeted cultural events, including art exhibits, and homosexual gatherings.

Some radical Islamic groups established vice squads to monitor the behavior of other Muslims and to punish errant behavior. One such group, the Anti-Vice Mass Movement (GMAM) kidnaped and tortured two police officials in Makassar, South Sulawesi for the police officials' alleged involvement in gambling and prostitution activities. Non-Muslims also were the targets of violence. Roadblocks manned by Muslim morality squads who check the religious identities of passersby continued to operate in the Makassar area. There were reports of some non-Muslims being detained and beaten by these squads.

Political tensions among Muslim groups became more intense during the period covered by this report, in particular between the 2 largest Muslim social organizations, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which has 40 million members, and Muhammadiyah, which has 35 million members. NU is associated politically with President Wahid, its former chairman, while Muhammadiyah is associated politically with Amien Rais, a former chairman of the organization and now chairman of the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR). During the first 6 months of 2001, NU supporters, enraged by Rais' calls for the impeachment of Wahid, attacked and damaged Muhammadiyah offices and other properties, including a mosque frequented by Muhammadiyah followers, in Central and East Java.

Muslim student groups also are divided along political lines. The Muslim Students' Action Front (KAMMI), the Association of Islamic Students (HMI), and the Intercampus Muslim Student Association (HAMMAS) opposed President Wahid and

called for his removal or resignation. On the other hand, the Muslim Student's Movement (PMII), which is affiliated with NU, supported Wahid.

Some prominent Muslim interfaith organizations also were in part divided along political affiliations. Many of the Muslim members of the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace (ICRP) were affiliated with Muhammadiyah and some opposed the continuation of President Wahid's presidency, while many of the Muslim members of the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (also ICRP) were NU supporters and pro-President Wahid.

Many Muslim moderates worried that minority extremist groups potentially could force their will on the country's moderate Muslim majority and erode the country's religious harmony. In December 2000, more than 70 Muslim clerics and 17 NGO leaders issued a letter to the police calling the raids and sweepings of pubs, hotels, and amusement centers "intolerable acts" and giving their support to police efforts to stem the raids. A coalition of media, human rights groups, students, legal scholars and literary figures (the Alliance for Freedom of Thought and Expression) condemned the book seizures in May 2001. But only one Islamic organization, the Muhammadiyah Youth Association (IRM), joined the public condemnation. In May 2001, the Attorney General announced a government prohibition on sweeping operations, and the Minister of Religion noted that such operations conflicted with religious teachings.

Muslims are a religious minority in the easternmost province of Irian Jaya/Papua. The arrival in the province of mainly Muslim migrants from other parts of the country has in the past led to attacks on mosques; however, there were no reports of attacks on mosques in Irian Jaya/Papua during the period covered by this report.

Muslim and Christian observers expressed concern over what they believed was an increase in Christian fundamentalist groups in the country, some of which were influenced and partially funded by foreign groups from other countries. Some observers maintain that leaders of these "Charismatic" Christian groups were aggressive proselytizers, who did not respect the sensitivities of the country's Muslim majority. When radical Muslim groups alleged that there was a foreign Christian conspiracy to destabilize the country by attacking Muslims, moderate Muslim and Christian religious leaders and intellectuals claimed that they were referring to these groups.

Some extremist religious leaders—both Muslim and Christian—preached hatred against other religious groups and encouraged their followers to engage in violence against persons of other faiths. Speaking at mosques and on the radio, the Laskar Jihad leader stationed in Ambon/Maluku ordered Muslims to launch a Jihad against non-believers—Christians—and to kill them if need be. Other local Moluccan Muslim leaders threatened to kill Muslims who tried to make peace or do business with Christians. Some extreme Christian leaders reportedly encouraged their followers to use violence against Muslims. Both sides argued that they were acting out of self-defense, and that the opposing side had started the cycle of violence.

Members of the mainstream Hindu community, represented by the Pansada Hindu Dharma, reported no incidents where followers were discriminated against or harassed; however, some Hindus objected strongly to the use of sacred Hindu words and symbols in the secular world of advertising. In January 2001, the Peradah Hindu Youth Association lodged a formal complaint against a motorcycle company that had used the names Rama, Vishnu, and Krishna for their line of motorcycles.

Some mainstream Balinese Hindus opposed the presence of Hare Krishna in Bali and pressed the local public prosecutor's office to reinforce a local ban on Hare Krishna (see Section II). Hare Krishna followers strongly oppose the Balinese Hindu tradition of sacrificing meat during their ceremonies, one of a number of ritual differences between the two Hindu groups.

Members of the Baha'i Faith did not report major problems since the lifting of the ban on their religious practice (see Section II); however, in early May 2001, a crowd of Muslims reportedly ousted two Baha'i families living in a predominantly Muslim village in the Donggala District of Central Sulawesi. The local branch of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued a religious decree (fatwa) banning the spread of the Baha'i Faith in the district.

During the period covered by this report, there were a number of reports of killings of persons who practice traditional magic—"dukun santet"—based in part on indigenous pre-Islamic "Aliran Kepercayaan" and "Kebatinan" belief systems. Police acknowledged in November 2000 that at least 20 villagers in the Cianjur area of West Java had been executed for allegedly practicing traditional magic. Police arrested 20 persons suspected of involvement in the killings. However, none of the cases had come to trial by the end of the period covered by this report.

During the period covered by this report, interfaith organizations grew, and their activities enjoyed some media coverage. The Indonesian Peace Forum (FID) formed immediately following the December 24, 2000 church bombings, and brought together moderate leaders from all of the country's major religions. FID leaders, many of them prominent Muslims, deplored the attacks on the churches, called for a thorough government investigation, and formed their own investigative team. FID also sponsored a number of events to foster religious respect and end interreligious, ethnic, and separatist conflicts.

Other active interfaith groups include the Society for Interreligious Dialog (MADIA); the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP); the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace (also ICRP); the Institute for Interfaith Dialogue (Interfidei); and the Institute of Gender and Religious Studies. During the period covered by this report, these and other similar organizations hosted numerous national and regional seminars to promote interfaith dialog and religious tolerance. In November 2000, the two ICRP organizations announced plans to host an Asia-wide Conference on Religion and Peace. In December 2000, Interfidei held an interdenominational forum on Religion and National Integration in Yogyakarta, and in February 2001, the national chapter of the World Committee of Churches held an Interfaith Youth Conference in North Sulawesi. One of the Muslim panelists attributed the religious intolerance to the incorrect teaching of religion in the country.

#### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya and visiting State Department officials regularly engaged Indonesian government officials (particularly in the Ministry of Religion and the State Secretariat) on religious freedom issues and also encouraged officials from other embassies to discuss the subject with the Indonesian Government. U.S. Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya officials focused many of these discussions on the deterioration of religious freedom in the Moluccas. U.S. government officials expressed serious concern over the forced conversions of Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas and encouraged Indonesian government officials and Indonesian NGO leaders to hear the testimony of victims of forced conversion and to lobby to bring action against the perpetrators of such acts (see Section III). Some of these interventions appeared in local press accounts. The Embassy also voiced support for the Government's decision to lift its ban on Jehovah's Witnesses.

The U.S. Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), local NGO's, and others pressed Ambon/Maluku government officials to evacuate forced conversion victims from Teor and Keswui Islands in January 2001 (see Section II). Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya and USAID officials were partly successful in their encouragement of moderate Moluccan Muslims and Christians to seek ways—through the Baku Bae movement and other initiatives—to end the violence and to work jointly to rebuild the war-torn provinces.

U.S. Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya officials regularly met with religious leaders to discuss the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and to encourage interreligious efforts to mitigate the sectarian conflict in the Moluccas and to combat religious intolerance in many parts of the country.

U.S. Embassy and USAID officials worked with Indonesian and international NGO's to develop methods to mitigate religious conflict and to combat religious intolerance. The U.S. Embassy and USAID worked with Indonesian interfaith NGO's, such as the Society for Interreligious Dialog (MADIA), the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace (also ICRP), and the Institute for Interfaith Dialog (Interfidei). They also met with Indonesian and international human rights groups and with the National Human Rights Commission (KOMNASHAM) and its branch in Ambon in the Maluku Province.

The U.S. Embassy promoted religious tolerance through public affairs, exchange, and training programs and engagement with Indonesian officials and religious and NGO leaders. State Department and USAID funding was used to promote religious freedom, tolerance, and conflict resolution. U.S. Embassy/Consulate General Surabaya officials identified and assisted several Indonesians to testify on religious freedom before the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and advised the USCIRF of potential issues. The U.S. Embassy served as a liaison between the U.S. Government, Congress and Indonesian government officials on religious freedom issues and advocated U.S. government positions on areas of concern. In May 2001, over 170 Indonesians (government officials and NGO representatives) attended a U.S. Embassy-sponsored digital videoconference on Religious Freedom and Tolerance in a Democracy in May 2001. Religious freedom and tolerance also was one of the three themes addressed during the annual Fulbright seminar held

in May 2001 in Bali. The Embassy/U.S.-Indonesian Fulbright Foundation (AMINEF) provided expertise and equipment (a virtual library on comparative religion) to help establish the country's first graduate-level program on comparative religion at Gadjadara University in Yogyakarta (see Section II).

In late June 2001, the U.S. Embassy arranged for a U.S. speaker on religious freedom to visit Indonesia. The speaker participated in an interreligious conference in Jakarta and began teaching a 5-week course at Gadjadara University in Yogyakarta, which was ongoing at the end of the period, covered by this report. The U.S. Embassy also supported a conference on religious freedom in South Sulawesi from June 1 to 4, 2001. Indonesians participated in International Visitor and USAID programs related to religious and ethnic tolerance and conflict resolution. Two U.S. Fulbright scholars lectured and conducted research in comparative religion at Gadjadara University in Yogyakarta, Central Java and at the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) in Jakarta. The U.S. Embassy sponsored two workshops for domestic media on how to report on conflict and how to encourage conflict resolution. The U.S. Embassy and USAID also worked with The Asia Foundation and IAIN to develop a new course that will look at Indonesia's national doctrine, Pancasila; and will stress tolerance and respect for human rights. The U.S. Embassy funded the printing of 16,000 copies of the new textbook for the course.

USAID funded international and domestic NGO's promoting religious tolerance, conflict resolution, and truth and reconciliation. USAID and U.S. Embassy support for the Muslim-Christian Joint Committee on the Moluccas (Baku Bae) was instrumental in advancing grassroots efforts to mitigate the conflict and to find constructive solutions benefiting both religious communities. In March 2001, USAID also supported a 3-day conference on the Moluccas conflict in southeast Maluku province. Muslim and Christian grassroots, religious, and community leaders attended the meetings and agreed to take joint steps to end the sectarian violence in the region.

USAID and the U.S. Embassy supported local NGO and Indonesian government efforts to bring victims of forced conversions to Jakarta to testify before human rights organizations and Indonesian government officials. USAID-funded public service announcements promoting interfaith tolerance aired on major commercial and government television stations from January to March 2001. USAID also funded a number of interfaith conflict resolution workshops for journalists and religious and grassroots leaders to address the sectarian conflicts in the Moluccas and Central Sulawesi.

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## JAPAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some restrictions. The Aum Shinrikyo group, which lost its religious status following its 1995 Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system, remained under government surveillance.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 145,902 square miles. The population is an estimated 127 million. Regular participation in formal religious activities by the public is low, and the accurate determination of the proportions of adherents to specific religions is difficult. According to the latest statistics published by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, 44.8 percent of citizens adhered to Buddhism, 49.5 percent to Shintoism, 4.8 percent to so-called "new" religions, and 0.8 percent to Christianity in December 1999. However, Shintoism and Buddhism are not mutually exclusive religions, and the figures do not represent the ratio of actual practitioners; most members claim to observe both. All other faiths are classified as "new religions" and include both local chapters of international religions such as the Unification Church of Japan and the Church of Scientology as well as the Tenrikyo, Seichounoie, Sekai Kyusei Kyo, Perfect Liberty, and Risho Koseikai religions, which were founded in the country. A small segment of the population, mostly foreign-born residents, attend Orthodox, Jewish, and Islamic services.



There are 28 Buddhist sects recognized by the Government under the 1951 Religious Corporation Law. The major Buddhist sects are Tendai, Shingon, Joudo, Zen, Nichiren, and Nara. In addition to traditional Buddhist orders, there are a number of Buddhist lay organizations, including the Soka Gakkai, which has more than 8 million members. The three main schools of Shintoism are Jinja, Kyoha, and Shinkyoha. Among Christians, both Catholic and Protestant denominations enjoy modest followings.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government does not require that religious groups be registered or licensed; however, to receive official recognition as a religious organization, which brings tax benefits and other advantages, a group must register with local or national authorities as a "religious corporation." In response to Aum Shinrikyo terrorist attacks in 1995, a 1996 amendment to the Religious Corporation Law gives governmental authorities increased oversight of religious groups and requires greater disclosure of financial assets by religious corporations. The Diet enacted two additional laws in December 1999 aimed at regulating the activities of Aum Shinrikyo. In practice almost all religious groups register. The most recent available statistics from the Cultural Affairs Agency listed 182,935 registered religious groups as of December 31, 1999. However, the Cultural Affairs Agency estimates that nearly 5,000 of these groups are dormant and has taken legal action in an attempt to remove dormant groups from its registry. In 1998 the Matsuyama District Court ordered the dissolution of a registered Shinto religious group that had been dormant since 1982. Since 1998 courts have accepted requests by the Cultural Affairs Agency to dissolve three dormant religious bodies that had been registered under the Religious Corporation Law.

Some Buddhist and Shinto temples and shrines receive public support as national historic or cultural sites. This situation is subject to change in the aftermath of a 1997 Supreme Court ruling that a prefectural government may not contribute public funds to only one religious organization if the donations supported, encouraged, and promoted a specific religious group. In 1998 the Kochi District Court ruled that using municipal government funds to repair two Shinto shrines was tantamount to allocating public funds to one religious group and therefore was unconstitutional. However, no additional cases questioning the use of public funds in connection with a religious organization have been brought since 1998.

There are no known restrictions on proselytizing.

### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Aum Shinrikyo organization, which officially was renamed Aleph by its leadership in February 2000, is under active government surveillance. Aum Shinrikyo lost its legal status as a religious organization in 1996 following the indictment of several hundred cult members for the group's 1995 Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system. From June to November 2000, the Tokyo District Court sentenced five senior cult members to death and two others to life imprisonment in connection with the 1995 Sarin gas attack, as well as the 1989 killings of an Aum Shinrikyo member who attempted to leave the organization and a lawyer who had assisted several individuals who were trying to persuade their family members to leave the organization. Cases still are pending in district courts against seven other senior Aum members, including its leader Shoko Asahara. In March 2000, the Tokyo District Court ordered Aum/Aleph to pay \$640,000 (688 million yen) to survivors and next-of-kin to those killed in the attack. In July 2000, lawyers representing senior Aum Shinrikyo officials reached agreement to pay \$37.4 million (40 billion yen) in compensation.

In December 1999, the Diet enacted two laws to enable authorities to monitor and inspect facilities of groups found to have committed "indiscriminate mass murder during the past 10 years" and to uncover assets of companies associated with these groups. The new laws are subject to review, including possible repeal, in 2005. The Public Security Examination Commission placed Aum/Aleph under continuous surveillance for a 3-year period on January 31, 2000, on the basis of one of the two laws. The Public Security Investigative Agency conducted at least 19 on-site inspections of Aum/Aleph facilities around the country in connection with the surveillance order during the period covered by this report. According to an April 2001 Justice Ministry report, Aum/Aleph has an estimated 1,650 followers, a decrease from 10,000 in 1995. However, under the 1999 laws, Aum is required to file a report

every 3 months listing member names and addressees and claimed to have only 1,019 members in February 2001.

In September 2000, municipal officials from Saitama prefecture publicly revealed that they had taken action earlier in the year to reverse their decision to block two daughters of Aum founder Shoko Asahara from attending a local elementary school. However, in November 2000, the Supreme Court upheld a decision taken by Ibaraki prefecture to block the school registration of three other children of Asahara.

Members of the Unification Church continued to allege that police do not act in response to allegations of forced deprogramming of church members. They also claimed that police do not enforce the laws against kidnaping when the victim is held by family members and that Unification Church members are subjected to prolonged detention by individuals, who are not charged by police.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There generally are amicable relations between the various religious communities; however, there is some societal discrimination against followers of Aum Shinrikyo.

In April 2001, the Tokyo District Court sentenced a defendant to 6 years' penal servitude for firing shots into a Tokyo apartment building where followers of Aum Shinrikyo live. He reportedly remained in official custody at the end of the period covered by this report. At least four municipalities in which Aum facilities are active refused to register Aum group members as residents. Other communities continued to block the establishment of new Aum settlements or demand that Aum members leave their municipalities through protests and public appeals.

Members of the Unification Church alleged in June 1999 that police do not act in response to allegations of forced deprogramming of church members.

In May 2001, approximately 250 Muslims from various regions of the country traveled to Toyama prefecture to protest an incident in which a defaced copy of the Koran allegedly was thrown at a place of business owned by a Muslim foreign resident. Local police officials were investigating the incident at the end of the period covered by this report.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of the promotion of human rights, including the promotion of religious freedom internationally. The U.S. Embassy maintains periodic contact with representatives of religious organizations.

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## KIRIBATI

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Kiribati, an island state of approximately 265 square miles, has a population of approximately 90,000. Christianity was introduced widely into the area by missionaries in the nineteenth century. Major religions include: The Roman Catholic Church; the Kiribati Protestant Church (KPC), formerly the Congregational Church; Seventh-Day Adventists; the Baha'i Faith; and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Roman Catholics are the dominant Christian denomination and constitute an estimated 54 percent of the population; members of the KPC constitute an estimated 38 percent. Other religious groups each account for 1 to 2 percent of

the population. Persons with no religious preference account for about 5 percent of the population.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There is no state or politically dominant religion. The State does not favor a particular religion, nor are there separate categories for different religions.

### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Christianity, the religion of more than 90 percent of the population, is a dominant social and cultural force, but there are amicable relations between the country's various religions. Nonbelievers, who constitute a very small percentage of the residents, do not suffer discrimination. Virtually all governmental and social functions begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer delivered by an ordained minister, cleric, or church official.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

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## DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA<sup>1</sup>

The Constitution provides for "freedom of religious belief;" however, in practice the Government discourages organized religious activity, except that which is supervised by officially recognized groups. Genuine religious freedom does not exist.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The regime appears to have cracked down on unauthorized religious groups in recent years, and there have been unconfirmed reports of the killing of members of underground Christian churches. In addition religious persons who proselytize or who have ties to overseas evangelical groups operating across the border with China appear to have been arrested and subjected to harsh penalties, according to several unconfirmed reports. In the late 1980's, there was some easing of religious discrimination policies when the Government initiated a campaign highlighting President Kim Jong Il's "benevolent policies." Government sponsored religious groups that were established at that time continue to operate, and foreign religious leaders visited the country during the period covered by this report. The inter-Korean summit in mid-2000 led to an increase in contacts with the Republic of Korea; its impact on the religious freedom situation remains unclear.

There was no information available on societal attitudes toward religious freedom.

The U.S. Government does not have diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and information about the situation for religious freedom in the country is limited. The Government maintains tight and effective control on information on conditions in the country.

North Korea does not allow representatives of foreign governments, journalists, or other invited visitors the freedom of movement that would enable them to assess human rights conditions fully there. This report is based on information obtained over more than a decade, updated where possible by information drawn from recent interviews, reports, and other documentation. While limited in detail, this informa-

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<sup>1</sup>The United States does not have an embassy in North Korea. This report draws heavily on non-U.S. Government sources.

tion is nonetheless indicative of the religious freedom situation in North Korea today.

#### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 47,000 square miles, and the population is approximately 21 million. The number of religious believers is unknown but has been estimated at 10,000 Protestants, 10,000 Buddhists, and 4,000 Catholics. In addition the Chondogyo Young Friends Party, a government-sponsored group based on a traditional religious movement, is still in existence. There has been a limited revival of Buddhism with the translation and publication of Buddhist scriptures that had been carved on 80,000 wooden blocks and kept at an historic temple. In the late 1980's, the Government sent two Roman Catholic men to study religion in Rome. However, the two returned before being ordained priests, and it still is not known whether any Catholic priests, whose role is a fundamental element for the practice of the Catholic faith, remain in the country. Seoul Archbishop Nicholas Jin-Suk Cheong, appointed by the Pope as Apostolic Administrator of Pyongyang, was quoted in July 2000 as stating that while there were 50 priests in the country in the 1940's, it was not known if they still were alive in July 2000.

Two Protestant churches under lay leadership and a Roman Catholic church (without a priest) have been opened since 1988 in Pyongyang. One of the Protestant churches is dedicated to the memory of North Korean former leader Kim Il Sung's mother, Kang Pan Sok, who was a Presbyterian deacon. Several foreigners resident in Pyongyang attend Korean services at these churches on a regular basis. Although some foreigners who have visited the country over the years stated that church activity appears staged, others believe that church services are genuine, although sermons contain both religious and political content supportive of the regime. The Government claims, and visitors confirm, that there are more than 500 authorized "house churches." Hundreds of religious figures have visited the country in recent years, including papal representatives, the Reverend Billy Graham, and religious delegations from the Republic of Korea, the United States, and other countries. A Vatican delegation, including Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Vatican undersecretary for relations with states, visited the country in November 2000. The delegation reported a meeting with the Catholic community in Pyongyang, and a meeting with the leader of the Association of North Korean Catholics. Overseas religious relief organizations also have been active in responding to the country's food crisis. An overseas Buddhist group has been operating a factory in the Najin-Sonbong Free Trade Zone since 1998 to produce food for preschool children.

There are 300 Buddhist temples. Most of the temples are regarded as cultural relics, but in some of them religious activity is permitted.

There have been unconfirmed reports of members of underground Christian churches.

#### SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for "freedom of religious belief;" however, in practice the Government discourages organized religious activity, except that which is supervised by officially recognized groups. Genuine religious freedom does not exist. The Constitution also stipulates that religion "should not be used for purposes of dragging in foreign powers or endangering public security."

During and immediately after the Korean War of 1950-53, large numbers of religiously active persons were identified by the Government as "counterrevolutionaries," and many of them were killed or imprisoned in concentration camps. The peak of this oppression was in the early 1970's when a constitutional revision added a clause regarding "freedom of antireligious activity." The Government began to moderate its religious discrimination policies in the late 1980's, when it launched a campaign highlighting Kim Jong Il's "benevolent politics." As part of this campaign, the regime eased the system that it had instituted after a period of factional strife in the 1950's of classifying the population into dozens of rigidly defined categories according to family background and loyalty to the regime, and allowed the formation of several government-sponsored religious organizations. These organizations serve as interlocutors with foreign church groups and international aid organizations. Foreigners who have met with representatives of these organizations believe that some members are genuinely religious but note that others appear to know little about religious dogma or teaching. Although the organizations continue to operate and visits by foreign religious figures have increased, the Government appears to have suppressed unauthorized religious groups in recent

years. In particular, religious persons who proselytize or who have ties to overseas evangelical groups operating across the border with China appear to have been arrested and subjected to harsh penalties, according to several unconfirmed reports. The inter-Korean summit in mid-June 2000 led to an increase in contacts with persons in the Republic of Korea; its impact on religious freedom in North Korea remains unclear.

A constitutional change in 1992 deleted the clause about freedom of antireligious propaganda, authorized religious gatherings, and provided for "the right to build buildings for religious use."

Several schools for religious education exist. There are 3-year religious colleges for training Protestant and Buddhist clergy. A religious studies program also was established at Kim Il Sung University in 1989; its graduates usually go on to work in the foreign trade sector. A Protestant seminary was reopened in 2000 with assistance from foreign missionary groups; however, critics, which included at least one church official providing assistance, stated that the Government opened the seminary only to train personnel to facilitate reception of assistance funds from foreign faith-based nongovernmental organizations (NGO's).

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Persons engaging in religious proselytizing may be arrested and are subject to harsh penalties, including imprisonment and prolonged detention without charge. The Government appears concerned that religiously based South Korean relief and refugee assistance efforts along the northeast border with the People's Republic of China may become entwined with more political goals, including overthrow of the regime. The food crisis apparently has heightened government concern about antiregime activity. An article in the Korean Workers Party newspaper in 1999 criticized "imperialists and reactionaries" for trying to use ideological and cultural infiltration, including religion, to destroy socialism from within. South Korean law requires all parties, including religious groups, traveling to North Korea or contacting North Koreans to request permission from the South Korean security agency. This requirement increases suspicions among North Korean officials about the intentions of such groups.

Little is known about the actual life of religious persons in the country. Members of government-recognized religious groups do not appear to suffer discrimination; in fact, some reports claim that they have been mobilized by the regime. Persons whose parents were believers but who themselves are nonpracticing are able to rise to at least the middle levels of the bureaucracy, despite their family background. Such individuals, as a category, suffered broad discrimination in the past. Members of underground churches connected to border missionary activity appear to be regarded as subversive elements.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The Government deals harshly with all opponents, including those engaging in religious practices deemed unacceptable to the regime. In April 1999, witnesses testified on the treatment of persons held in prison camps through the early 1990's. The witnesses stated that prisoners held on the basis of their religious beliefs generally were treated worse than other inmates were. One witness, a former prison guard, testified that because the authorities taught that "all religions are opium," those believing in God were regarded as insane. He recounted an instance in which a woman was kicked repeatedly and left with her injuries unattended for days because a guard overheard her praying for a child who was being beaten. Because the country is a closed society, such allegations could not be substantiated.

Religious and human rights groups outside the country have provided numerous, unconfirmed reports that members of underground churches have been beaten, arrested, or killed because of their religious beliefs. One unconfirmed report stated that 1 dozen Christians were killed by government authorities between October 1999 and April 2000. According to another unconfirmed report, 7 Christian men, ranging in age from 15 to 58 years, had been killed in April 2000. According to another unconfirmed report, 23 Christians were killed between October 1999 and April 2000; some reportedly were killed under falsified criminal charges, and some reportedly were tortured prior to their deaths. A religious NGO quoted an unnamed South Korean pastor's claims that 400 Christians were killed in 1999. These reports could not be confirmed or disproved because of the effectiveness of the Government in barring outside observers.

Nonetheless, the collective weight of anecdotal evidence of harsh treatment of unauthorized religious activity lends credence to such reports. The regime deals harshly with its critics, and views religious believers belonging to underground congregations or with ties to evangelical groups in North China as opponents. Reports of exe-

cutions, torture, and imprisonment of religious persons in the country continue to emerge.

The regime appears to have cracked down on unauthorized religious groups in recent years, especially persons who proselytize or who have ties to overseas evangelical groups operating across the border with China. There were several unconfirmed reports of killings of such persons during the year covered by the report. News reports indicated that the Government had taken steps to tighten control and increased punishments at the Chinese border, increasing the award for information on any person doing missionary work. One South Korean missionary asserted that the Government was conducting "education sessions" as a means for identifying Christian leaders so that they could be apprehended.

There is no reliable information on the number of religious detainees or prisoners, but there have been unconfirmed reports that some of those detained in the country are detained because of their religion.

#### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There was no information available on societal attitudes toward religious freedom. The regime does not allow representatives of foreign governments, journalists, or other invited guests the freedom of movement that would enable them to assess religious freedom in the country fully. The Unification Church, which has business ventures in the country, is constructing an interfaith religious facility in Pyongyang.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The United States does not have diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and has no official presence there. The country is a closed society and is extremely averse and resistant to outside influences. U.S. policy allows U.S. citizens to travel to the country, and a number of churches and religious groups have organized efforts to alleviate suffering caused by shortages of food and medicine.

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## REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 98,000 square miles, and the population is approximately 47 million. According to a 1995 government survey, the country's major religions and the number of adherents of each are: Buddhism: 10,321,012; Protestantism: 8,760,336; Roman Catholicism: 2,950,730; Confucianism: 210,927; Won Buddhism: 86,923; and other religions: 267,996. There are 21,593,000 atheists or nonpractitioners in the country. While the population has increased, the percentage of adherents of each faith has remained approximately the same. Although no official figures for the number of adherents are available, there are also several minority religions, such as the Elijah Evangelical Church, the Jesus Morning Star Church, and the All People's Holiness Church. Muslims, members of the Unification Church, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses also are present.

Among those practicing a faith, 41.7 percent said that they attend religious services or rituals at a temple or church at least once per week. Six percent responded that they attend religious services 2 to 3 times per month; 9.4 percent attend once per month; 6.8 percent attend once every 2 to 3 months; 26.9 percent attend once

per year; and 9.2 percent do not attend any services. Among practicing Buddhists, 1.2 percent responded that they attend religious services. A total of 71.5 percent of Protestants and 60.4 percent of Catholics responded that they attend religious services.

Buddhism has approximately 38 orders. The Catholic Church has 15 dioceses, including one based in Seoul. There are 83 Protestant denominations, including the Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, and Presbyterian denominations, the Anglican Church, and the Korean Gospel Church Assembly.

There are 17 Protestant and 6 Catholic missionary groups operating in the country. The Protestant groups include: Christians in Action, Korea; the Church of the Nazarene, Korea Mission; the Overseas Mission Fellowship; and World Opportunities International, Korea Branch. The Catholic missionary groups include the Missionaries of Guadeloupe, the Prado Sisters, and the Little Brothers of Jesus.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion, and the Government does not subsidize or favor a particular religion.

There are no government-established requirements for religious recognition. To protect cultural properties such as Buddhist temples, in 1987 the Government instituted the Traditional Temples Preservation Law. In accordance with this law, Buddhist temples receive some subsidies from the Government for their preservation and upkeep.

In accordance with the March 1, 1999 change in the Immigration Control Law, foreign missionary groups no longer are required to register with the Government.

The Religious Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism takes the lead in organizing groups such as the Korea Religious Council and the Council for Peaceful Religions to promote interfaith dialog and understanding. The Bureau also is responsible for planning regular events such as the Religion and Art Festival, the Seminar for Religious Leaders, and the Symposium for Religious Newspapers and Journalists.

### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

In August 1998, Catholic priest Moon Kyu Hyun was arrested on charges of violating the National Security Law after returning from North Korea, where he allegedly wrote in praise of Kim Il Sung in a North Korean visitor's book and participated in a North Korean-sponsored reunification festival in Panmunjom. The eight other priests who traveled with him were not arrested, and Father Moon's arrest apparently was not based on his religious beliefs. He was released on bail in October 1998. In May 2000, Father Moon was sentenced to 2 years in prison and granted a 2-year stay of execution, equivalent to probation or a suspended sentence. He has appealed this decision, but no further action was taken on his case by the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between religious groups are generally amicable and free of incident, and religious tolerance is widespread; however, during the period covered by this report, there were press reports of so-called "Protestant fanatics" damaging Buddhist temples and artifacts through vandalism and arson. In mid-2000, a Christian was arrested for vandalism of Dong Kuk University, a Buddhist institution, and of some small temples. Such reports generated calls for religious tolerance and mutual respect in the media and among the general public. However, such incidents are rare, and religious leaders regularly meet both privately and under the Government's aegis to promote mutual understanding and tolerance. These meetings are given wide and favorable coverage by the media.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials also meet regularly with members of various religious communities to discuss issues related to human rights.

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**LAOS**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. Some government officials committed abuses of citizens' religious freedom.

The Government's poor record of respect for religious freedom deteriorated in some aspects during the period covered by this report. The Government sought greater and more uniform regulation of the activities of religious organizations. Although some officials of the central Government occasionally attempted to restrain antireligious activities by local officials, such problems continued. Renunciation campaigns and harassment increased. However, while believers continued to be detained, arrested, and incarcerated, the number of detentions throughout the country decreased by half during the period covered by this report. During the period covered by this report, government authorities closed more than 65 churches. There were 20 known religious prisoners or detainees at the end of the period covered by this report.

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious groups in society, although there were some ethnic tensions that contributed to the deteriorating conditions for religious freedom.

U.S. Embassy representatives discussed the need for greater religious freedom at working levels of the central Government. The Charge pressed high-level government officials to allow greater religious freedom. U.S. Embassy representatives remained in contact with religious leaders. The Embassy helped to facilitate two visits by the Institute for Global Engagement, a private foundation dedicated to promoting religious freedom.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Laos has a total area of approximately 85,000 square miles, and its estimated population is approximately 5.2 million. Estimates of the number of persons who practice various faiths rank Theravada Buddhism first, with from 60 to 65 percent of the population, especially among lowland Lao. Many believers in animism—an estimated 30 percent of the population—are found among Lao Theung (mid-slope dwelling) and Lao Soung (highland) minority tribes. Among lowland Lao, particularly in the countryside, there is both a certain syncretistic practice of, and tolerance for, animist customs among those who devote themselves to Buddhist beliefs and rituals. Christians, including Roman Catholics, constitute at most 1.5 percent of the population. Other minority religions include the Baha'i Faith, Islam, Mahayana Buddhism, and Confucianism. A very small number of citizens follow no religion.

In Vientiane there are five Mahayana Buddhist pagodas, two serving the Lao-Vietnamese community and three the Lao-Chinese community. Buddhist monks from Vietnam, China, and India have visited these pagodas freely to conduct services and minister to worshipers. There are at least four more large Mahayana Buddhist pagodas in other urban centers. There are also unconfirmed reports of other, smaller Mahayana pagodas in villages near the borders of Vietnam and China. A few of the pagodas are served by Buddhist nuns. Whether a monk could reside permanently in any of these pagodas is unknown; the key determinant appears to be the expense for the congregation. One Mahayana pagoda in Pakse has at least one monk from Vietnam in residence at all times.

The Roman Catholic Church has a following of 30,000 to 40,000 adherents. It is unable to operate effectively in the highlands and much of the north because churches are not allowed to register, and worship services are restricted in some areas. However, it has an established presence in five of the most populous central and southern provinces, where Catholics are able to worship openly. There are three bishops, located in Vientiane, Thakhek, and Pakse, who were able to visit Rome to confer with other bishops and the Pope. A Catholic seminary opened in Thakhek in early 1998 and is expected to train enough priests to serve the Catholic Community.

Approximately 250 to 300 Protestant congregations conducted services throughout the country for a Protestant community numbering from 30,000 to 40,000 persons.



The Government has granted permission to four Protestant congregations from the approved denominations to have church buildings in the Vientiane area. In addition the Lao Evangelical Church has church buildings in Savannakhet and Pakse. Several of these properties, belonging to the Lao Evangelical Church, were seized by the Government after 1975, but were returned to the church in the early 1990's.

There are approximately 400 adherents of Islam in the country, the vast majority of whom are foreign permanent residents. There are two active mosques in Vientiane that minister to the Sunni and Shafie branches of Islam.

The Baha'i Faith has more than 1,200 adherents and four centers: Two in Vientiane municipality, one in Vientiane province, and one in Pakse.

There were unconfirmed reports that small groups of followers of Confucianism and Taoism practice their beliefs in the larger cities.

Although the Government prohibits foreigners from proselytizing, there were reports that a very small number of both foreign missionaries and citizens were engaged in missionary work during the period covered by this report.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. The Constitution prohibits "all acts of creating division of religion or creating division among the people." The Lao Peoples Revolutionary Party (LPRP) and the Government appear to interpret this constitutional provision narrowly, thus inhibiting religious practice by all persons, including the Buddhist majority and a large population of animists. Although official pronouncements accept the existence of religion, they emphasize its potential to divide, distract, or destabilize. Some local officials appeared to enforce this law on the assumption that any religious conversion, for example, to Christianity, represented a "creating a division among the people."

The Constitution provides that the State "mobilizes and encourages" monks, nuns, and priests of other religions to participate in activities "beneficial to the nation and the people." The Department of Religious Affairs in the Lao Front for National Construction, an LPRP mass organization or peoples' network is responsible for overseeing all religions. Although the Government does not require registration, all functioning religious groups report to the Department of Religious Affairs quarterly. Reports of activities effectively constitute a system of approval; the approval process for new facilities is bureaucratic and time consuming and results in few new facilities.

The Department of Religious Affairs reportedly drafted regulations for religious organizations in late 1999. It arranged for the public reading of the draft regulations in November 2000, but held no substantive public consultations with religious leaders on the new guidelines during the period covered by this report. The draft regulations were under consideration by the Prime Minister at the end of the period covered by this report.

Although the State is secular in both name and practice, members of the LPRP and governmental institutions pay close attention to Theravada Buddhism, which is practiced by more than 60 percent of the population. The Government's observation, control of clergy, training support (including Marxist-Leninist training for monks), and oversight of temples and other facilities constitutes less a form of favoritism than a means to supervise and limit religious freedoms among the dominant Buddhist faith. Many persons regard Buddhism as both an integral part of the national culture and as a way of life.

Although the Government does not recognize the Vatican, the Papal Nuncio visits from Bangkok, Thailand and coordinates with the Government on assistance programs, especially for lepers and the disabled.

The Lao National Front has recognized two Protestant groups, the Lao Evangelical Church, the umbrella Protestant church, and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The Front strongly encourages all other Protestant groups to become a part of the Lao Evangelical Church.

All persons in the Islamic community appear to be able to practice their faith openly, freely attending the two active mosques. Daily prayers and the weekly Jumaat prayer on Fridays proceed unobstructed and all Islamic celebrations are allowed. Citizens who are Muslims are able to go on the Hajj. Groups that conduct Tabligh teachings for the faithful come from Thailand once or twice per year.

Baha'i local spiritual assemblies and the national spiritual assembly routinely hold Baha'i 19-day feasts and celebrate all holy days. The national spiritual assembly meets regularly and is free to send a delegation to the Universal House of Justice in Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel.

The Government requires and routinely grants permission for formal links with coreligionists in other countries. In practice the line between formal and informal links is blurred, and relations generally are established without much difficulty.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government's tolerance of religion varied by region. In general central government authorities appeared unable—and in some cases, unwilling—to control or mitigate harsh measures that were taken by some local or provincial authorities against the practices of members of minority religious denominations. Although there was almost complete freedom to worship among unregistered groups in a few areas, particularly in the largest cities, government authorities in many regions allowed properly registered religious groups to practice their faith only under circumscribed conditions.

In Savannakhet, Luang Prabang, and Vientiane provinces, district authorities, supported by police, military, and representatives of the Lao Front for National Reconstruction closed more than 65 Christian churches during the period covered by this report. Unlike church closings in prior years, a number of these churches were of long standing, with the vast majority of believers having adopted the faith of their parents. For example, in Vientiane provincial authorities closed at least 12 churches, including a church in a refugee returnee village agreed to at the time that the village was established under U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) auspices.

Some minority religious groups reported that they were unable during the period covered by this report to register new congregations or receive permission to establish new places of worship, including places in Vientiane. Authorities required new denominations to join other religious groups having similar historical antecedents, despite clear differences between the groups' beliefs. Some groups did not submit applications for establishment of places of worship because they did not believe that their applications would be approved.

Although authorities tolerate diverse religious practices in the southern panhandle, a pattern of petty local harassment persists there. Many converts must run a gauntlet of harsh government interviews; however, after overcoming that initial barrier, they are permitted to practice their new faith unhindered.

The authorities continued to remain suspicious of patrons of the religious community other than Buddhism, including some Christian groups, in part because these faiths do not share a similar high degree of direction and incorporation into the government structure, as is the case with Theravada Buddhism. Some authorities criticized Christianity in particular as a Western or imperialist "import" into the country. They especially appear to suspect those religious groups that gain support from foreign sources, that aggressively proselytize among the poor or uneducated, that proselytize ethnic minorities, or that give targeted assistance to converts. The Government generally permitted major religious festivals of all established congregations without hindrance, but local authorities in some areas prohibited them or reversed prior authorizations. In one case in Vientiane province, authorities broke up a Christian church service on Christmas day.

At the end of the period covered by this report, the status of the Catholic Church in Luang Prabang town continued to be in doubt. There appears to be a congregation there but due to local government obstructions, worship may not be conducted readily. However, Catholics are now able to practice more openly in neighboring Sayabouly province, and a priest visits the Luang Prabang diocese regularly.

The Party controls the Buddhist clergy (Sangha) in an attempt to direct national culture. After 1975 the Government attempted to "reform" Buddhism and ceased to consider it the state religion, causing thousands of monks to flee abroad, where many remain in self-exile. The Government has only one semireligious holiday, Boun That Luang, which also is a major political and cultural celebration. However, the Government recognizes the popularity and cultural significance of Buddhist festivals, and many senior officials openly attend them. Buddhist clergy are featured prominently at important state and party functions. The Lao National Front directs the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Association, organized under a charter adopted in 1998. The Front continued to require monks to study Marxism-Leninism, to attend certain party meetings, and to combine the party-state policies with their teachings of Buddhism. In recent years, some individual temples have been able to receive support from Theravada Buddhist temples abroad, to expand the training of monks, and to focus more on traditional teachings.

The Government prohibits foreigners from proselytizing, although it permits foreign nongovernmental organizations with religious affiliations to work in the country. Foreigners caught distributing religious material may be arrested or deported. There is no prohibition against proselytizing by citizens. For example, Lao Christian

proselytizers were active in some areas, resulting in new conversions; however, there has been increased local government investigation and harassment of citizens who do so under the constitutional provision against creating division of religion.

The Government does not permit the printing of religious texts or their distribution outside a congregation and restricts the import of foreign religious texts and artifacts. However, in practice all approved congregations are able to supply texts to their adherents and decorate their places of worship.

In a few villages in which churches had been closed, security forces set up roadblocks during Sunday worship hours that prevented villagers from traveling to other places to conduct worship services. Many groups of coreligionists seeking to assemble in a new location are thwarted in attempts to meet, practice, or celebrate major religious festivals.

In rare cases, some local authorities harassed citizens who traveled outside the country for short-term religious training on the grounds that these persons had not provided their full travel plans to the authorities prior to departing from the country. Some church closings and forced renunciations in some districts of Savannakhet appeared to be reprisals against these persons. This restriction on freedom of movement appeared to affect primarily those who applied for crossborder passes into Thailand. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the power to grant exit visas and usually grants them as a matter of routine. There is no evidence that the central Government investigated travelers on their return.

Government-issued identity cards report the religious affiliations of all adult citizens. In many areas, minority believers are identified incorrectly as "Buddhist" on identity cards in what appears to be routine bureaucratism and indifference. However, Christians who seek to be identified properly often are denied this right. When police question members of groups assembling for religious purposes, if the improperly issued ID card does not confirm the stated reason for assembling, the bearer may be subject to additional scrutiny and questioning.

Some evidence suggests that the Government makes little effort to ameliorate existing societal discrimination against ethnic minorities when that social tension can be cited as a pretext to restrict religious activities.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Authorities continued to arrest persons for their religious activities. Members of religious minorities were held in long-term detention or served jail terms at one time during the period covered by the report. The greatest number of detainees was from 30 to 35 at the end of 2000 and during the first 5 months of 2001. At the end of June 2001, the number of detainees stood at 20; 5 persons were arrested in Luang Prabang in May.

In addition a total of more than 45 other persons were arrested and detained at least briefly for their religious activities during the period covered by this report. Of those, 11 were known convicted religious prisoners and an estimated 9 religious detainees. These persons were detained in the following locations: Phongsaly, 1; Savannakhet, 3; and Luang Prabang, 5.

In Luang Prabang, three persons were tried and convicted; in Oudomxai, five persons were tried and convicted; in Houaphan, three persons were tried and convicted. Three of the members of religious minorities convicted in Oudomxai were convicted of working with foreign religious groups and given jail sentences to of from 12 to 15 years, which observers believed to be unduly harsh. In addition, the Government had not presented evidence to prove that the three ever left the country by the end of the period covered by this report.

In areas such as Sayabouly, Bolikhamxai, Vientiane province, Luang Namtha, Luang Prabang, Savannakhet, Oudomxai, and Phongsaly, the authorities arrested and detained without charge religious believers and their spiritual leaders. For example, in Luang Prabang, three evangelical Christians were sentenced in November 1999 to 5 years' imprisonment under Article 66 of the Penal Code for gathering to create social turmoil. Their sentences were reduced on appeal to 3 years in August 2000. Each of the three was a well-known Christian spiritual leader.

In February 2001, the Government deported five foreign practitioners of Falun Gong for distributing religious materials. In April 2001, security officials also briefly detained nine Filipino nationals associated with Campus Crusade who were proselytizing in Luang Prabang. After confiscating their religious materials, the authorities allowed them to leave the country on their scheduled tour.

In more isolated cases, provincial authorities instructed their officials to monitor and arrest persons who professed belief in Christianity, Islam, or the Baha'i Faith. For example, there is clear evidence that in Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and Savannakhet provinces the authorities continued to force hundreds of Christians to sign renunciations of their faith. Some civil servants were threatened with loss of

their positions if they did not sign the renunciations. Citizens in Luang Prabang since 1999 reported that authorities ordered them to stop completely their Christian activities, under threat of arrest. The order appeared to apply only to new converts; believers of long standing were allowed to continue their beliefs but not to conduct worship or openly practice their faith. Despite general inaction by officials on their threats, such threats have had a chilling effect on religious practice in these provinces. The overwhelming preponderance of arrests in Laos have been of religious leaders and the most active and visible proselytizers, not of practitioners.

A few of the religious detainees are singled out for special mistreatment; some were forced to wear handcuffs while in detention.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion*

The enhanced status given to Buddhism in Luang Prabang—famed for its centuries-old Buddhist tradition and numerous temples—apparently led some local officials there to act more harshly toward minority religions, particularly toward Christian and Baha'i groups, than in other areas of the country. Some minor local officials reportedly forced renunciations that sometimes involved forced participation in animist traditions, including the drinking of animal blood. Other officials forced some believers to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes against their will.

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The various religious communities coexist amicably; society places a high premium on harmonious relations, and the dominant Buddhist faith is generally tolerant of other religious practices. Although there is no ecumenical movement, and there are no efforts to create greater mutual understanding, cultural mores generally instill respect for longstanding, well-known differences in belief.

However, interreligious tensions arose on rare occasions within some minority ethnic groups in response to proselytizing. For example, in one incident in May 2001, a large group of parents in a Hmong village was angry with Hmong Christian ministers because the young adults (some under age 18 and still under parental control) were abandoning their animist spiritual traditions.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy representatives discussed religious freedom issues with the Human Rights Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The Charge d'Affaires has raised high profile cases with high-ranking MFA officials and other Embassy officers have discussed the topic with relevant provincial governors. In addition the Embassy has an ongoing dialog with the Department of Religious Affairs in the Lao National Front and with other high ranking officials in the National Front.

Embassy representatives met with all of the major religious leaders in the country during the period covered by this report. Embassy officials have actively encouraged religious freedom despite an environment that is restricted by the government-owned and government-controlled media.

In December 2000 and June 2001, the Embassy helped to facilitate the visit of a representative of the Institute for Global Engagement, a private foundation promoting religious freedom and interdenominational dialog, who had frank exchanges with Lao officials.

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## MALAYSIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government places some restrictions on this right. Islam is the official religion; however, the practice of Islamic beliefs other than Sunni Islam is restricted significantly.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Religious minorities generally worship freely although with some restrictions. The Government enforces some restrictions on the establishment of non-Muslim places of worship and on the activities of political opponents in mosques.

The generally amicable relationship among believers in various religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 127,000 square miles and a population of approximately 23 million. According to government census figures, in 1991 59 percent of the population were Muslim; 18 percent practiced Buddhism; 8 percent Christianity; 6 percent Hinduism; 5 percent Confucianism, Taoism, or other religions that originated in China; 1 percent animism; and 0.5 percent other faiths, including Sikhism and the Baha'i Faith. Estimates of the religious practices of the remainder of the population were not stated.

Non-Muslims are concentrated in East Malaysia, major urban centers, and other areas.

In February 2000, the opposition-controlled state of Kelantan announced plans to form an Interreligious Council, but there were no reported further developments during the period covered by this report.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, Islam is the official religion, and the practice of Islamic beliefs other than Sunni Islam is restricted significantly. Religious minorities include Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Sikh communities. Government funds support an Islamic religious establishment (the Government also grants limited funds to non-Islamic religious communities), and it is official policy to "infuse Islamic values" into the administration of the country. The Government imposes Islamic religious law on Muslims only in some matters and does not impose Islamic law beyond the Muslim community. Adherence to Islam is considered intrinsic to Malay ethnic identity, and therefore Islamic religious laws bind ethnic Malays.

The Registrar of Societies, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, registers religious organizations. Registration enables organizations to receive government grants and other benefits.

In May 2001, the Government decided not to approve the Falun Gong Preparatory Committee's application to register as a legal organization.

For Muslim children, religious education according to a government-approved curriculum is compulsory in public schools.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Muslims who wish to convert from Islam face severe obstacles. For Muslims, particularly ethnic Malays, the right to leave the Islamic faith and adhere to another religion is a controversial question, and in practice it is very difficult for Muslims to change religions. The legal process of conversion is unclear; in practice it is very difficult for Muslims to change their religion legally. In March 1999, the High Court ruled that secular courts have no jurisdiction to hear applications by Muslims to change religions. According to the ruling, the religious conversion of Muslims is solely the jurisdiction of Islamic courts. In April 2001, a High Court judge rejected the application of a Malay woman who argued that she had converted to Christianity, and requested that the term "Islam" be removed from her identity card. The judge ruled that an ethnic Malay is defined by the federal Constitution as "a person who professes the religion of Islam." The judge also reaffirmed the March 1999 High Court ruling and stated that only an Islamic court has jurisdiction to rule on the woman's supposed renunciation of Islam and conversion to Christianity. The ruling makes conversion of Muslims nearly impossible in practice.

The issue of Muslim apostasy is very sensitive. In 1998 after a controversial incident of attempted conversion, the Government stated that apostates (i.e., Muslims who wish to leave or have left Islam for another religion) would not face government punishment so long as they did not defame Islam after their conversion. The Government opposes what it considers deviant interpretations of Islam, maintaining that the "deviant" groups' extreme views endanger national security. In the past, the Government imposed restrictions on certain Islamic groups, primarily the small number of Shi'a. The Government continues to monitor the activities of the Shi'a minority.

In April 2000, the state of Perlis passed a Shari'a law subjecting Islamic "deviants" and apostates to 1 year of "rehabilitation." (Under the Constitution, religion, including Shari'a law, is a state government matter.) Leaders of the opposition Islamic Party have stated that the penalty for apostasy should be death.

In June 2000, the Government announced that all Muslim civil servants must attend religious classes, but only Islamic classes are conducted. In addition only teachers approved by the Government are employed.

The Government generally respects non-Muslims' right of worship; however, state governments carefully control the building of non-Muslim places of worship and the allocation of land for non-Muslim cemeteries. Approvals for such permits sometimes are granted very slowly. After a violent conflict in Penang between Hindus and Muslims in March 1998, the Government announced a nationwide review of unlicensed Hindu temples and shrines. However, implementation was not vigorous, and the program was not a subject of public debate during the period covered by this report.

In July 1999, the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism (MCCBCHS), a nongovernmental organization representing minority religions, protested the planned implementation of Ministry of Housing and Local Government guidelines governing new non-Muslim places of worship. The MCCBCHS specifically complained that the guidelines required an area to have at least 2,000 adherents of a particular non-Muslim faith for a new non-Muslim place of worship to be approved (no such requirement exists for Muslim places of worship). In August 2000, these minimum population guidelines were relaxed somewhat. In addition after years of complaints by non-Islamic religious organizations about the need for the State Islamic Council in each state to approve construction of non-Islamic religious institutions, the Minister of Housing and Local Government announced that such approval would no longer be required. However, it is not known whether this change always is reflected in state policies and local decisions. For example, in Shah Alam, for several years the Selangor state authorities have blocked the construction of a Catholic Church.

Proselytizing of Muslims by members of other religions is prohibited strictly, although proselytizing of non-Muslims faces no obstacles. The Government discourages—and in practical terms forbids—the circulation in peninsular Malaysia of Malay-language translations of the Bible and distribution of Christian tapes and printed materials in Malay. However, Malay-language Christian materials are available. Some states have laws that prohibit the use of Malay-language religious terms by Christians, but the authorities do not enforce them actively. The distribution of Malay-language Christian materials faces few restrictions in East Malaysia.

In recent years, visas for foreign clergy no longer are restricted and in fact most visas were approved during the period covered by this report. Beginning in March 2000, representative non-Muslims were invited to sit on the immigration committee that approves such visa requests. Some non-Islamic groups complained that Christian proselytizing campaigns sometimes were conducted in unethical ways and tended to result in heightened religious animosity within the communities in which the ministers worked.

For Muslim children, religious education in public schools according to a government-approved curriculum is compulsory. There are no restrictions on home instruction.

The Government generally restricts remarks or publications that might incite racial or religious disharmony. This includes some statements and publications critical of particular religions, especially Islam. The Government also restricts the content of sermons at mosques.

After the November 1999 national elections, the Government significantly expanded efforts to restrict the activities of the Islamic opposition party at mosques. Several states announced measures including banning opposition-affiliated imams from speaking at mosques, more vigorously enforcing existing restrictions on the content of sermons, replacing mosque leaders and governing committees thought to be sympathetic to the opposition, and threatening to close down unauthorized mosques with ties to the opposition. The Government justified such measures as necessary to oppose the "politicization of religion" by the opposition.

In family and religious matters, all Muslims are subject to Shari'a law. According to some women's rights activists, women are subject to discriminatory interpretations of Shari'a law and inconsistent application of the law from state to state.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The Government continues to monitor the activities of the Shi'a minority, and the Government periodically detained members of what it considers Islamic "deviant sects" without trial or charge under the Internal Security Act during the period covered by this report.

In November 2000, the Shari'a High Court in the state of Kelantan, which is controlled by the Islamic opposition party, sentenced four persons to 3 years in prison for disregarding a lower court order to recant their alleged heretical beliefs and "return to the true teachings of Islam." The High Court rejected their argument that Shari'a law has no jurisdiction over them because they had ceased to be Muslims.

In November 2000, four prisoners were convicted of apostasy by a Shari'a court. There were no reports of religious detainees during the period covered by this report.

*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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country's various believers generally live amicably.

The Government has a comprehensive system of preferences in the administration of housing, education, business, and other areas for Bumiputras, ethnic Malay Muslims, and a few other groups that practice various religions.

Ecumenical and interfaith organizations of the non-Muslim religions exist and include the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism, the Malaysian Council of Churches, and the Christian Federation of Malaysia. Muslim organizations generally do not participate in ecumenical bodies.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy representatives have met with some religious leaders.

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**MARSHALL ISLANDS**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country's total land area is approximately 67 square miles, and the estimated population in 2000 was 52,000. Major religions include the United Church of Christ (formerly Congregational) with 54.8 percent of the population; the Assembly of God with 25.8 percent; and the Roman Catholic Church with 8.4 percent. Also represented are Bukot Nan Jesus (also known as Assembly of God Part Two) with 2.8 percent; the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) with 2.1 percent; Seventh-Day Adventists with 0.9 percent; Full Gospel with 0.7 percent; and the Baha'i Faith with 0.6 percent. Persons without any religious affiliation account for 1.5 percent of the population, and another 1.4 percent belong to religions not named in the 1999 census.

There are missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Seventh-Day Adventists. Religious schools include the Assumption Catholic School and the Rita Christian School as well as facilities operated by the United Church of Christ and the Assembly of God.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion. Missionary groups are allowed to operate freely.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

*Forced Religious Conversions*

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although Christianity is a dominant social and cultural force, there are amicable relations between the country's religious denominations. Nonbelievers, who constitute a very small percentage of the residents, do not suffer discrimination. Typically, governmental and social functions begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer delivered by an ordained minister, cleric, or church official.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promotion of human rights.

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**FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country's total area is approximately 260 square miles, and the population is approximately 133,000. Most Protestant denominations as well as the Roman Catholic Church are present on the four major islands of the country. The most prevalent Protestant denomination is the United Church of Christ. Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon), and adherents of the Baha'i Faith also are represented. On the island of Kosrae, 99 percent of the population are members of the United Church of Christ; on Pohnpei approximately 50 percent of the population are Protestant and 50 percent are Catholic; on Chuuk and Yap, approximately 60 percent are Catholic and 40 percent are Protestant. There is a small group of Buddhists on Pohnpei.

Most immigrants are Filipino Catholics, who join local Catholic Churches.

On the island of Pohnpei, clan divisions mark religious boundaries in some measure. More Protestants live on the western side of the island, while more Catholics live on the eastern side.

Missionaries of many faiths work within the nation, including Seventh Day Adventists, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Bill of Rights forbids establishment of a state religion and governmental restrictions on freedom of religion. There is no state religion.

Foreign missionary groups operate without hindrance on all four islands.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

*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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.



## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

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**MONGOLIA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the law limits proselytizing, and some groups that sought to register have faced bureaucratic harassment.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 580,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 2.65 million. Buddhism and the country's traditions are tied closely, and it appears likely that almost all ethnic Mongolians (93 percent of the population) practice some form of Buddhism. Lamaist Buddhism of the Tibetan variety is the traditional and dominant religion.

Since the end of Socialist controls on religion and the country's traditions in 1990, active interest in Buddhism and its practice have grown. The Buddhist community is not completely homogeneous, and there are several competing schools, including a small group that believes that the sutras should be in the Mongolian language and that all members of religious clergy should be citizens.

Kazakhs, most of whom are Muslim, are the largest of the ethnic minorities, constituting approximately 4 percent of the population nationwide and 85 percent of the population of the western province, Bayan-Olgii. Kazakhs operate Islamic schools for their children. They sometimes receive financial assistance from religious organizations in Kazakhstan and Turkey. The Kazakhs' status as the majority ethnic group in Bayan-Olgii was established in the former Socialist period and continues in much the same circumstances.

Foreign missionaries include Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, various evangelical Protestant groups, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, and adherents of the Baha'i Faith.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the law limits proselytizing, and some groups that sought to register have faced bureaucratic harassment. The Constitution explicitly recognizes the separation of church and state, and the law regulating the relationship between church and state was passed in 1993 and amended in 1995.

Although there is no state religion, traditionalists believe that Buddhism is the "natural religion" of the country. The Government has contributed to the restoration of several Buddhist sites. These are important religious, historical, and cultural centers. The Government does not subsidize the Buddhist religion otherwise.

Religious groups must register with the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs. While the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs is responsible for registrations, local assemblies have the authority to approve applications at the local level.

Under the law, the Government may supervise and limit the number of places of worship and clergy for organized religions; however, there were no reports that the Government did so during the period covered by this report. The registration process is decentralized with several layers of bureaucracy, in which officials sometimes demand financial benefits in exchange for authorization. In addition registration in the capital may not be sufficient if a group intends to work in the countryside where local registration also is necessary. Some groups encountered harassment during the

registration process, including demands by midlevel city officials for financial contributions in return for securing legal status. When registration was completed, the same authorities threatened some religious groups with withdrawal of approval. In general it appears that difficulties in registering primarily are the consequence of bureaucratic action by local officials and attempts to extort financial assistance for projects not funded by the city. Of the 260 temples and churches founded since 1990, approximately 150 are registered, including 90 Buddhist, 40 Christian, and 4 Baha'i, in addition to 1 Muslim mosque and other organizations. Contacts with coreligionists outside the country are allowed.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

While the law does not prohibit proselytizing, it limits it by forbidding the use of incentives, pressure, or deceptive methods to introduce religion. With the opening of the country following the 1990 democratic changes, religious groups began to arrive to provide humanitarian assistance and open new churches, which resulted in some friction between missionary groups. Proselytizing by registered religious groups is allowed, although a Ministry of Education directive bans mixing foreign language or other training with religious teaching or instruction. The Government enforced this law particularly in the capital area.

Some missionary groups are still in the process of registering with the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs. The process is protracted for some groups, but others are registered quickly.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Citizens generally are tolerant of the beliefs of others, and there were no reports of religiously motivated violence; however, there has been some friction between missionary groups and citizens because humanitarian assistance in the past was mixed with proselytizing activity. Some conservatives have criticized foreign influences on youth and children, including religion and the use of incentives to attract believers.

There are no significant ecumenical movements or interfaith dialog.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy officials have discussed with midlevel bureaucrats specific registration difficulties encountered by Christian churches. These discussions focused attention on U.S. concern for religious freedom and opposition to corruption; the discussions resulted in a clarification of the requirements for registration.

The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with Buddhist leaders. In addition the Embassy met with representatives of U.S. based religious and humanitarian organizations. The Embassy also maintains contact with the staff of the local office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the U.N. Development Program to discuss human rights and religious freedom.

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## NAURU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Nauru has a total area of approximately 10 square miles, and its population an estimated 10,000. Christianity is the primary religion. Approximately two-thirds of Christians are Protestants, and the remaining one-third are Roman Catholics. The population as a whole is 58 percent Nauruan, 26 percent other Pacific Islanders, 8 percent European, and 8 percent Chinese. Some of the latter group may be Buddhist or Taoist.

Foreign missionaries introduced Christianity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are a few active Christian missionary organizations, including representatives of the Anglican, Methodist, and Catholic faiths.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government has not taken specific actions to improve interreligious relations. However, it has set aside land for the renovation and construction of places of worship.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

*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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relations in society contributed to religious freedom.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Fiji visit periodically to discuss religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. They also meet with leaders of religious communities and nongovernmental organizations that have an interest in religious freedom.

The U.S. Embassy actively supports efforts to improve and expand governmental and societal awareness of and protection for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion.

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**NEW ZEALAND**

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country is an island nation with a total area of approximately 99,000 square miles and a population of approximately 3.8 million. The religious composition of the country is predominantly Christian but is becoming more diverse. According to the 1996 census, approximately 60.6 percent of citizens identified themselves as Christian or as affiliated members of individual Christian denominations; less than 3 percent were affiliated with non-Christian religions. The four major Christian denominations of Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches experienced a decline in membership between 1991 and 1996, with the proportion of the

population affiliated with these denominations falling from 57.6 percent to 49.1 percent. Anglicans remained by far the largest Christian denomination, with 18 percent of the population in 1996. Pentecostals were the only major Christian group to experience significant growth (55 percent) during the same period. Among non-Christian religions, the number of Buddhists and Muslims more than doubled, while the number of Hindus increased by approximately 50 percent, although each of these groups still constitutes less than 1 percent of the population. The number of persons who indicated no religious affiliation also increased markedly between 1991 and 1996, rising by 33 percent to over one-fourth of the population. The indigenous Maori (approximately 15 percent of the population) overwhelmingly are followers of Presbyterianism, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Ratana, Ringatu, and other faiths.

According to 1996 census data, the following were the numbers and percentages of the population's religious affiliation: Anglican—631,764 (18.42 percent); Roman Catholic—473,112 (13.79 percent); Presbyterian—458,289 (13.36 percent); Methodist—121,650 (3.55 percent); Baptist—53,613 (1.56 percent); Mormons—41,166 (1.20 percent); Pentecostal—39,228 (1.14 percent); Ratana (a Maori/Christian group with services in the Maori language)—36,450 (1.06 percent); Buddhist—28,131 (0.82 percent); Hindu—25,293 (0.74 percent); Brethren—19,950 (0.58 percent); Jehovah's Witnesses—19,524 (0.57 percent); Assemblies of God—17,520 (0.51 percent); Salvation Army—14,625 (0.43 percent); Islam—13,548 (0.39 percent); Seventh-Day Adventist—12,324 (0.36 percent); Apostolic Church of New Zealand—8,913 (0.26 percent); Congregational—8,838 (0.26 percent); Ringatu (a Maori/Christian group with services in the Maori language)—8,268 (0.24 percent); Orthodox Christian—6,936 (0.20 percent); Spiritualist—5,097 (0.15 percent); Lutheran—5,007 (0.15 percent); Jewish—4,812 (0.14 percent); Churches of Christ—4,233 (0.12 percent); Reformed—3,288 (0.10 percent); Baha'i—3,111 (0.09 percent); Elim—3,018 (0.09 percent); Sikh—814 (0.08 percent); Protestant—2,778 (0.08 percent); Exclusive Brethren—1,986 (0.06 percent); Christadelphians—1,743 (0.05 percent); Uniting/Union Church—1,728 (0.05 percent); evangelical—1,584 (0.05 percent); Religious Society of Friends—1,161 (0.03 percent); Satanist—909 (0.03 percent); Worldwide Church of God—624 (0.02 percent); Rastafarianism—582 (0.02 percent); Taoism—561 (0.02 percent); Nazarene—459 (0.01 percent); Hauhau—408 (0.01 percent); Christian Science—294 (0.01 percent); Revival Centres—273 (0.01 percent); Unitarian—267 (0.01 percent); Hare Krishna—258 (0.01 percent); Church of Scientology—216 (0.01 percent); Commonwealth Covenant Church—168 (less than 0.01 percent); Unification Church—135 (less than 0.01 percent); other Christian—188,670 (5.50 percent); other non-Christian—4,596 (0.13 percent); other response including no religion—893,910 (26.06 percent); object to statement—256,593 (7.48 percent); not specified—187,881 (5.50 percent); total—3,618,303 (100.00 percent).

The Auckland statistical area (which accounts for roughly 30 percent of the country's total population) exhibits the greatest religious diversity. Farther south on the North Island, and on the South Island, the percentage of citizens who identified themselves with Christian faiths increased while those affiliated with non-Christian religions decreased.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels protects this right and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Education Act of 1964 specifies in its "secular clause" that teaching within public primary schools "shall be entirely of a secular character;" however, it also permits religious instruction and observances in state primary schools within certain parameters. If the school committee in consultation with the principal or head teacher so determines, any class may be closed at any time of the school day within specified limits for the purposes of religious instruction given by voluntary instructors. However, attendance at religious instruction or observances is not compulsory. According to the Legal Division of the Ministry of Education, public secondary schools also may permit religious instruction at the discretion of their individual school boards. The Ministry of Education does not keep centralized data on how many individual primary or secondary schools permit religious instruction or observances, but a curriculum division spokesperson maintains that in practice religious instruction, if it occurs at a particular school, usually is scheduled after normal school hours.

Under the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act of 1975, the Government, in response to a burgeoning general primary school role and financial difficulties ex-

perienced by a large group of Catholic parochial schools, permitted the incorporation of private schools into the public school system. Designated as “integrated schools,” they were deemed to be of a “unique character” and permitted to receive public funding provided that they allowed space for nonpreference students. A total of 303 of the 2,784 primary schools are integrated schools with this designation. More than 250 of these 303 schools are Catholic; there are a handful of non-Christian or non-religious schools, such as Islamic, Hare Krishna, or Rudolph Steiner—a school of spiritual philosophy. Primary school students are not required to attend an integrated school.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion; however, Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Easter Monday are official holidays, and some businesses are fined if they attempt to operate on these holidays. The small but growing non-Christian communities has called for the Government to take into account the increasingly diverse religious makeup regarding holiday flexibility. In response, the Government acted to remove some constraints on trade associated with the Christian faith. In 2001 the Government enacted new legislation that permits several types of business to remain open on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. However, many other businesses still are fined if they attempt to operate on these Christian holidays.

In 1993 the University of Canterbury granted an honors thesis to a student who reportedly denied the impact of the Holocaust. The controversial thesis was embargoed until 2000, when the author issued an apology and acknowledged mistakes in an addendum. Many members of the country’s Jewish community criticized the university’s refusal to rescind the degree or withdraw the thesis.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Amicable relations exist among the various religious communities in society. Incidents of religiously motivated violence are extremely rare. Due to the infrequency of their occurrence and difficulties in clearly establishing such motivations, the police do not attempt to maintain data on crimes that may have been motivated by religion.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religion freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

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## PALAU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religion freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

An archipelago of more than 300 islands in the Western Pacific Ocean, the country has a total land area of 188 square miles and a population of approximately 19,000 persons; 70 percent live in the temporary capital, Koror. There are 19 Christian denominations. The Roman Catholic Church is the dominant religion, and approximately 65 percent of the population are members. Other religions with a sizable membership include the Evangelical Church (with approximately 2,000 members), the Seventh-Day Adventists (with approximately 1,000), the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) (about 300), and Jehovah's Witnesses (about 70). Modekngai, which embraces both pagan and Christian beliefs and is unique to the country, has about 800 adherents. There also is a small group of Bangladeshi Muslims in the country who practice their faith actively. The primarily Catholic Filipino labor force (approximately 3,100 persons) practice their faith actively. A large percentage of citizens do not practice their faith actively.

Since the arrival of Jesuit priests in the early nineteenth century, foreign missionaries have been active in the country. Some missionaries have been in the country for years and speak the language fluently. A number of groups (the Baha'i Faith, the Roman Catholic Church, the Chinese Agriculture Mission, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Evangelical Church, the High Adventure Ministries, the Iglesia ni Cristo, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Korean Church, the Korea Presbyterian Church, the Pacific Missionary Aviation, the Palau Assembly of God, and the Seventh-Day Adventists) have missionaries in the country on proselytizing or teaching assignments. The Seventh-Day Adventist and the Evangelical Churches have missionaries teaching in their respective elementary and high schools.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government does not promote or restrain religious activities; however, the Government regulates the establishment of religious organizations by requiring them to obtain charters as nonprofit organizations from the office of the Attorney General. This registration process is not protracted, and the Government did not deny any groups registration during the period covered by this report. As nonprofit organizations, these churches and missions are tax exempt.

Foreign missionaries are required to obtain a missionary permit at the office of immigration; however, there were no reports that the Government denied these permits to any group during the period covered by this report.

The Government does not require or permit religious instruction in public schools. There is government financial support for religious schools; the Government also provides small scale financial assistance to cultural organizations.

There are two religious groups with independent radio stations, the High Adventure Ministries and the Seventh-Day Adventists.

The Government recognizes Christmas as a national holiday. There is active participation by the majority of the country's religious groups in Easter and Christmas services. Even though the Government does not sponsor religious groups or promote religious activities, official ceremonies—national or state level, public and private graduations, etc.—always are conducted with a prayer to open and close the ceremonies.

### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Employers have complained to the Division of Labor under the Ministry of Commerce and Trade that the religious practices of Bangladeshi Muslims interfere both with activity in the workplace and with the living arrangements of the employing families. In response the Ministry decided to deny work permits to Bangladeshi workers in the future. Workers present in the country at the time of the decision were not expelled.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The various religious organizations are cordial and civil with each other, and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

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**PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country is an island nation covering 280,773 square miles, and its population is approximately 4.6 million. According to the 1990 census, the churches with the largest number of members are the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Church, the Evangelical Alliance, and the Seventh-Day Adventists. At that time, 97 percent of citizens identified themselves as members of a Christian church. Less than 0.3 percent identified themselves as non-Christian, and less than 3 percent identified themselves as having no religion. Reports indicate that approximately 1,000 persons practice Islam. Many citizens combine their Christian faith with some pre-Christian traditional indigenous practices.

The mainstream churches proselytized on the island of New Guinea in the nineteenth century. Colonial governments initially assigned different missions to different geographic areas. Since territory in the country is strongly aligned with language group and ethnicity, this colonial policy led to the identification of certain churches with certain ethnic groups. However, churches of all denominations now are found in all parts of the country. The Muslim community has a mosque in the capital of Port Moresby.

Nonmainstream Christian churches and non-Christian religious groups are active throughout the country. According to the Papua New Guinea Council of Churches, both Muslim and Confucian missionaries have become active, and foreign missionary activity in general is high. The Pentecostal Church in particular has made inroads into the congregations of the more established churches, and nearly every conceivable movement and faith that proselytizes has representatives in the country. The Summer Institute of Linguistics is an important missionary institution; it translates the New Testament into native languages.

The Roman Catholic Church is the only mainstream church that still relies to a large extent on foreign clergy.

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The Constitution's provisions for freedom of conscience, thought, and religion consistently have been interpreted to mean that any religion may be practiced or propagated so long as it does not interfere with the freedom of others. The predominance of Christianity is recognized in the preamble of the Constitution, which refers to "our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours."

In general the Government does not subsidize the practice of religion. The Department of Family and Church Affairs has a nominal policymaking role that largely has been confined to reiterating the Government's respect for church autonomy.

Most of the country's schools and many of its health services were built and continue to be run by the churches, and the Government provides support for those institutions. At independence the Government recognized that it had neither the funds nor the human capital with which to take over these institutions and agreed to subsidize their operations on a per pupil/per patient basis. The Government also pays the salaries of national teachers and health staff. Although the education and health infrastructures continue to rely heavily on church-run institutions, some schools and clinics have closed periodically because they did not receive the promised government support. These problems are due in part to endemic financial management problems in the Government.

Immigrants and noncitizens are free to practice their religion, and foreign missionary groups are permitted to proselytize and engage in other activities.

It is the policy of the Department of Education to set aside 1 hour per week for religious instruction in the public schools. Church representatives teach the lessons, and the students attend the class operated by the church of their parents' choice. Children whose parents do not wish them to attend the classes are excused.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

*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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

As new missionary movements proliferate, representatives of some established churches and some individuals have questioned publicly whether such activity is desirable. Some persons have proposed legislation to limit such activity. However, the courts and government practice have upheld the constitutional right to freedom of speech, thought, and belief, and no legislation to curb those rights has been adopted. For example, when the Muslim community applied to the Land Board for permission to acquire property on which to build a mosque, some churches objected, citing the country's historical character as a Christian country. Nevertheless permission to acquire the land was granted. After the mosque was built, the press continued to report on the public debate over whether Islam was a threat to the country. Most denominations, including the Catholic Bishops Conference, supported the establishment of the mosque.

The Papua New Guinea Council of Churches makes the only known effort at interfaith dialog. The Council members consist of the Anglican, Gutnius and Union Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran and United churches, and the Salvation Army. In addition it has 15 parareligious organizations, including the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which participate in its activities; however, the self-financing Council has only Christian affiliates. The ecumenical work of the Council of Churches is confined primarily to cooperation between churches on social welfare projects.

### SECTION III. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy engages the Government on a wide range of human rights issues, including religious freedom. The Ambassador continued discussions with the Council of Churches and individual church leaders throughout the period covered by this report. The Ambassador and the Embassy's consular officer visit regularly with U.S. citizen missionaries of all denominations.

## PHILIPPINES

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, although there were a few exceptions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Adherents of all faiths are free to exercise their religious beliefs in all parts of the country without government interference or restriction; however, socioeconomic disparity between the Christian majority and the Muslim minority has contributed to persistent conflict in certain provinces. The principal remaining armed insurgent Muslim group continued to seek greater autonomy or an independent Islamic state. Peace talks between the Government and this group stalled during June 2000 as violent clashes claimed many lives on both sides. Negotiations began again after Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became President in January 2001. In June 2001, the Government reached agreement with this group to implement a cease-fire agreement, cooperate in efforts to resettle displaced persons, and undertake development projects in areas of conflict. Militant Muslim splinter groups have engaged in terrorism. Moderate Muslim leaders strongly criticized these tactics.



There is some ethnic and cultural discrimination against Muslims by Christians. This has led some Muslims to seek successfully a degree of political autonomy for Muslims in the southwestern part of the country.

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The Philippines has a land area of approximately 118,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 76.4 million. Over 85 percent of citizens of this former Spanish colony claim membership in the Roman Catholic Church, according to the most recent official census data on religious preference (1990). Other Christian denominations together comprise approximately 8.7 percent of the population. Followers of the Islamic faith totaled 4.6 percent and Buddhists 0.1 percent. Indigenous and other religious traditions accounted for 1.2 percent of those surveyed. Atheists and persons who did not designate a religious preference accounted for 0.3 percent of the population.

Some academic experts question the accuracy of the statistical sampling in the 1990 census. Some Muslim scholars argue that census takers seriously undercounted the number of Muslims because of security concerns in western Mindanao, where Muslims still are a majority, that often prevented them from conducting accurate counts outside urban areas. Current estimates place the number of Muslims at at least 5 million, or approximately 7 percent of the population. Muslims reside principally in Mindanao and nearby islands and are the largest single minority religious group in the country.

There is no available data on "nominal" members of religious organizations. Estimates of nominal members of the largest group, Roman Catholics, range from 60 to 65 percent of the total population. These estimates are based on regular church attendance. El Shaddai, a lay charismatic movement affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, has grown rapidly in the last decade; it claims approximately 5 million active members within the country and an additional 300,000 members in other countries.

Most Muslims belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. There is a small number of Shi'a believers in the provinces of Lanao del Sur and Zamboanga del Sur. Approximately 19 percent of the population of Mindanao is Muslim, according to the 1990 census. Members of the Muslim minority are concentrated in five provinces of western Mindanao: Maguindanao; Lanao del Sur; Basilan; Sulu; and Tawi-Tawi. There also are significant Muslim communities in nearby Mindanao provinces, including Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, and North Cotabato. There are sizable Muslim neighborhoods in metropolitan Manila on Luzon, and in Palawan.

Among Protestant and other Christian groups, there are numerous denominations, including Seventh Day-Adventists, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, Assemblies of God, and Philippine (Southern) Baptist denominations. In addition there are two churches established by Filipino religious leaders, the Independent Church of the Philippines or Aglipayan and the Iglesia ni Cristo (Church of Christ). A majority of the country's nearly 12 million indigenous people reportedly are Christians. However, observers note that many indigenous groups mix elements of their native religions with Christian beliefs and practices.

Christian missionaries work in most parts of western Mindanao, often within Muslim communities.

#### SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, although there were a few exceptions. Although Christianity, particularly Roman Catholicism, is the dominant religion, there is no state religion. The Government generally does not restrict adherents of other religions from practicing their faith.

Organized religions must register with the Securities and Exchange Commission as nonstock, nonprofit organizations and with the Bureau of Internal Revenue to establish their tax-exempt status. There were no reports of discrimination in the registration system during the period covered by this report.

The Government provides no direct subsidies to institutions for religious purposes, including aid to the extensive school systems maintained by religious orders and church groups. The Office of Muslim affairs, funded through the Office of the President, generally limits its activities to fostering Islamic religious practices, although

it also has the authority to coordinate projects for economic growth in predominantly Muslim areas. The office's Philippine Pilgrimage Authority helps coordinate the travel of religious pilgrimage groups to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, by providing bus service to and from airports, hotel reservations, and guides. The Presidential Assistant for Muslim Affairs helps coordinate relations with countries that have large Islamic populations that have contributed to Mindanao's economic development and to the peace process with insurgent groups.

The four-province Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was established in 1990 to respond to the demand of Muslims for local autonomy in areas where they are a majority or a substantial minority. The provinces comprising the ARMM are: Maguindanao; Lanao del Sur; Sulu; and Tawi-Tawi.

In 1996 the Government signed a peace agreement with the Islamic Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), concluding an often violent struggle that had lasted more than 20 years. A plebiscite on autonomy for an expanded autonomous region, promised in the 1996 peace agreement, again was postponed during the period covered by this report. The Government is working with the MNLF's leaders on a variety of development programs to reintegrate former MNLF fighters into the market economy through jobs and business opportunities. In addition the integration of ex-MNLF fighters into the armed forces and police has eased suspicion between Christians and Muslims.

Peace negotiations between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the chief remaining armed Muslim separatist group, stalled during June 2000. During the second half of 2000, government forces completed the military offensives begun during the first half of the year, overrunning most MILF strongholds. Negotiations began again after Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became President in January 2001. In June 2001, the Government reached agreement with the MILF to implement a cease-fire agreement, cooperate in efforts to resettle displaced persons, and undertake development projects in areas of conflict.

In June 2000, following persistent reports that troops operating against Muslim separatists in Mindanao had desecrated mosques, the Secretary of National Defense ordered the AFP to refrain from such action. The Department of National Defense issued code-of-conduct instructions that included provisions that military offensives could not be begun during Muslim prayer hours "unless absolutely required."

The Code of Muslim Personal Laws, enacted in 1977, recognizes the Shari'a (Islamic law) civil law system as part of national law; however, it applies only to Muslims, and applies regardless of their place of residence in the country. As part of their strategy for a moral and religious revival in western Mindanao, some Muslim religious leaders (ulamas) argue that the Government should allow Islamic courts to extend their jurisdiction to criminal law cases, a step beyond the many civil law cases that they already can settle as part of the judicial system in western Mindanao. Some ulamas also support the MILF's goal of forming an autonomous region governed in accordance with Islamic law.

Based on a traditional policy of promoting moral education, local public schools make available to church groups the opportunity to teach moral values during school hours. Attendance is not mandatory, and various churches rotate in sharing classroom space. In many parts of Mindanao, Muslim students routinely attend Catholic schools from elementary to university level. These students are not required to undertake Catholic religious instruction.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Muslims, who are concentrated in the most impoverished parts of western Mindanao, complained that the Government has not made sufficient effort toward economic development in those areas. Some Muslim religious leaders asserted that Muslims suffer from economic discrimination, which is reflected in the Government's failure to provide money to stimulate southwestern Mindanao's sluggish economic development. Leaders in both Christian and Muslim communities contend that economic disparities and ethnic tensions, more than religious differences, are at the root of the modern separatist movement that emerged in the early 1970's.

Intermittent government efforts to integrate Muslims into political and economic society have achieved only limited success to date. Many Muslims claim that they continue to be underrepresented in senior civilian and military positions, and have cited the lack of proportional Muslim representation in the national government institutions. At the end of the period covered by this report, there was one Muslim cabinet secretary and two Muslim senior presidential advisors, but no Muslim senators or Supreme Court justices. There are 7 Muslims in the 206-member House of Representatives.

In July 2000, many Muslims complained of the Government's disrespect for Muslim religious practices when then-President Estrada celebrated an Armed Forces of

the Philippines (AFP) military victory by holding a pork and beer feast at the former headquarters of the separatist MILF.

The Government placed responsibility on the MILF for mass killings on July 16, 2000 in Bumbaran, Lanao del Sur Province, but after subsequent investigation, the Commission on Human Rights stated that the perpetrators could have been non-MILF separatists posing as MILF members, or may have been renegade former members of the MNLF. MILF soldiers reportedly had forced approximately 33 civilians, all Christians, into a Muslim prayer house in the early morning. After a nearby battle during the day between the MILF and government forces, armed persons fired on the civilians in custody, killing 21 persons and injuring 9 others.

The profit-oriented terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) claims to seek the immediate establishment of an independent Islamic state in the southwestern part of the country. In fact, however, the ASG is a loose collection of criminal-terrorist gangs, and its religious affiliation is rejected by mainstream Muslim leaders. All ASG kidnap victims taken during 2000 except one had been released by mid-April 2001, but in late May the ASG kidnaped another 20 hostages, including several foreign nationals. More hostages were taken in June 2001, and several were beheaded by their captors. Most of those hostages remained in captivity at mid-year. Although many Muslims believe that discrimination against them is rooted in their religious culture, most do not favor the establishment of a separate state, and the overwhelming majority reject terrorism as a means of achieving a satisfactory level of autonomy. Mainstream Muslim leaders, both domestic and foreign, have strongly criticized the actions of the ASG and its renegade offshoots as "un-Islamic."

#### *Forced Religious Conversions*

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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious affiliation is customarily a function of a person's family, ethnic group, or tribal membership. Historically, Muslims have been alienated socially from the dominant Christian majority, and there is some ethnic and cultural discrimination against Muslims.

Christian and Muslim communities live in close proximity throughout central and western Mindanao and, in many areas, their relationship is harmonious. However, efforts by the dominant Christian population to resettle in traditionally Muslim areas, particularly over the past 60 years, have brought resentment from some Muslim residents. Muslims view Christian proselytizing as an extension of an historical effort by the Christian majority to deprive them of their homeland and cultural identity as well as their religion. Christian missionaries work in most parts of western Mindanao, often within Muslim communities.

On August 27, 2000, unidentified persons attacked a vehicle and killed 12 passengers, all Muslims, in Carmen, North Cotabato. The Government blamed the MILF, but the provincial governor stated that those responsible may have been civilians seeking revenge on Muslims.

The national culture, with its emphasis on familial, tribal, and regional loyalties, creates informal barriers whereby access to jobs or resources is provided first to those of one's own family or group. Some employers have a biased expectation that Muslims have a lower educational level. Predominantly Muslim provinces in Mindanao continue to lag behind the rest of the island of Mindanao in almost all aspects of socioeconomic development.

Religious dialog and cooperation among the country's various religious communities generally are amicable. Many religious leaders are involved in ecumenical activities and also in interdenominational efforts to alleviate poverty. The Interfaith Group, which is registered as a nongovernmental organization, includes Roman Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant church representatives who have joined together in an effort to support the Mindanao peace process through work with communities of former combatants. Besides social and economic support, the Interfaith Group seeks to encourage Mindanao communities to instill their faiths in their children.

Amicable ties among religious groups are reflected in many nonofficial organizations. The leadership of human rights groups, trade union confederations, and industry associations represent many religious persuasions.

The Bishops-Ulams Conference, which meets monthly to deepen mutual doctrinal understanding between Roman Catholic and Muslim leaders in Mindanao, helps further the Mindanao peace process. The co-chairs of the conference are the Archbishop of Davao, Ferdinand Capalla, and the president of the Ulama Associa-

tion, Majid Mutilan, the outgoing governor of Lanao del Sur province. The conference seeks to foster exchanges at the local level between parish priests and local Islamic teachers. Paralleling the dialog fostered by religious leaders, the Silsila Foundation in Zamboanga City hosts a regional exchange among Muslim and Christian academics and local leaders meant to reduce bias and promote cooperation.

The Government's National Ecumenical Commission (NEC) fosters interfaith dialog among the major religious groups—the Roman Catholic Church, Islam, Iglesia ni Cristo, the Philippine Independent Church (Aglipayan), and Protestant denominations. The Protestant churches are represented in the NEC by the National Council of Churches of the Philippines and the Council of Evangelical Churches of the Philippines. Members of the NEC met periodically with the President to discuss social and political questions.

#### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy staff members have met with representatives of all major faiths to learn about their concerns on a variety of issues. In addition the U.S. Government supports the Government's peace process with Muslim insurgents in Mindanao, which has the potential to contribute to a better climate for interfaith cooperation. The U.S. Agency for International Development provides training and economic assistance to former Muslim combatants who seek jobs and business opportunities, and support for their agricultural livelihood projects.

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## SAMOA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Samoa is comprised of two major islands that total approximately 1,000 square miles, and the population is about 180,000 persons. Most live on the island of Upolu, where the capital, Apia, is located. As a result of a strong missionary movement in the 19th century, nearly 100 percent of the population is Christian; most of the population is Protestant, although Roman Catholicism is a significant force. The religious distribution of the population is estimated to be: Congregational Christian Church (43 percent); Catholic (21 percent); Methodist (17 percent); the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (10 percent); and Seventh-Day Adventist (about 3 percent). There are small congregations of other Christian denominations, as well as members of the Baha'i Faith and adherents of Islam. There are no reports of atheists. This distribution of church members is reflected throughout the population, but individual villages, particularly small ones, may have only one or two of the major churches represented.

There are no sizable foreign national or immigrant groups, with the exception of U.S. citizens, most of whom are American Samoans. Members of this group practice the same faiths as native-born (Western) Samoans.

There is little or no correlation between religious differences and ethnic or political differences. Religious groups are comprised of citizens of any social and economic status.

Foreign missionary groups include the Baha'i Faith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Roman Catholics.

#### SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion along with freedom of thought and conscience, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The

Government at all levels generally protects this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution provides the right to practice the religion of one's choice, and the Government observes and enforces these provisions. The Constitution also provides for the protection of the right of religious freedom and effective remedies for violation of that right. Judicial remedies are accessible and effective.

The preamble to the Constitution acknowledges "an independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and traditions." Nevertheless, while Christianity is constitutionally favored, there is no official or state religion. There are no religious holidays, aside from Christmas, that are considered national holidays.

There are no requirements for the recognition of a religious group or for licenses or registration.

The Constitution provides freedom from unwanted religious indoctrination in schools but gives each denomination or religion the right to establish its own schools; these provisions are adhered to in practice. There are both religious and public schools; the public schools do not have religious instruction as part of their curriculum.

Pastoral schools in most villages provide religious instruction.

There is an independent Christian radio and television station.

Missionaries operate freely, either as part of one of the established churches, or by conducting independent revival meetings.

The Government takes steps to promote interfaith understanding by rotating ministers from various denominations who assist at government functions. Most government functions include a prayer at the opening.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

Although the Constitution grants each person the right to change religion or belief and to worship or teach religion alone or with others, in practice the matai (village chiefs) often choose the religious denomination of the aiga (extended family). In previous years, despite constitutional protections, village councils—in the name of maintaining social harmony within the village—sometimes banished or punished families that did not adhere to the prevailing religious belief in the village. However, civil courts take precedence over village councils, and courts have ordered families readmitted to the village. The 1990 Village Fono Act gives legal recognition to the decisions of the fono (village courts) and provides for limited recourse of appeal to the Lands and Titles Courts and to the Supreme Court. In July 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that the Village Fono Act may not be used to infringe upon villagers' freedom of religion, speech, assembly, or association. The Supreme Court also ordered the reinstatement of 32 persons who had been banished from a village for practicing a religion other than that traditionally practiced in the village. The plaintiffs had complained that the village matai in Saipipi village had prohibited them from conducting Bible classes or church services on the village's communal land and limited the number of churches allowed in the village.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

There is strong societal pressure at the village and local level to attend church, participate in church services and activities, and support church leaders and projects financially. In some denominations, such financial contributions often total more than 30 percent of family income. A high percentage of the population attends church weekly.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

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## SINGAPORE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in some circumstances.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government has banned Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church. The Government does not tolerate speech or actions that could affect racial harmony.

The generally amicable relationship among the religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 254 square miles and a total population of 4 million, of whom 3.3 million are citizens or permanent residents. According to an official survey, 85 percent of citizens and permanent residents profess some religious faith or belief. Of this group, slightly more than one-half (51 percent) practice Buddhism, Taoism, ancestor worship, or other faiths traditionally associated with the ethnic Chinese. Approximately 15 percent of the population are Muslim, 15 percent are Christian, and 4 percent are Hindu. The remainder are agnostics or atheists. Among Christians, the majority of whom are Chinese, Protestants outnumber Roman Catholics by slightly more than two to one. There are also small Sikh, Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Jain communities.

Approximately 77 percent of the population are Chinese, 14 percent are ethnic Malay, and 8 percent are ethnic Indian.

Virtually all ethnic Malays are Muslim and most Indians are Hindu. The ethnic Chinese population is divided among Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity, or are agnostic or atheist.

Foreign missionaries are active in the country and include Catholics, Mormons, and Baptists.

### SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in some circumstances. The Constitution provides that every citizen or person in the country has a constitutional right to profess, practice, or propagate his religious belief so long as such activities do not breach any other laws relating to public order, public health, or morality. There is no state religion.

All religious groups are subject to government scrutiny and must be registered legally under the Societies Act. The Government deregistered the Singapore Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1972 and the Unification Church in 1982, making them unlawful societies.

The Government plays an active but limited role in religious affairs. For example the Government seeks to assure that citizens, the great majority of whom live in publicly subsidized housing, have ready access to religious organizations traditionally associated with their ethnic groups by assisting religious institutions to find space in these public complexes. The Government maintains a semiofficial relationship with the Muslim community through the Islamic Religious Council (MUIS) set up under the Administration of Muslim Law Act. The MUIS advises the Government on concerns of the Muslim community and has some regulatory functions over Muslim religious matters. The Government provides some financial assistance to build and maintain mosques.

The Constitution acknowledges ethnic Malays as "the indigenous people of Singapore" and charges the Government to support and promote their political, educational, religious, economic, social, cultural, and language interests.

The Presidential Council on Minority Rights examines all pending bills to ensure that they are not disadvantageous to a particular group. It also reports to the Government on matters affecting any racial or religious community and investigates complaints.

The Government does not promote interfaith understanding directly; however, it sponsors activities to promote interethnic harmony, and, since the primary ethnic minorities are predominantly of one faith the Government programs to promote ethnic harmony have implications for interfaith relations.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government restricts certain religions by application of the Societies Act; it has banned Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church. In 1982 the Minister for Home Affairs dissolved the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, also known as the Unification Church. In 1972 the Government deregistered and banned the Singapore Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses on the grounds that its roughly 2,000 members refuse to perform military service (which is obligatory for all male citizens), salute the flag, or swear oaths of allegiance to the State. Although the Court of Appeals in 1996 upheld the rights of Jehovah's Witnesses to profess, practice, and propagate their religious belief, the result of deregistration has been to make meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses illegal. The Government also has banned all written materials published by the International Bible Students Association and the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, both publishing arms of Jehovah's Witnesses. In practice this has led to confiscation of Bibles published by the group, even though the Bible itself has not been outlawed.

There are 26 Jehovah's Witnesses incarcerated in the Armed Forces Detention Barracks because of their refusal to serve in the Armed Forces. The Government regards such refusal as prejudicial to public welfare and order. Sentences are initially 15 months, to which 24 months is added upon a second refusal. Subsequent failures to perform required annual military reserve duty receive 40-day sentences; a 12-month sentence is usual after four such refusals.

Since the beginning of 2000, public secondary schools have indefinitely suspended 12 students who were members of Jehovah's Witnesses for refusing to sing the national anthem or participate in the flag ceremony. In April 2001, one public school teacher, also a member of Jehovah's Witnesses, resigned after being threatened with dismissal for refusing to participate in singing the national anthem. In 1998 another member of Jehovah's Witness lost a law suit against a government school for wrongful dismissal because he also refused to sing the national anthem or salute the flag. In March 1999, the Court of Appeals denied his appeal.

The 1990 Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, which was prompted by actions that the Government perceived as threats to religious harmony, including aggressive and "insensitive" proselytizing and "the mixing of religion and politics," gives the Government the power to restrain leaders and members of religious groups and institutions from carrying out political activities, "exciting disaffection against" the Government, creating "ill-will" between religious groups or carrying out subversive activities. The act also prohibits judicial review of its enforcement or of any possible denial of rights arising from it.

The Government does not tolerate speech or actions, including ostensibly religious speech or action, that affect racial and religious harmony and sometimes issues restraining orders barring persons from taking part in such activities.

The Presidential Council on Religious Harmony reports to the Minister for Home Affairs on matters affecting the maintenance of religious harmony that are referred to the Council by the Minister or by Parliament. The Council also considers and makes recommendations to the Minister on restraining orders referred to the Council by the Minister. Such orders are directed at individuals to restrain them from causing feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will, or hostility between among various religious groups or to restrain them from mixing religion with politics. The orders put individuals on notice that they should not repeat such acts, and advise them that failure to do so would result in prosecution in a court of law.

On December 31, 2000, police arrested and later charged 15 Falun Gong adherents for conducting protest without a permit; only 2 of those arrested were citizens. The 15 persons arrested had participated in an assembly of 60 Falun Gong members who sought to draw attention to the arrest and killing of Falun Gong members in China. The group had not sought a permit, asserting that police had not responded to their previous efforts to obtain permits.

In October 2000, the Government refused to grant a public entertainment license for a controversial play that depicted marital violence experienced by Indian Muslim women after the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore strongly objected to the play's content. The government rejected the application on the grounds that the play might inflame religious and ethnic passions.

Missionaries, with the exception of Jehovah's Witnesses and representatives of the Unification Church, are permitted to work and to publish and distribute religious texts. However, while the Government does not prohibit evangelical activities in practice, it discourages activities that might upset the balance of intercommunal relations.

In October 1999, the Government proposed compulsory education for all children, which prompted concern from the Malay/Muslim community on the fate of madrasahs (Islamic religious schools). In response the Government exempted

madrasah students from compulsory attendance in national schools when the legislation was enacted in October 2000. However, madrasahs were given 8 years from the time that the law goes into effect to achieve minimum academic standards or they will no longer be allowed to teach core secular subjects such as science, mathematics, and English. The date the law goes into effect had not yet been decided by the end of the period covered by this report.

The Women's Charter, enacted in 1961, gives women, among other rights, the right to own property, conduct trade, and receive divorce settlements. Muslim women enjoy most of the rights and protections of the Women's Charter; however, for the most part, Muslim marriage law falls under the administration of the Muslim Law Act, which empowers the Shari'a court to oversee such matters. Those laws allow Muslim men to practice polygyny.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

Authorities briefly detained and questioned a man in 2000 and three others in 2001 for possession of banned religious material; none were charged with an offense.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among religious communities in society generally are amicable. Virtually all ethnic Malay citizens are Muslim, and ethnic Malays constitute the great majority of the country's Muslim community. Attitudes held by non-Malays on the Malay community and by Malays on the non-Malay community are based on both ethnicity and religion, and are virtually impossible to separate.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

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## SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 11,599 square miles, and its population is 450,000. Most citizens are members of Christian churches. The Anglican, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Methodist, and Seventh-Day Adventist denominations are represented. Traditional indigenous religious believers, consisting primarily of the Kwaio community on the island of Malaita, account for approximately 5 percent. Other groups, such as the Baha'i Faith, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and indigenous churches that have broken away from traditional Christian churches, account for another 2 percent. There are believed to be members of additional world religions within the foreign community who are free to practice their religion, but they are not known to proselytize or hold public religious ceremonies. According to the most recent census figures there are only six Muslims in the country.



## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The Department of Home and Cultural Affairs has a nominal policymaking role concerning religion. It characterizes this role, on the one hand, as keeping a balance between constitutionally protected rights of religious freedom, free speech, and expression; and, on the other hand, maintenance of public order. All religious institutions are required to register with the Government; however, there is no evidence that registration has been denied to any group.

In general the Government does not subsidize religion. However, several schools and health services in the country were built by and continue to be operated by religious organizations. There are schools sponsored by Roman Catholics, the Church of Melanesia, the United Church (Methodist), the South Sea Evangelical Church, and Seventh-Day Adventists. Upon independence the Government recognized that it had neither the funds nor the personnel to take over these institutions and agreed to subsidize their operations. The Government also pays the salaries of most teachers and health staff in the national education system.

The public school curriculum includes 30 minutes daily of religious instruction, the content of which is agreed upon by the Christian churches; students whose parents do not wish them to attend the class are excused. However, the Government does not subsidize church schools that do not align their curriculums with governmental criteria. There is mutual understanding between the Government and the churches but no formal memorandum of understanding. Although theoretically non-Christian religions can be taught in the schools, there is no such instruction at present.

Christianity was brought to the country in the 19th and early 20th centuries by missionaries representing several Western churches: Anglican; Roman Catholic; South Seas Evangelical; Seventh-Day Adventist; and the London Missionary Society (which became the United Church). Some foreign missionaries continue to work in the country. However, with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church, whose clergy is about 50 percent indigenous, the clergy of the other traditional churches is nearly entirely indigenous. Traditional church missionaries are represented by religions such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, the United Church (Methodist), the South Sea Evangelical Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

There are no government-sponsored ecumenical activities. Customarily, government oaths of office are taken on the Bible; however, religious oaths are forbidden by the Constitution and cannot be required.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

*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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities. Joint religious activities, such as religious representation at national events, are organized through the Solomon Islands Christian Association, which is composed of the five traditional churches of the country. Occasionally individual citizens object to the activities of nontraditional denominations and suggest that they be curtailed. However, society in general is tolerant of different religious beliefs and activities.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

## THAILAND

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it does not register new religious groups that have not been accepted into one of the existing religious governing bodies on doctrinal or other grounds. The Government places some limits on foreign missionaries.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 190,000 square miles and its population is approximately 60 million. In a 1997 survey, over 99 percent of the population professed some religious belief or faith. According to government statistics, approximately 94 percent of the population are Buddhist, and 5 percent are Muslim; however, recent estimates by academics and religious groups state that approximately 85 to 90 percent of the population are Theravada Buddhist, and up to 10 percent of the population are Muslim. Estimates also indicate that Christians constitute about 1 to 2 percent of the population. There are small animist, Hindu, Sikh, Taoist, Jewish, and Brahman populations. No official statistics exist as to the numbers of atheists or persons who do not profess a religious faith or belief, but recent surveys indicate that together they make up less than 1 percent of the population.

The dominant religion is Theravada Buddhism. The Buddhist clergy or Sangha consists of two main schools, which are governed by the same ecclesiastical hierarchy. Monks belonging to the older Mahanikaya school far outnumber those of the Dhammayuttika School, an order that grew out of a 19th century reform movement led by King Mongkut (Rama IV).

Islam is the dominant religion in four of the five southernmost provinces, which border Malaysia. Minority Muslim populations also live in 74 of the 76 provinces. The majority of Muslims are ethnic Malay, but the Muslim population encompasses groups of diverse ethnic and national origin, including descendants of immigrants from South Asia, China, Cambodia, and Indonesia. Government agencies did not use consistent figures to describe the size of the Muslim population during the period covered by this report, but most estimates suggest that Muslims constitute as much as 10 percent of the population. There are approximately 3,200 mosques in 57 provinces, with the largest number (552) in Pattani province. All but a very small number of these mosques are associated with the Sunni branch of Islam. The remainder, estimated by the Religious Affairs Department to be from 1 to 2 percent of the total, are associated with the Shi'a branch.

According to government statistics, Christians constitute approximately 0.7 percent (438,600) of the population. Almost half the Christian population lives in Chiang Mai province. The remainder live in the Bangkok area and in the north-eastern provinces. Approximately 25 percent of the Christian population is Roman Catholic. There are also several Protestant denominations. Most Protestant churches belong to one of four umbrella organizations. The oldest of these groupings, the Church of Christ in Thailand, was formed in the mid-1930's. The largest is the Evangelical Foundation of Thailand. Baptists and Seventh-Day Adventists are recognized by government authorities as separate Protestant denominations and are organized under similar umbrella groups.

There are six tribal groups (chao khao) recognized by the Government, with an estimated population from 500,000 to 600,000 persons, whose members generally are described as animists. Syncretistic practices drawn from Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, and ethnic Tai spirit worship are common. The Hindu and Sikh communities have an estimated population of about 19,000 persons. Both are associated with small immigrant groups that arrived from South Asia during the twentieth century, although Brahman temples had been established in Bangkok as early as 1784. The majority of Hindus and Sikhs live in Chonburi, Bangkok, and Phuket provinces.

The ethnic Chinese minority (Sino-Thai) has retained some popular religious traditions from China, including adherence to popular Taoist beliefs. Members of the Mien hill tribe follow a form of Taoism.

Mahayana Buddhism is practiced primarily by small groups of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants. There are more than 650 Chinese and Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist shrines and temples throughout the country.

Citizens proselytize freely. Monks working as Buddhist missionaries (Dhammaduta) have been active since the end of World War II, particularly in border areas among the country's tribal populations. In April 2001, there were approximately 3,100 Dhammaduta working in the country. In addition the Government sponsored the international travel of another 884 Buddhist monks sent by their temples to disseminate religious information abroad. Christian and Muslim organizations also reported having smaller numbers of citizens working as missionaries in Thailand and abroad.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, it restricts the activities of some groups. The Constitution requires that the monarch be a Buddhist. The state religion is in effect Theravada Buddhism; however, it is not designated as such. When the Constitution was being drafted in 1997, the Constitutional Drafting Assembly rejected a proposal to have Theravada Buddhism named the official religion on the grounds that such an action would create social division and be "offensive" to other religious communities in the country.

The Constitution states that discrimination against a person on the grounds of "a difference in religious belief" shall not be permitted. There was no significant pattern of religious discrimination during the period covered by this report. The Government maintained longstanding policies designed to integrate Muslim communities into society through developmental efforts and expanded educational opportunities, as well as policies designed to increase the number of appointments to local and provincial positions where Muslims traditionally have been underrepresented.

The Government plays an active role in religious affairs. The Religious Affairs Department (RAD), which is located in the Ministry of Education, registers religious organizations. In order to be registered, a religious organization first must be accepted into an officially recognized ecclesiastical group. During the period covered by this report, there were seven such groups, including one for the Buddhist community, one for the Muslim community, one for the Catholic community, and four for Protestant denominations. Government registration confers some benefits, including access to state subsidies, tax-exempt status, and preferential allocation of resident visas for organization officials. In practice unregistered religious organizations operate freely.

Under the provisions of the Religious Organizations Act of 1969, the Department of Religious Affairs recognizes a new religion if a national census shows that it has at least 5,000 adherents, has a uniquely recognizable theology, and is not politically active. However, since 1984 the Government has maintained a policy of not recognizing any new religious faiths. This has restricted the activities of some groups that have not been accepted into one of the existing religious governing bodies on doctrinal or other grounds.

The Constitution requires the Government "to patronize and protect Buddhism and other religions." The State subsidizes the activities of the three largest religious communities (Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian). During the period covered by this report, the Government provided approximately the equivalent of \$47 million to support religious groups. Included in this amount are funds: To support Buddhist and Muslim institutes of higher education; to fund religious education programs in public and private schools; to provide daily allowances for monks and Muslim clerics who hold administrative and senior ecclesiastical posts; and to subsidize travel and health care for monks and Muslim clerics. This figure also includes an annual budget for the renovation and repair of Buddhist temples and Muslim mosques, the maintenance of historic Buddhist sites, and the daily upkeep of the Central Mosque in Pattani.

During the period covered by this report, the Government also provided \$66,000 (3 million baht) to Christian organizations to support social welfare projects. Catholic and Protestant churches can request government support for renovation and repair work but do not receive a regular budget to maintain church buildings nor do they receive government assistance to support their clergy. The Government considers donations made to maintain Buddhist, Muslim, or Christian buildings to be tax-free income; contributions for these purposes are also tax-deductible for private donors.

The Government actively sponsors interfaith dialog in accordance with the Constitution, which requires the State to "promote good understanding and harmony among followers of all religions." The Government funds regular meetings and public education programs. These programs included the Religious Affairs Department

annual interfaith meeting for representatives of all religious groups certified by RAD. The September 2000 meeting in Bangkok drew 400 participants. They also included monthly meetings of the 17-member Subcommittee on Religious Relations, located within the Prime Minister's National Identity Promotion Office (The Subcommittee is composed of one representative from the Buddhist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Hindu, and Sikh communities in addition to civil servants from several government agencies), and a 1-week education program coorganized by the National Identity Promotion Office and the National Council on Social Welfare. The latter event is held each December in celebration of the King's birthday. Representatives from every religious organization recognized by the RAD are invited to attend seminars associated with the event. The program also targets the general public through films and public displays.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Two branches of the Government investigated religious groups alleged to be engaged in cult activities prior to the period covered by this report. In 1998 the National Security Council and the House Standing Committee on Religion, Arts, and Cultural Affairs initiated an investigation into the alleged "cultish practices" of the Hope of Thai People Foundation after complaints were filed at the Religious Affairs Department by parents claiming that their children had isolated themselves from friends and family after joining the church. In January 1999, the House Standing Committee moved to consider a petition filed by a Senator requesting that the foundation's activities be investigated. In response the foundation filed a law suit against the committee chairman for defamation in May 1999. The law suit against the former chairman, now a senator, remained in litigation at the end of the period covered by this report. No further action was taken before the committee disbanded at the end of the parliamentary session.

In February 2001, Thai Falun Gong members voluntarily decided not to proceed with plans organize an international meeting in Bangkok, proposed for April 2001. Their decision was in part a response to unofficial indications from the Government that it did not favor such a conference. There were reports that the government of China had exerted significant economic pressure on the Government in connection with this issue.

The Government does not recognize new religious faiths outside of the seven existing groupings. However, unregistered religious organizations operate freely. The Government has not recognized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

The Government permitted foreign missionary groups to work freely throughout the country, although it also maintained policies that favored proselytizing by its citizens.

The number of foreign missionaries officially registered with the Government is limited to a quota that originally was established by the Religious Affairs Department in 1982. The quota is divided along both religious and denominational lines and is considered sensitive for this reason. The Government does not publish or release its quotas for particular religious denominations. In May 2001, there reportedly were 2,000 foreign missionaries legally registered, including 418 Roman Catholic, 996 Protestant, 150 Mormon, and 6 Muslim missionaries.

While official registration conferred some benefits, such as longer terms for visa stays, it was not a significant barrier to foreign missionary activity during the period covered by this report. Many foreign missionaries entered the country using tourist visas and proselytized or disseminated religious literature without the acknowledgment of the Religious Affairs Department. There were no reports that foreign missionaries were deported or harassed for working without registration, although the activities of Muslim professors and clerics were subjected disproportionately to scrutiny on national security grounds because of continued government concern about the potential resurgence of Muslim separatist activities in the south.

Religious instruction is required in public schools at both the primary (grades 1 through 6) and secondary (grades 7 through 12) education levels. Students at the primary level are required to take 80 hours of instruction per academic year in religious studies classes. Instruction is limited to Buddhism and Islam. During the period covered by this report, some parts of the country with large Muslim student populations did not have Muslim studies courses. Muslim students in these schools generally were directed to school libraries to participate in Muslim self-study courses.

The Constitution provides for, and citizens generally enjoy, a large measure of freedom of speech. However, laws prohibiting speech likely to insult Buddhism remain in place under the 1997 Constitution. The police, who have legal authority under the Printing and Advertisement Act of 1941 to issue written warnings or or-

ders suspending the publication or distribution of printed materials considered offensive to public morals, confiscated a book in December 1999, written by a Phra Dhammakaya temple follower, that attacked a monk who is one of the chief critics of that temple. In December 1999, the police issued an arrest warrant for the author for defamation of character. As of June 2001, no arrest had been made in the case.

National Identity Cards produced by the Ministry of Interior since April 12, 1999 include an optional designation of the religious affiliation of the holder for the first time. The 1999 change in policy was implemented in response to the demands of parliamentarians who wanted easier identification of persons requiring Muslim burial. Persons who fail or choose not to indicate religious affiliation in their applications can be issued cards without religious information.

Muslim female civil servants are not permitted to wear headscarves when dressed in civil servant uniforms.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

#### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. The case of a March 1999 attack in Nonthaburi province was closed due to lack of evidence in May 2001.

None of the religious communities led "ecumenical" movements.

Religious groups closely associated with ethnic minorities, such as Muslims, experience some societal economic discrimination.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

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## TONGA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 277 square miles and its population is 102,321. According to the last official census (1996), membership by percentage of population of major denominations is: Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, 41.3 percent; Roman Catholic, 16 percent; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), 14 percent; Free Church of Tonga, 12 percent; others, 17 percent. However, both Roman Catholics and the Mormon Church state that between 30 to 40 percent of all citizens are members of their faiths. Members of the Tokaikolo Church (a local offshoot of the Methodist Church), Seventh-Day Adventists, Assembly of God, Anglicans, the Baha'i Faith, Islam, and Hinduism are represented in much smaller numbers. There were no reports of atheists.

Western missionaries, particularly members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and other Christian Denominations, are active in the country.

### SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

#### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this

right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

All religious groups are permitted duty-free entry of goods intended for religious purposes, but no religious group is subsidized or granted tax-exempt status. Missionaries operate without special restrictions. There are a number of schools operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and by the Wesleyan Church.

*Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Constitution states that Sunday, the Sabbath day, is to be “kept holy” and that no business can be conducted “except according to law.” Although an exception is made for hotels and resorts that are part of the tourism industry, the Sabbath day business prohibition is strictly enforced strictly for all businesses, regardless of the business owners’ religions.

The Tonga Broadcasting Commission (TBC) maintains policy guidelines regarding the broadcast of religious programming on Radio Tonga. The TBC guidelines state that in view of “the character of the listening public,” those who preach on Radio Tonga must confine their preaching “within the limits of the mainstream Christian tradition.” Due to this policy, the TBC does not allow members of the Baha’i Faith to discuss the tenets of their religion, or the founder, Baha’ullah, by name. Similarly, the TBC does not allow the Mormon Church to discuss its founder, Joseph Smith, or the Book of Mormon by name. This policy applies to all churches. Mormons utilize Radio Tonga for the announcement of church activities and functions. Other faiths also utilize Radio Tonga. Members of the Baha’i Faith utilize a privately owned radio station for program activities and the announcement of functions. A government-owned newspaper occasionally carries news articles about Baha’i activities or events, as well as those of other faiths.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

*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 Government’s refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government does not maintain a resident Embassy in Tonga; the U.S. Ambassador in Suva, Fiji is also accredited to the Government in Naku’alofa. The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Officials from the U.S. Embassy in Fiji meet with religious officials and nongovernmental organizations during visits to the country.

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## TUVALU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects 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 religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country is composed of nine island groups with a total land area of approximately 10 square miles and its population is 10,838. The Church of Tuvalu, which has historic ties to Congregational and other churches in Samoa, has the largest number of followers. There are no specific or official figures on religious membership; however, but Tuvaluan officials and others estimate membership as follows: Church of Tuvalu, 91 percent; Seventh-Day Adventists, 3 percent; Baha’i, 3 percent;

Jehovah's Witness, 2 percent; and Catholic, 1 percent. There are also smaller numbers of Muslims, Baptists, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and a few atheists.

All nine island groups have traditional chiefs who are members of the Church of Tuvalu. Most followers of other religions or denominations are found in Funafuti, the capital. An exception to this is the relatively large proportion of followers of the Baha'i Faith on Nanumea island.

There are a number of active Christian missionary organizations representing some of the same religious faiths practiced in the country.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion, and the Constitution provides for separation of church and state. However, in practice government functions at the national and island council levels, such as the opening of Parliament and other official and ceremonial events, often include Christian prayers, clergy, or perspectives.

Missionaries practice without specific restrictions.

### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

During the period covered by this report, the country's radio station was sold to a private owner who charges all churches for radio broadcasting time except for daily morning devotion. The Church of Tuvalu, the largest and most popular church, continues to conduct the morning devotion program.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Interfaith relations generally are amicable, but reportedly there is a degree of social intolerance for non-Church of Tuvalu activities, particularly on some outer islands. Members of the Church of Tuvalu dominate most aspects of social and political life in Tuvalu, given that they comprise over 90 percent of the population.

There are no ecumenical movements.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government does not maintain a resident Embassy in Tuvalu; the U.S. Ambassador in Suva, Fiji is also accredited to the Government in Funafuti. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Fiji visit periodically to discuss religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officials also meet with representatives of the religious communities and nongovernmental organizations that have an interest in religious freedom. The U.S. Embassy actively supports efforts to improve and expand governmental and societal awareness of and protection for human rights, including the right to freedom of religion.

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## VANUATU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by the report and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

Although traditions of communal decisionmaking sometimes conflict with the introduction of new churches in rural communities, government officials use modern law and traditional authority to maintain amicable relations among established and new churches. Both government policy and the strength of traditional authority figures contribute to the religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country is an island nation, covering approximately 4,707 square miles; its population is approximately 183,000. The great majority of the population belong to Christian churches, although many combine their Christian faith with some pre-Christian cultural practices. Church membership is primarily Presbyterian (approximately 48 percent), Roman Catholic (15 percent), and Anglican (12 percent). Another 30 percent are members of the Church of Christ, the Apostolic Church, the Assemblies of God, or the Seventh-Day Adventists. The John Frum Movement is centered on the island of Tanna and includes less than 5 percent of the population. Muslims, members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) reportedly also are active. There are believed to be members of other religions within the foreign community who are free to practice their religions, but they are not known to proselytize or hold public religious ceremonies.

Missionaries representing several Western churches brought Christianity to the country in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some foreign missionaries continue this work; however, the clergy of the established churches is now primarily indigenous. Missionaries represent the Church of Christ, Presbyterians, Seventh-Day Adventists, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics. Current missionary activity includes the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which translates the New Testament into indigenous languages.

#### SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

##### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The preamble of the Constitution refers to a commitment to traditional values and Christian principles; however, the Constitution also provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

In 1995 in response to concerns expressed by some established churches about the activities of new missionary groups, such as the Holiness Fellowship, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Parliament passed the Religious Bodies Act. However, the President never signed the act, and it never has been enforced. A few churches registered with the Government voluntarily, while some church representatives believe that it had a chilling effect on new missionary activity.

The Government interacts with churches through the Department of Internal Affairs and the Vanuatu Christian Council. Customarily, government oaths of office are taken on the Bible. The Government provides some financial help for the construction of churches for council members, provides grants to church-operated schools, and pays the national teaching staffs. These benefits are not available to non-Christian religious organizations. Government schools also schedule time each week for religious education conducted by representatives of council churches, using materials designed by those churches. Students whose parents do not wish them to attend the class are excused. Non-Christian religions are not permitted to teach their religions in the public schools.

Aside from the activities of the Department of Internal Affairs, use of government resources to support religious activities is not condoned (although there is no specific law prohibiting such support). If a formal request is given to the Government and permission is granted, governmental resources may be used. The Ombudsman's Office investigated the Minister of Health for allegedly using his office and stationery to solicit contributions for the John Frum Movement, a political party that is an indigenous religious movement on the island of Tanna.

The Government does not attempt to control missionary activity.

There are no government-sponsored ecumenical activities.

##### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

##### *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 Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.



## SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations between the religious communities; however, some churches and individuals object to the missionary activities of nontraditional denominations and continue to suggest that they be curtailed. There continues to be pressure to reinstate controls.

Religious representation at national events is organized through the Vanuatu Christian Council. Ecumenical activities of the council are limited to the interaction of its members.

In rural areas, traditional Melanesian communal decisionmaking predominates. If a member of the community wants to start something new, such as a new church, the chief and the rest of the community must agree. If a new church is started without community approval, the community views this action as a gesture of defiance by those who join the new church and as a threat to community solidarity. However, the resulting turmoil so far has been resolved through appeals from traditional leaders to uphold individual rights.

## SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting of human rights.

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**VIETNAM**

Both the Constitution and government decrees provide for freedom of worship; however, the Government continued to restrict those organized activities of religious groups that it declared to be at variance with state laws and policies. The Government generally allowed individual worship for those persons who participated privately in recognized religious bodies, including the Buddhist and Roman Catholic traditions. Participation in religious activities throughout the country continued to grow significantly; however, the Government maintained organizational control of the administration of recognized religions, and restrictions on the hierarchies and clergy of most religious groups remained in place. The Government controlled the administrative process leading to the creation of the official organizations for the major sanctioned religions, including the naming of their officers. In some cases, most notably the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Buddhist religions, some former leaders of the nonofficial pre-1975 organizations and many believers reject the official organizations.

Overall, the status of respect for religious freedom did not change during the period covered by this report, but remains improved from conditions of the early 1990's. The Government used the lack of official recognition of groups to restrict them; certain groups of Buddhists, Protestants, and Hoa Hao lack legal recognition. Restrictions remained on unrecognized religions and dissident religious leaders and groups. These restrictions were particularly harsh in some border provinces, although religious practice and observance became easier for believers in other parts of the country. In April 2001, the Government officially recognized the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam and allowed the group to elect its own leaders democratically. However, in February 2001, in the Central Highlands provinces of Gia Lai and Dak Lak the government took action against Protestant ethnic minorities protesting in part against the loss of traditional homelands to recent migrants—mostly ethnic Vietnamese—and abusive police treatment in the provinces. The authorities detained several Protestant leaders, and security forces harassed some local Christians, especially those suspected of advocating political autonomy for the region. The Government continued to permit only intermittent, supervised access to these provinces by diplomats, nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), and other foreigners, making it difficult to verify conditions there.

Police routinely questioned persons who advocate dissident religious views and arbitrarily detained persons based on their religious beliefs and practices. Groups of Protestant Christians who worshipped in house churches in ethnic minority areas were subjected to detention by local officials who broke up unsanctioned religious meetings. Authorities also imprisoned persons for practicing religion illegally by using provisions of the Penal Code that allow for jail terms of up to 3 years for "abusing freedom of speech, press, or religion." There are an estimated two dozen religious prisoners and detainees.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society led to some modest attempts at cooperation and dialog in the southern part of the country.

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City maintained an active and regular dialog with senior- and working-level government officials to advocate greater religious freedom. The U.S. Ambassador and other U.S. officials discussed concerns about the detention and arrest of religious figures and other restrictions on religious freedom with cabinet ministers, Communist Party officials, and provincial officials. Intervention by the U.S. Government during the period covered by this report resulted in improvements, such as the release of at least five religious prisoners and detainees, a more open dialog on Cao Dai, and the recognition of the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam.

#### SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 122,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 80 million. The Government officially recognizes Buddhist (approximately 50 percent of the population), Roman Catholic (approximately 8 percent), Cao Dai (1.5 percent), Hoa Hao (1.5 percent), Protestant (0.9 percent), and Muslim (0.1 percent) religious organizations. Approximately 38 percent of citizens consider themselves nonreligious.

Among the country's religious communities, Buddhism is the dominant religious belief. Many Buddhists practice an amalgam of Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucian traditions that sometimes is called Vietnam's "triple religion." Some estimates suggest that more than half the population is at least nominally Buddhist, visit pagodas on festival days, and have a world view that is shaped in part by Buddhism, although in reality these beliefs rely on a very expansive definition of the faith. One prominent Buddhist official has estimated that 30 percent of Buddhists are devout and practice their faith regularly. The Government's Office of Religious Affairs uses a much lower estimate of 7 million practicing Buddhists. Mahayana Buddhists, most of whom are part of the ethnic Kinh majority, are found throughout the country, especially in the populous areas of the northern and southern delta regions. There are fewer Buddhists proportionately in certain highland areas, although migration of Kinh to highland areas is changing the distribution somewhat. Mahayana Buddhist monks in the country occasionally have engaged in political and social issues, most notably actively campaigning for peace and against perceived injustices in the former Republic of Vietnam during the 1960's.

A Khmer ethnic minority in the south practices Theravada Buddhism. Numbering just over 1 million persons, they live almost exclusively in the Mekong Delta.

There are an estimated 6 million Roman Catholics in the country (approximately 8 percent of the population). French missionaries introduced the religion in the 17th century. In the 1940's, priests in the large Catholic dioceses of Phat Diem and Bui Chu, to the southeast of Hanoi, organized a political association with a militia that fought against the Communist guerrillas until the military defeat in 1954. Hundreds of thousands of Catholics from the northern part of the country fled to Ho Chi Minh City (then called Saigon) and surrounding areas ahead of the 1954 partition of North and South. Catholics live throughout the country, but the largest concentrations remain in the southern provinces around Ho Chi Minh City and in the provinces just southeast of Hanoi. Catholicism has revived in northern regions. In recent years, congregations in the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong and many nearby provinces have rebuilt churches and reinstated religious services.

In the past several years, diplomatic missions from the Vatican have resulted in the filling of bishoprics that had been vacant for a number of years. In June 2000, a bishop was named for Da Nang province, and in August 2000, a bishop was named for Vinh Long province. During a Vatican delegation's visit in June 2001, the Government reportedly agreed to the Vatican's appointment of three additional bishops: A new bishop for Bui Chu Diocese; an auxiliary bishop for Ho Chi Minh City; and a coadjutor bishop for Phan Thiet. However, the Government also reportedly refused to allow appointment of a bishop for the Hung Hoa Diocese, a coadjutor bishop for Hanoi, and a bishop for Haiphong. The head of the Vatican delegation stated that the atmosphere in the meetings was warmer than on any of his six earlier visits. Government officials stated that they "view the Catholic Church as a positive force."

There are at least 700,000 Protestants in the country (less than 1 percent of the population), with more than half of these persons belonging to a large number of unregistered evangelical "house churches" that operate in members' homes or in rural villages, many of them in ethnic minority areas. Perhaps as many as 150,000 of the followers of house churches are Pentecostals, who celebrate "gifts of the spirit" through charismatic and ecstatic rites of worship. Protestantism in the country dates from 1911, when an American missionary from the Christian and Missionary Alliance arrived in Da Nang. Reports from believers indicated that Protestant

church attendance grew during the period covered by this report, especially among the house churches, despite continued government restrictions on proselytizing activities. Based on believers' estimates, two-thirds of Protestants are members of ethnic minorities, including ethnic Hmong (an estimated 150,000 followers) in the northwest provinces and some 200,000 members of ethnic minority groups of the Central Highlands (Ede, Jarai, Bahnar, and Koho, among others). The house churches in ethnic minority areas have been growing rapidly, sparked in part by radio broadcasts in ethnic minority languages from the Philippines.

The Cao Dai religion was founded in 1926 in the south. The Office of Religious Affairs estimates there are 1.1 million Cao Dai. Some NGO sources estimate that there are from 2 to 3 million followers. Cao Dai groups are most active in Tay Ninh Province, where the Cao Dai Holy See is located, and in Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta. There are separate groups within the Cao Dai religion, which is syncretistic, combining elements of many faiths. Its basic belief system is influenced strongly by Mahayana Buddhism, although it recognizes a diverse array of persons who have conveyed divine revelation, including Siddhartha, Jesus, Lao-Tse, Confucius, and Moses. During the 1940's and 1950's, the Cao Dai participated in political and military activities. Their opposition to the Communist forces until 1975 was a factor in government repression after 1975. The Cao Dai were granted legal recognition only in 1997. Some adherents claim that it became more broadly based in 2000.

Hoa Hao, considered by some of its followers to be a "reform" branch of Buddhism, was founded in the southern part of the country in 1939. Hoa Hao is a largely privatistic faith that does not have a priesthood and rejects many of the ceremonial aspects of mainstream Buddhism. According to the Office of Religious Affairs, there are 1.3 million Hoa Hao followers; church-affiliated expatriate groups estimate that there may be from 2 million to 3 million followers. Hoa Hao followers are concentrated in the Mekong Delta, particularly in provinces such as An Giang, where the Hoa Hao were dominant as a political and military as well as a religious force before 1975. Elements of the Hoa Hao were among the last defenders to surrender to Communist forces in the Mekong Delta in the summer of 1975.

Mosques serving the country's small Muslim population, estimated at 60,000 persons, operate in western An Giang province, Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, and provinces in the southern part of the country. The Muslim community is composed of ethnic Cham in the southern coastal provinces and western Mekong Delta. The Muslim community also includes some ethnic Vietnamese and migrants originally from Malaysia, Indonesia, and India. Most practice Sunni Islam.

There are a variety of smaller religious communities. Approximately 4,000 Hindus live in Ho Chi Minh City; some are ethnic Cham, but most are Indian or of mixed Indian-Vietnamese descent. Another estimated 4,000 ethnic Chams reportedly practice forms of Hinduism on the south central coast area.

There are estimated to be from several hundred to 2,000 members of the Baha'i Faith, largely concentrated in the south; prior to 1975, there were an estimated 130,000 believers, according to Baha'i officials.

There are several hundred members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) who are spread throughout the country but live primarily in the Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi areas.

Of the country's approximately 80 million citizens, 14 million or more reportedly do not practice any organized religion. Some sources strictly define those considered to be practicing Buddhists, excluding those whose activities are limited to visiting pagodas on ceremonial holidays. Using this definition, the number of nonreligious persons would be much higher, perhaps as high as 50 million persons.

Foreign missionaries from various groups throughout the country engaged in developmental, humanitarian, educational, and relief efforts. None of these organizations legally are permitted to register or to proselytize.

## SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

Both the Constitution and government decrees provide for freedom of worship; however, the Government continued to restrict significantly those organized activities of religious groups that it declared to be at variance with state laws and policies. The Government generally allowed persons to practice individual worship freely in one of the major sanctioned religions, and participation in religious activities throughout the country continued to grow significantly. However, the Government uses regulations to control religious hierarchies and organized religious activities closely, in part because in the past various religious bodies engaged in political and military activities and in part because the Communist Party believes that organized

religion may weaken its authority and its influence by serving as a political, social, and spiritual alternative to its own authority.

The secular Government does not favor a particular religion. The prominent traditional position of Buddhism does not affect religious freedom for others adversely, including those who wish not to practice a religion. The Constitution expressly protects the right of “non-belief” as well as “belief.”

The Government requires religious groups to register and uses this process to control and monitor religious organizations. Under the law, only those activities and organizations expressly sanctioned by the Government are deemed to be legal. In order for a group to obtain official recognition, it must obtain government approval of its leadership and the overall scope of its activities.

In February 2001, the Government organized a congress of Protestant delegates from the southern part of the country that led to the official recognition of the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam in April 2001. The Congress was notable for its election of officers, apparently free of government control. The newly recognized church is represented in all the southern provinces of the country; however, it is still unclear whether provincial officials will allow churches broad latitude to be represented by or to participate in the organization. The northern branch of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam, with some 15 officially approved churches in the northern part of the country, has been recognized for many years.

Officially recognized religious organizations are able to operate openly in most parts of the country, and followers of these religious bodies are able to worship without government harassment, except in some isolated provinces. Officially recognized organizations must consult with the Government about their religious and administrative operations, although not about their religious tenets of faith. While the Government does not directly appoint the leadership of the official religious organizations, to varying degrees it plays an influential role in shaping the process of selection and in some cases maintains a veto power. In general religious organizations are confined to dealing specifically with spiritual and with organizational matters. There has been a trend in the past several years to accord much greater latitude to followers of recognized religious organizations, and the majority of the country’s religious followers have benefited from this development. The Government holds conferences to discuss and publicize its religion decrees.

Religious organizations must obtain government permission to hold training seminars, conventions, and celebrations outside the regular religious calendar; to build or remodel places of worship; to engage in charitable activities or operate religious schools; and to train, ordain, promote, or transfer clergy. They also must obtain government permission for large mass gatherings, as do nonreligious groups. Many of these restrictive powers lie principally with provincial or city people’s committees, and local treatment of religious persons varied widely. Some provincial leaders, such as those in certain northwestern provinces, have claimed that there are no religious believers in their provinces since the religious believers there are not recognized officially.

Many Catholic churches in Ho Chi Minh City are allowed to provide religious education to children. Children also are taught religion at Khmer Buddhist pagodas and at mosques outside regular classroom hours.

Because of the lack of meaningful due process in the legal system, the actions of religious adherents are subject to the discretion of local officials in their respective jurisdictions. Because the court system is subservient to the Communist Party and its political decisions, and because persons are not charged specifically with religious offenses, there are no known cases in recent history in which the courts acted to interpret laws so as to protect a person’s right to religious freedom.

The degree of Government control of church activities varied greatly among localities. In some areas, especially in the south, Catholic churches operated kindergartens and engaged in a variety of humanitarian projects. Buddhist groups engage in humanitarian activities in many parts of the country.

The Office of Religious Affairs hosts periodic meetings to address religious matters according to government-approved agendas that bring together leaders of diverse religious traditions.

In practice there are no effective legal remedies for violations of religious freedom caused by the capricious actions of officials.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The Government continued to maintain broad legal and policy restrictions on religious freedom, although in many areas, Buddhists, Catholics, and Protestants reported an increase in religious activity and observance.

The Government restricts Protestant practice in the Central Highlands among the region’s ethnic minorities, particularly the Mnong, Ede, Jarai, and Bahnar, and re-

stricts Protestant congregations from cooperating on joint religious observances or other activities, although in some localities they were free to do so. There is some ecumenical networking among Protestants, particularly in Ho Chi Minh City. The Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECV), which comprises the network of Tin Lanh (Good News) churches, generally operated with greater freedom than did the so-called Protestant house churches. The roughly 300 Tin Lanh churches in the country are concentrated in the major cities, including Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, Hanoi, and in lowland areas. Until 2001 approximately 15 ECV churches in the northern provinces were the only officially recognized Protestant churches. One of the pastors of the main ECV church in Hanoi continued to be pressured by local authorities to resign from the church; government authorities proposed that he be replaced by a church official from Haiphong who was supported by local authorities. The pastor received a letter from local police stating that he had violated the law because of his past support of unsanctioned religious activities; however, the pastor and the congregation continued to resist successfully this 2-year-old effort to force him to resign.

In April 2001, the Government conferred legal recognition on the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam. This body represents Protestant churches throughout the southern part of the country, with representatives from every southern province, including the Central Highlands, where many "house churches" operate. However, it is still unclear whether provincial officials will allow churches broad latitude to be represented by or to participate in the organization. Because of past government repression of Protestantism, particularly in the Central Highlands, some Protestant pastors in that area are suspicious of the Southern Evangelical Church and reportedly do not plan to seek affiliation with it. It is not known whether the Southern Evangelical Church is to be allowed, or would like, to have formal ties to the legally recognized Evangelical Church of Vietnam, based in Hanoi.

The Government continued to ban and actively discourage participation in what it regards as illegal religious groups, including the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), Protestant house churches, and the unapproved Hoa Hao groups. The withholding of official recognition of religious bodies is one of the means by which the Government actively intervenes to restrict religious activities by some believers. Religious and organizational activities by UBCV monks are illegal, and all UBCV activities outside private temple worship are proscribed. Most evangelical house churches do not attempt to register because they believe that their applications would be denied, or because they want to avoid government control.

The Hoa Hao have faced severe restrictions on their religious and political activities since 1975, in part because of their previous armed opposition to the Communist forces. After 1975 all administrative offices, places of worship, and social and cultural institutions connected to the faith were closed, thereby limiting public religious functions. Believers continued to practice their religion at home; however, the lack of access to public gathering places contributed to the Hoa Hao community's isolation and fragmentation. Nevertheless, in June 2000, an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 believers gathered for a religious festival in An Giang province.

The Government dissolved the Hoa Hao Buddhist church in 1975 and established a new official Hoa Hao body in 1999. The Government never dissolved the Cao Dai church but placed it under the control of the Fatherland Front in 1977. The Government banned several of its essential ceremonies because it considered them to be "superstitious," and it imprisoned and reportedly killed many Cao Dai clergy in the late 1970's. In 1997 the Government reorganized the religion and set up a new "Management Council" of cooperative Cao Dai priests who drew up a new constitution. In 1981 the Government organized a new umbrella organization of Buddhist sects, the Central Buddhist Church of Vietnam, which effectively annulled the former Buddhist organization, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV). The Government imposed, through indirect means, its own leadership on these new organizations. The new government-established religious bodies excluded those leaders who did not cooperate with the Government and persons whom they believed to be anti-Communist. The excluded leaders and supporters of the pre-1975 organizations, both in the country and abroad, have continued to challenge the legitimacy of the new administrative bodies. Other leaders and individuals refused to accept the leadership of the government-established religious bodies on principle.

In February 2000, a group of Hoa Hao believers tried to revive their pre-1975 Hoa Hao group and established an association independent of the government-sanctioned body, the Hoa Hao Central Buddhist Church (HHCBC). Several leaders of the Hoa Hao community, including several pre-1975 leaders, openly criticized the Government's 1999 recognition of an official Hoa Hao organization; they claimed that the official group is subservient to the Government, and demanded official recognition of their own leadership instead. They petitioned the Government for official recogni-

tion, but the Government ignored their petition. Some of these persons then protested. The group's highest officers either were in prison or under house arrest at the end of the period covered by this report.

Provincial officials in Ha Giang and Lai Chau provinces in the north attempted to pressure Hmong Christians to recant their faith. Local and provincial officials in these areas circulated official documents urging persons to give up their illegal "foreign" religion and to practice traditional animist beliefs and ancestor worship. Regional and police newspapers printed articles documenting how persons were deceived into following the house church "cults."

The Government requires all Buddhist monks to work under the officially recognized Buddhist organization, the Central Buddhist Church of Vietnam. The Government continued to oppose efforts by the non-government-sanctioned UBCV to operate independently, and tension between the Government and the UBCV continued. Several prominent UBCV monks, including Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do, continued to face Government restrictions on their civil liberties during the period covered by this report. Buddhist monks in Hue also continued to complain that petitions to local authorities for permission to repair or renovate pagodas go unanswered.

In October 2000, police in the Mekong Delta prevented a group of UBCV monks from distributing flood relief supplies that were labeled "UBCV," although in November 2000, police allowed these monks to distribute unlabeled aid packets. Hoa Hao leaders reported that they also were allowed to distribute unlabeled relief supplies during flooding in the Mekong Delta in 2000.

Operational and organizational restrictions on the hierarchies and clergy of most religious groups remained in place. Religious groups faced difficulty in obtaining teaching materials, expanding training facilities, publishing religious materials, and expanding the number of clergy in religious training in response to increased demand from congregations. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, faces many restrictions on the training and ordination of priests, nuns, and bishops, thus limiting pastoral ministry. The Government effectively maintains veto power over Vatican appointments of bishops; however, in practice it has sought to cooperate with the Church in nominations for appointment. Likewise, the Government restricted the number of clergy that the Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant, and Cao Dai Churches may train. Restrictions remained on the numbers of Buddhist monks and Catholic seminarians. Protestants and Cao Dai were not allowed to operate a seminary or to ordain new clergy. In addition worshipers in several Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant, and Cao Dai centers of worship reported that they believed that undercover government observers attended worship services to monitor the activities of the congregation and the clergy.

The Cao Dai Management Council a government-controlled organization established in 1997, has the power to control all the affairs of the Cao Dai faith, and thereby manages the church's operations, its hierarchy, and its clergy within the country. Independent Cao Dai officials oppose the edicts of this committee as unfaithful to Cao Dai principles and traditions. When the committee rewrote the Cao Dai constitution in 1997, it banned certain traditional rituals that the Government deemed "superstitious," including the use of mediums to communicate with spirits. Because the use of mediums was essential to ceremonies accompanying promotion of clerics to higher ranks, the new Cao Dai constitution effectively banned clerical promotions. In December 1999, the Management Committee reached agreement with Cao Dai clergy that it would modify its rituals in a way that would be acceptable to the Government, but maintain enough spiritual direction to be acceptable to Cao Dai principles. As a result, a Congress was held in which several hundred Cao Dai clergy were promoted.

The local Catholic Church hierarchy remained frustrated by government restrictions but has learned to accommodate itself to them for many years. A number of clergy reported a modest easing of government control over church activities in certain dioceses, including in a few churches in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City that were allowed to offer English-language masses that only expatriates could attend. The Church was able to engage in religious education including the education of children and performing charitable activities in some geographic areas.

Roman Catholic seminaries throughout the country have approximately 500 students enrolled. The Government limits the Church to operating six major seminaries and to recruitment of new seminarians only every 2 years. All students must be approved by the Government both upon entering the seminary and prior to their ordination as priests. The Church believes that the number of students being ordained is insufficient to support the growing Catholic population.

The Muslim Association of Vietnam was banned in 1975 but authorized again in 1992. It is the only registered Muslim organization. Association leaders say that

they are able to practice their faith, including daily prayer, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the Hajj to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. From 30 to 40 Muslims journeyed to Mecca for the Hajj in 2001.

The constitutional right of freedom of belief and religion is interpreted and enforced unevenly. In some areas, such as parts of Ho Chi Minh City, local officials allow relatively wide latitude to believers; in others, such as isolated provinces of the northwest, Central Highlands, and central coast, religious believers are subject to significant harassment because of the lack of effective legal enforcement and the whim of local officials. Some religious groups that lacked registration were subjected to local government harassment. This was particularly true for Protestant and UBCV believers.

The Government prohibits proselytizing by foreign missionary groups. Some missionaries visited the country despite this prohibition and carried on informal proselytizing activities. The Government deported some foreign persons for unauthorized proselytizing, sometimes defining proselytizing very broadly. Proselytizing by citizens is restricted to regularly scheduled religious services in recognized places of worship. Immigrants and noncitizens must comply with the law when practicing their religions. In both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, there are Sunday morning Catholic masses conducted in English by local Vietnamese priests for the convenience of foreigners. In both cities, there also are well-publicized Protestant worship services for foreigners conducted by foreigners, some of whom are affiliated with religious NGO's, although the legal status of these services is unclear.

In April 1999, the Government issued a decree on religion that prescribes the rights and responsibilities of religious believers. The religion decree states that persons formerly detained or imprisoned must obtain special permission from the authorities before they may resume religious activities. Some persons previously detained were released and were active in their religious communities during the period covered by this report.

The decree also states that no religious organization can reclaim lands or properties taken over by the State following the end of the 1954 war against French rule and the 1975 Communist victory in the south. Despite this blanket prohibition, the Government has returned some church properties confiscated since 1975. The People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City returned two properties to the Catholic Church. On one of the properties, in Cu Chi District, the Church is constructing an HIV/AIDS hospice to be operated by the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. The other property is now a church-operated orphanage. One of the vice-chairmen of the official Buddhist Sangha said that approximately 30 percent of Buddhist properties confiscated in Ho Chi Minh City have been returned since 1975, and from 5 to 10 percent of all Buddhist properties confiscated in the south have been returned. However, UBCV leaders stated that their properties were not returned. Likewise the former Protestant seminary in Nha Trang is used for secular purposes. Most Cao Dai and Hoa Hao properties also have not been returned, according to church leaders.

The Government restricts and monitors all forms of public assembly, including assembly for religious activities; however, on some occasions, large religious gatherings have been allowed, such as the Catholic celebrations at La Vang, and attendance at Buddhist festivals and pilgrimage sites increased dramatically in recent years. The Hoa Hao also have been allowed to hold large public gatherings in An Giang province on certain Hoa Hao festival days. On certain other traditional Hoa Hao commemorative days such as the anniversary of the death of the Hoa Hao founder, large gatherings are discouraged. In March 2000, dissident Hoa Hao leaders were prevented by arrest, police roadblock, and other forcible means from organizing their own independent commemorations. In March 2001, dissident leaders did not attempt to organize a large independent commemorations; however, several Hoa Hao followers were allowed to travel individually and in small groups to the traditional pilgrimage site to commemorate the anniversary peacefully.

The Government restricts persons who belong to dissident and unofficial religious groups from speaking publicly about their beliefs. It officially requires all religious publishing to be done by government-approved publishing houses. A range of Buddhist sacred scriptures, Bibles, and other religious texts and publications are printed by these organizations and are distributed openly. The government-sanctioned Hoa Hao Committee has printed 15,000 copies of publications of parts of the Hoa Hao sacred scriptures; however, Hoa Hao believers reported that the Government continued to restrict the distribution of the full scriptures.

The Government allows religious travel for some, but not all, religious persons; Muslims are able to undertake the Hajj, and many Buddhist and Catholic officials also have been able to travel abroad. For example, groups of Buddhist monks and nuns have traveled to Burma to study Theravada Buddhism. However, persons who

hold dissident religious opinions generally are not approved for foreign travel. For example, the Buddhist monk Thich Thai Hoa has been refused permission to travel outside the country on several occasions, including to New York in September 2000. The Government allowed many bishops and priests to travel freely within their dioceses and allowed greater, but still restricted, freedom for travel outside these areas, particularly in many ethnic areas. Local officials reportedly discourage priests from entering Son La and Lai Chau provinces. Upon return from international travel, citizens, including clergy, officially are required to surrender their passports; this law is enforced unevenly.

The Government does not designate persons' religions on passports, although citizens' "family books," which are household identification documents, identify religious and ethnic affiliation. The Government allows, and in some cases encourages, links with coreligionists in other countries if the religious groups are approved by the Government.

The Government actively discourages contacts between the UBCV and its foreign Buddhist supporters, and between illegal Protestant organizations such as the house churches and their foreign supporters. Contacts between Vatican authorities and the domestic Catholic Church are permitted, and the Government maintains a regular, active dialog with the Vatican on a range of issues including organizational activities, the prospect of establishing diplomatic relations, and a possible papal visit.

Adherence to a religious faith generally does not disadvantage persons in civil, economic, and secular life, although it likely would prevent advancement to the highest government and military ranks. Avowed religious practice is a bar to membership in the Communist Party, although anecdotal reports indicate that a handful of the 2 million Communist Party members are religious believers. Increasingly, party and government officials discuss attending (or their family members attending) Christian church services or visiting pagodas.

The Government does not permit religious instruction in public schools; however, it does permit clergy to teach at universities in subjects in which they are qualified. Several Catholic nuns and at least one Catholic priest teach at Ho Chi Minh City universities. They are not allowed to wear religious dress when they teach or to identify themselves as clergy. Catholic Sunday religious education in Ho Chi Minh City increased. Khmer Theravada Buddhists and Cham Muslims regularly hold religious and language classes outside of normal classroom hours in their respective pagodas and mosques.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

A significant number of religious believers experience harassment because they operate without legal sanction. Local officials have persecuted "unregistered" Protestant believers in the northwestern provinces and the Central Highlands for a number of years, including through the demolition of churches and forced renunciations of faith. UBCV leaders continued to be harassed and their rights severely restricted by the Government. Officials also have detained or otherwise harassed some persons who have used purported spiritual activities or powers to cheat and deceive believers in areas with large numbers of ethnic minorities. Police authorities routinely question persons who hold dissident religious or political views. Credible reports suggest that police arbitrarily detained persons based on their religious beliefs and practice, particularly in mountainous ethnic minority areas.

The authorities in the northwest provinces severely restrict the religious freedom of evangelical Protestants, including ethnic Hmong and ethnic Tai. The growth of Protestant house churches in ethnic minority areas continued to lead to tensions with local officials, particularly in several border provinces. Several leaders of these churches, especially among the Hmong in the northwest and among ethnic minority groups in the Central Highlands, reportedly were harassed or detained. The secretive nature of the house churches, notably among ethnic minorities, has contributed to greater repression of these groups. Provincial officials in certain northwest provinces do not allow churches or pagodas to operate. They have arrested and imprisoned believers for practicing their faith nonviolently despite provisions of the Constitution that permit such activities.

On several occasions, small groups of Protestants belonging to house churches were subjected to arbitrary detention after local officials broke up unsanctioned religious meetings. There were reported instances, particularly in isolated provinces in the northwest and Central Highlands, in which Protestant house church followers were punished or fined by local officials for participation in peaceful religious activities such as worship and Bible study. According to credible reports from the Central Highlands, some local officials extorted cattle and money from Protestants in those areas. It cannot be confirmed whether their religious affiliation or other factors were the cause of this reported extortion.



At the beginning of 1999, there were more than 25 Hmong Protestants imprisoned, primarily in Lai Chau province, for “teaching religion illegally” or “abusing the rights of a citizen to cause social unrest.” Following protests by church leaders and international attention to the detentions, most of the detainees were released. Among those Hmong Protestant leaders still believed to be imprisoned are Hmong Protestant leaders Sinh Phay Pao, Va Sinh Giay, Vang Sua Giang, and Phang A Dong, who had been arrested in Ha Giang province late in 1999. Phang A Dong was charged with illegally traveling to China without a visa or passport.

The Government’s treatment of Hmong Protestants is complicated by several factors, including their religious practices. Some Hmong who fought against the Government in the past live in sensitive regions that border China and Laos, which leads the Government to question their loyalty. Among the Hmong, there are two distinct religious groups. One group’s members follow a traditional form of Christianity while the other group’s beliefs contain elements such as a doomsday belief in the impending end of the world that lies outside more mainstream tenets. These beliefs have exacerbated the authorities’ anxiety about the Hmong. The Government does not differentiate between the two groups in their general treatment of the Hmong.

In December 1999, Nguyen Thi Thuy, a Protestant house church leader in Phu Tho province, was sentenced to 1 year in prison after police raided her home, where she was leading a Bible study group. In March 2000, in what is believed to be the first case of its kind, a defense lawyer appealed Thuy’s conviction by arguing that her arrest in her home while practicing her faith violated her constitutional right to religious freedom. A judge dismissed her appeal, and her 1-year sentence was upheld. She was released in September 2000 after serving 11 months of her 12-month sentence. An ethnic Hre church leader, Dinh Troi, was detained in Quang Ngai province in 1999. It is believed that he still was detained at the end of the period covered by this report.

Despite the Government’s restrictions, Protestant worship continued to grow. Repression of Protestantism in the Central Highlands is complicated by the presence of groups that advocate political autonomy for the indigenous peoples who live in the area, particularly in southern Gia Lai and northwestern Dak Lak provinces. A small number of Protestant pastors in this area reportedly support the establishment of an autonomous “Dega” state; however, the more orthodox majority of Protestant pastors in the Highlands appear not to support such political change.

In early February 2001, ethnic minority groups held widespread demonstrations in the Central Highlands provinces of Gia Lai and Dak Lak in part to protest the loss of traditional homelands to recent migrants—mostly ethnic Vietnamese—and abusive police treatment in the provinces. According to unconfirmed reports, in the immediate aftermath of the February demonstrations, between 1 and 5 persons were killed as a result of police actions, and allegedly hundreds were injured in beatings by authorities. Two local leaders of Protestant congregations in Dak Lak, Ama Ger and Ama Bion, were detained in February 2001 and reportedly continued to be held in Buon Ma Thuot at the end of the period covered by this report. Hundreds of persons reportedly went into hiding, and many fled to Cambodia. The Government refused to allow independent observers into the area to make an assessment of the events. Protestant sources also reported that between February 2001 and the end of the period covered by this report, authorities in the Central Highland provinces and in neighboring mountainous areas of the coastal provinces arrested and beat numerous Protestant believers in a widespread government crackdown during that period.

There were reports that between February and April 2001 groups of vigilantes abducted and beat Protestant worshippers in the Central Highlands’ provinces. In April 2001, assailants severely beat two ethnic Vietnamese female primary school teachers on their return from a Protestant service in Phu Nhon District in Gia Lai Province. There were dozens of additional specific reports of similar beatings in the area. For example, in March there were unconfirmed reports that authorities demolished churches in Plei Lau Village in Phu Nhon district.

The government response to ethnic unrest in the Central Highlands was directed at the organizers of the demonstrations; however, because some organizers also were Protestant leaders, some local authorities cracked down on Protestants in their areas. There are reports that from February through the end of the period covered by this report, groups of vigilantes abducted and beat Protestant worshippers. According to one report, the Protestant churches in Ban Don district in Dak Lak province were closed following the February 2001 demonstrations; authorities prevented all assembly for worship since that time.

In March 2001, teachers at a public primary school in the same district reportedly ordered all the Christian students to renounce Christ. When the students refused,

they were suspended from school and not allowed to return until further notice. It is not known if they remained suspended at mid-year 2001. On March 10, 2001, soldiers dispersed approximately 200 persons who had gathered at a Protestant church in Plei Lau village in Phu Nhon district of Gia Lak province. A fight ensued in which one person using a spear reportedly was killed by gunfire when he attacked a soldier. Authorities later burned the church to the ground.

The Government continued to isolate certain political and religious dissidents, in particular leaders of the UBCV, by restricting their movements and by pressuring the supporters and family members of others. Since 1982 Thich Huyen Quang, the Supreme Patriarch of the UBCV, has lived in Quang Ngai Province under conditions resembling house arrest. Thich Huyen Quang confirmed that he must request permission before leaving the pagoda, which is surrounded on all sides by a pond and sits directly across the street from the local police station, whose officers monitor all visitors to and from the pagoda. He is not allowed to lead prayers or participate in worship as a monk, nor is he able to receive visits from sympathetic monks, sometimes several of whom attempt to visit each week. After meeting with him, visitors are occasionally questioned by police. Thich Huyen Quang has called for the Government to recognize and sanction the operations of the UBCV. In April 2000, Thich Huyen Quang wrote a letter to the Communist Party General Secretary, the President, and the Prime Minister, calling on them to proclaim April 30, the anniversary of the "reunification" of North and South Vietnam, "the Communist Party's National Day of Contrition." On July 5, police reportedly entered his pagoda and berated him about the letter. Government officials reportedly proposed last year to move Thich Huyen Quang to Hanoi, where medical care for his chronic conditions would be better, but he has refused.

In March 1999, Thich Huyen Quang was visited by senior UBCV leader Thich Quang Do for the first time in 18 years, but after 3 days of meetings both were held for questioning by police, and Thich Quang Do was escorted by police to his pagoda in Ho Chi Minh City. In February 2001, Thich Quang Do again visited Thich Huyen Quang in Quang Ngai Province for 1 day. While he was returning to Ho Chi Minh City, police detained Thich Quang Do twice and questioned him for a total of 6 hours, at one point forcing him to undergo a strip-search. In June 2001, authorities enforced the 5-year administrative surveillance order that he was under following his release from prison in 1998 by confining him to his living quarters under guard. The confinement was in response to his attempt to organize a group of monks and nuns to go to Quang Ngai province to take Thich Huyen Quang to Ho Chi Minh City.

In February 2001, UBCV monks Thich Thai Hoa and Thich Chi Mau organized a "week of prayer" at Tu Hieu Pagoda in Hue City in the central part of the country. From 500 and 1,000 persons came to the pagoda during the week to offer their support. Local authorities reportedly ordered public high school and college students to attend classes throughout the week, even on Sunday—traditionally a non-school day—in an attempt to prevent their attending the event. Persons who visited the pagoda during the week reported that security forces detained and questioned them at local police stations.

Hoa Hao believers stated that a number of church leaders of various unrecognized Hoa Hao groups remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report. On December 20, 2000, Le Quang Liem, Chairman and founder of the unrecognized Hoa Hao Central Buddhist Church (HHCBC), organized approximately 300 followers to participate in commemoration ceremonies at the Hoa Hao founder's ancestral home in An Giang Province. They joined approximately 10,000 other Hoa Hao followers, but Liem's group wore caps and carried small flags identifying them as HHCBC. When approximately 50 to 60 persons attacked Liem's group, police intervened; however, according to several witnesses, police attacked Liem's group, beating them with batons. Police beat one follower, Truong Van Duc, so severely that he was hospitalized. Police arrested Duc and Ho Van Trong in connection with this incident. On May 20, 2001, they were tried, convicted, and received 12-year and 4-year prison sentences respectively.

On March 17, 2001, Le Quang Liem met with HHCBC Vice-Chairman Nguyen Van Dien and several other HHCBC supporters in a park in Ho Chi Minh City. Police detained Liem after he left the group. They released him, but on the following day placed him under formal house arrest under the 1997 Government Decree 31 CPP on Administrative Detention. Liem claims that he was severely beaten while in police custody. Police also detained the other members of the group who had remained in the park. Police claimed that several members of the group were preparing to immolate themselves. They later produced cans of gasoline and gasoline-soaked clothing as evidence. Nguyen Van Dien was returned to his home province of Dong Thap and placed under a 2-year house arrest there. The other members of

the group who had been detained were released. Two days later, on March 19, 75-year-old HHCBC supporter Nguyen Thi Thu burned herself to death at a village on the border between Dong Thap and Vinh Long Provinces to support the Hoa Hao cause. It is unknown whether Thu was among those detained in Ho Chi Minh City on March 17.

On March 28, 2000, eight Hoa Hao supporters were arrested at Phu My (Hoa Hao) village. Three of them subsequently were released, but five were tried on September 26, 2000, convicted, and received the following sentences: Truong Van Thuc, 3 years; Nguyen Chau Lan, 3 years; Le Van Mong (Le Thien Hoa), 2 years; Tran Van Be Cao, 1 year; and Tran Nguyen Hon, 1 year. Thuc, Lan, and presumably, Mong are incarcerated at Z30A K16 prison at Xuan Loc in Dong Nai Province. Be Cao and Hon were scheduled to have been released at the end of March 2001, having served their terms. On June 14, 2000, Vo Van Buu, one of the three detained March 28 but released April 9, 2000, was rearrested, along with his wife, Mai Thi Dung, after they met with Nguyen Van Dien, the Vice Chairman of the non-government-sanctioned HHCBC. The couple was tried in September 2000 and convicted. Buu received a 30-month prison term; Dung was given an 18-month suspended sentence. Later in September, Dung slashed her stomach in protest. She was hospitalized, then released on the following day. Buu remained incarcerated at the end of the period covered by this report.

On April 14, 1999, police detained Ha Hai in An Giang Province and subsequently placed him under house arrest. In February 2000, Hai was named the third-ranking officer of the HHCBC. Hai broke his house arrest orders in November 2000 by traveling to Ho Chi Minh City along with other HHCBC officers and supporters to help organize a demonstration planned to coincide with the visit to Ho Chi Minh City of then-U.S. President Clinton. Police in Ho Chi Minh City arrested Hai (along with four others, including Nguyen Van Dien and Mai Thi Dung, who were later released from custody) and detained him in a jail in An Giang Province pending trial. On November 28, a group of persons armed with clubs beat three of Hai's adult children who had accompanied his wife on a visit to the jail. The following day, several dozen persons protested the beatings at the police station. On December 7, approximately 1,000 persons approached the jail to demand Hai's release. When police dispersed them, a clash ensued, and in protest, Vo Hoang Van stabbed himself in the stomach and Mai Thi Dung slit her own throat. Both eventually recovered. Hai was tried on January 16, 2001, was convicted, and received a 5-year prison sentence for abusing his "democratic rights." He remained imprisoned at the end of the period covered by this report.

Priests and lay brothers of a Vietnamese Catholic order, the Congregation of the Mother Co-Redemptrix, continue to face Government restrictions. Founded by Reverend Tran Dinh Thu in Bui Chu Diocese in 1953, the historically anti-Communist order reestablished its headquarters in Thu Duc District of Ho Chi Minh City in 1954. In 1988 police surrounded the 15-acre site and arrested all the priests and lay persons inside the compound. Father Thu was released in 1993 after serving nearly 5 years of a 20-year prison term. Most of the other Co-Redemptrix priests and lay brothers subsequently were released. However, Reverend Pham Minh Tri and lay person Nguyen Thien Phung remain incarcerated at the end of the period covered by this report.

At Tu Hieu Pagoda, on the day before the start of the "week of prayer," Catholic Father Nguyen Van Ly, Hoa Hao elder Le Quang Liem, and Buddhists monks Thich Thien Hanh and Chan Tri met for the purpose of forming an interreligious body independent of government authority. Later in the same month, following hearings by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (CIRF), police surrounded Father Ly's church and placed him under administrative detention. His detention was reported widely in the state-controlled press, which identified him as a "traitor" for submitting written testimony critical of the Government to the CIRF. On May 16, 2001, the police—allegedly as many as 300—surrounded his church, formally arrested him. He remained in detention without trial at the end of the period covered by this report; he was reportedly engaged in a hunger strike.

In October 1998, the authorities detained two Cao Daiists in Kien Giang province, Le Kim Bien and Pham Cong Hien, who sought to meet with United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance Abdelfattah Amor and sentenced them to 2 years' imprisonment on a conviction of "taking advantage of their democratic liberties to endanger the welfare of the State and society." Bien was released on April 30, 2000, as part of a national amnesty. Hien was released in October 2000, after completing his sentence. Three Cao Daiists, Lam Thai The (Lam The Thanh), Van Hoa Vui, and Do Hoang Giam were released from prison in the April 30, 2000 amnesty. Two senior Cao Dai clergy, Archbishop Thuong Nha Thanh and Archbishop Thai The Thanh, who have chosen not to participate in the government-sanctioned

Cao Dai Management Committee, reportedly were free to worship but were not allowed to meet with foreigners.

The Penal Code establishes penalties for offenses that are defined only vaguely, including “attempting to undermine national unity” by promoting “division between religious believers and non-believers.” In some cases, particularly involving Hmong Protestants, authorities imprisoned persons for practicing religion illegally. They use provisions of the Penal Code that allow for jail terms of up to 3 years without trial for “abusing freedom of speech, press, or religion.” There were complaints that officials fabricated evidence and that some of the provisions of the law used to convict religious prisoners contradict the right to freedom of religion.

A 1997 directive on administrative detention gives national and local security officials broad powers to detain and monitor citizens and control where they live and work for up to 2 years if they are believed to be threatening “national security.” In their implementation of administrative detention, some local authorities held persons under conditions resembling house arrest. The authorities use administrative detention as a means of controlling persons whom they believe hold dissident opinions.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of religious detainees and religious prisoners. There is little transparency in the justice system, and it is very difficult to obtain confirmation of when persons are detained, imprisoned, tried, or released. By the end of the period covered by this report, there reportedly were at least seven religious detainees who were held without formal arrest or charge; however, the number may be greater since persons sometimes are detained for questioning and held under administrative detention regulations without being charged or without their detention being publicized. The seven persons believed to be detained are ethnic minority Protestants: Hmong Protestants Sinh Phay Pao, Va Sinh Giay, Vang Sua Giang, and Phang A Dong in Ha Giang province; Dinh Troi, an ethnic Hre Protestant detained in Quang Ngai in 1999; and Ama Ger and Ama Bion detained in Dak Lak in February 2001. Unconfirmed reports suggest there may be other Protestants detained in the Central Highlands. Other religious leaders, most prominently Supreme Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang of the UBCV, are held under conditions that resemble administrative detention. Thich Huyen Quang is not allowed to leave the pagoda where he lives in Quang Ngai province without express police permission, and only then for medical appointments in the isolated town where he stays. In addition a number of UBCV Buddhists such as Thich Quang Do, Cao Dai dignitaries, and Catholic, Hoa Hao, and Protestant believers have their movements restricted or are watched and followed by police.

There are an estimated 14 religious prisoners, although the actual number may be higher. This figure is difficult to verify because of the secrecy surrounding the arrest, detention, and release process. In a positive development, many of the ethnic Hmong Protestants who were imprisoned in Lai Chau province at the beginning of 1999 are believed to have been released by the end of the period covered by this report. Those persons believed to be religious prisoners as of June include: UBCV monks Thich Them Minh and Thich Hue Dang; Catholic priests Pham Minh Tri and Nguyen Van Ly, and Catholic lay person Nguyen Thien Phung; Hoa Hao lay persons Truong Van Thuc, Nguyen Chau Lan, Le Van Mong, Vo Van Buu, Ha Hai, Le Van Son, Ho Van Trong, Truong Van Duc, and Le Minh Triet (Tu Triet). (Le Minh Triet, also known as Tu Triet, is a Hoa Hao leader arrested in 1990 for sending information about Vietnam to Radio Free Asia and other international media; he is serving a 12-year sentence in Xuan Loc in Dong Nai Province.) In addition Hoa Hao leaders Le Quang Liem and Nguyen Van Dien remain under formal administrative detention (house arrest).

#### *Forced Religious Conversion*

On multiple occasions, Hmong Protestant Christians in several northwestern villages reportedly were forced by local officials to recant their faith and to perform traditional Hmong religious rites such as drinking blood from sacrificed chickens mixed with rice wine.

There were no reports of forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### *Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom*

While the status of respect for religious freedom remained fundamentally unchanged during the period covered by this report, there were improvements in some areas, such as the recognition of the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam in April 2001, the compromise leading to the promotions of several hundred Cao Dai clergy, and the release of some persons detained or arrested because of their reli-

gious beliefs. Local governments in some parts of the country relaxed the restrictions on religious organizations from engaging in charitable and social activities. In addition there was continued gradual expansion of the parameters for individual believers of officially recognized churches to practice their faiths. In some provinces in which harassment of religious believers has been very severe, local officials have lost their positions because of religious restrictions. Many believers who worship in officially recognized churches are able to practice their faith publicly without interference from government officials. This continued a trend of the past several years toward less official interference in the lives of citizens, such as the diminution of the block warden system, which is now much less pervasive and intrusive in monitoring persons. On religious celebration days, churches, pagodas, and temples are filled by worshippers. Most of the country's religious believers benefit from this development.

### SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

In general there are amicable relations among the various religious communities, and there were no instances of societal discrimination or violence based on religion during the period covered by this report. In Ho Chi Minh City, there were nascent efforts at informal ecumenical dialog by leaders of disparate religious communities. Various dissident elements of the UBCV Buddhists, Catholics, Cao Dai, and Hoa Hao appear to be successful in networking with each other; many of them formed bonds while serving prison terms at Xuan Loc.

### SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City actively and regularly raised U.S. concerns about religious freedom with a wide variety of Government officials including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of Religion, the Ministry of Public Security, and other government offices in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and provincial capitals. Embassy and Consulate officials also meet and talk with leaders of all of the major religious groups, recognized as well as unregistered.

The U.S. Ambassador raised religious freedom problems with senior cabinet ministers including the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, senior Government and Communist Party advisors, the head of the Government's Office of Religion, Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Public Security, and the chairpersons of Provincial People's Committees around the country, among others. Other Embassy and Consulate General officials also raised U.S. concerns on religious freedom with senior officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Security and with provincial officials. Embassy and Consulate General officials maintained regular contact with the key Government offices responsible for respect for human rights. Embassy officers informed government officials that progress on religious problems and human rights have an impact on the degree of full normalization of bilateral relations. The Embassy's public affairs officer distributed information about U.S. concerns regarding religious freedom to Communist Party and Government officials.

In their representations to the Government, the Ambassador and other embassy officers urged recognition of a broad spectrum of religious groups, including members of the UBCV, the Protestant house churches, and dissenting Hoa Hao and Cao Dai groups. In general representations by Embassy and Consulate General officials focused on specific abuses and restrictions on religious freedom. On several occasions the Embassy's and the Consulate General's interventions on problems involving religious freedom have resulted in direct improvements, such as the release of some religious prisoners. The recognition of the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam followed direct advocacy by U.S. officials during the annual Human Rights Dialog with Vietnam and ongoing discussions involving the Ambassador, the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, and other U.S. officials. The Ambassador and other U.S. Mission officials regularly and periodically meet with senior officials of the Government Committee on Religion in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, raising the full range of our concerns about religious freedom for all communities in the country.

Representatives of the Embassy and Consulate General met on several occasions with leaders of all the major religious communities, including Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Muslims. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, maintain a regular dialog with foreign NGO's. In February 2001, a Consulate General officer met with the government-sanctioned Hoa Hao Committee in An Giang Province and maintained regular contact with Hoa Hao dissident Le Quang Liem and with Hoa Hao elder Tran Huu Duyen. The Consulate General also maintained regular contact with UBCV monk Thich Quang Do and other UBCV

Buddhists and officially recognized Buddhists. In May 2001, a Consulate General officer met with the 95-year-old founder of the Co-Redemprix Order Father Tran Dinh Thu in Ho Chi Minh City. An Embassy officer met with Thich Thai Hoa in Hue in September. Embassy and Consulate General officers met with the Catholic Archbishops of Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Hue as well as other members of the Episcopal Conference and outspoken priest Chan Tin. Embassy and Consulate General officers also met repeatedly with leaders of Protestant “tin lanh” and house churches, and Consulate General officers met with leaders of the Cao Dai and Muslim communities.

The U.S. Government commented publicly on the status of religious freedom in the country on several occasions. In addition the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom held hearings on the status of religious freedom in Vietnam on February 13, 2001. The Commission weighed testimony from both Father Nguyen Van Ly and Buddhist Thich Thai Hoa, as well as from a number of persons residing abroad and in April published a report of its findings based on that information.