

## KIRIBATI

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were isolated reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

### Section I. Religious Demography

The country is an archipelago with an area of 265 square miles and a population of about 100,835. The 2005 census showed that the major religious groups include the Roman Catholic Church, 55 percent; Kiribati Protestant Church, 36 percent; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), 3 percent; the Bahai Faith, 2 percent; and Seventh-day Adventists, 2 percent. Several groups claim to have higher numbers of adherents, including the Mormons, who claimed in 2009 to have 13,475 members or 11 percent of the estimated population, but there is no independent confirmation. Persons with no religious affiliation account for less than 1 percent of the population. Members of the Catholic Church are concentrated in the northern islands, while Protestants are the majority in the southern islands.

### Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

#### Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

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There is no state religion. The government does not favor a particular religious group.

Although the law requires that a religious organization must be able to claim a certain percentage of the population as members before it may be registered, there are no consequences for not registering. The Mormon Church, which is not registered, was able to perform marriages, own property, and operate schools and churches with no interference from the government.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Easter, Christmas, and National Gospel Day.

### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of abuses, including religious prisoners or detainees, in the country.

### Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of Religious Freedom

There were isolated reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

There were occasional problems for religious groups viewed as outside the mainstream that desired to proselytize in some villages and on outer islands. To avoid conflict, some nonmainstream groups did not attempt to proselytize in villages where they felt unwelcome.

Most governmental and social functions begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer delivered by an ordained minister or other church official.

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

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.