

LIECHTENSTEIN

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The government did not demonstrate a trend toward either improvement or deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom.

There were isolated reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Most cases involved Muslim immigrants who suffered verbal discrimination. Other examples included right wing or anti-Semitic graffiti and Internet websites disseminating discriminatory rhetoric.

During discussions with government officials, the U.S. ambassador and embassy officers encouraged the promotion of religious freedom.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the 2010 census, membership in religious groups was as follows: 76 percent Roman Catholic; 7.6 percent Protestant; 5.4 percent Muslim; 2.8 percent professing no formal creed; 1.1 percent Christian Orthodox; 1.7 percent other religious groups; and 5.3 percent indicated no religious affiliation.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. The criminal code prohibits any form of discrimination against or debasement of any religion or its adherents. According to the constitution, the Catholic Church is the “National Church.” As such, it enjoys the full protection of the state.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Epiphany, Candlemas/Groundhog Day, Good Friday, Easter, Easter Monday, Ascension, Whit Sunday, Whit Monday, The Nativity of Mary, All Saints’ Day, Immaculate Conception, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Saint Stephen’s Day. Assumption Day (August 15) is celebrated as National Day. Sunday is a public

holiday, with work generally not allowed and shops prohibited from opening with certain exceptions.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

On November 15, the government and the municipality of Ruggell announced it would provide three Roman Catholic chapels in three different parishes to Muslims to hold funeral services. Two chapels (one in the parish of Eschen and one in the parish of Mauren) were inaugurated during the year, with a third expected to open in the parish of Ruggell.

Funding for religious institutions comes from the municipalities and from the general budget, as decided by the parliament; it is not a direct tithe paid by citizens. The government provides money to the Catholic Church and other religious groups. Catholic and Protestant churches receive regular annual contributions from the government in proportion to membership; smaller religious groups are eligible to apply for grants for associations of foreigners or specific projects. The two main representative bodies of the Muslim community (the Islamische Gemeinschaft and the Tuerkischer Verein) collaborated with governmental authorities in early 2010 to form an umbrella organization that receives state contributions to be used equitably for all Muslims residing in the country. All religious groups enjoy tax-exempt status.

To receive a religious worker visa, applicants must have completed theological studies, be a member of a nationally recognized religious group, and be sponsored by a registered member of the official religious group's clergy. Visa requests for religious workers are normally issued and processed in the same manner as other requests.

The government grants the Muslim community a residency permit for one imam, plus one short-term residency permit for an additional imam during Ramadan. The government routinely grants visas to the imams of the Turkish Association and the Muslim community who agree not to allow or preach sermons that incite violence or advocate intolerance.

Religious education is part of the curriculum at public schools. Catholic or Protestant religious education is compulsory in all primary schools, but the authorities routinely grant exemptions for children whose parents request them.

The curriculum for Catholic confessional education is determined by the Roman Catholic Church with only a minor complementary supervisory role by the municipalities, with the exception of Balzers, Triesen, and Planken, which have stronger governmental supervision. At the secondary school level, parents and pupils chose between traditional confessional education organized by their religious community and the nonconfessional subject “Religion and Culture.” The government provides financial support to some smaller denominations that choose to offer religious education classes at their churches outside regular school hours.

The government is currently on the verge of integrating Islamic religious education into the official curriculum. During the year, six primary schools offered Islamic education to 80 students between the ages of 7 and 13. The classes were taught in German.

The government commemorated the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, on January 27, with a special memorial hour. This event was part of the government’s program to fight racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Since 2003 secondary schools have held discussion forums on the Holocaust on the occasion of the Day of Remembrance.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were isolated reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. However, Catholics, Protestants, and members of other religious groups worked well together on an ecumenical basis. Differences among religious groups were not a significant source of tension in society.

The government’s Equal Opportunity Office is charged with handling complaints of religious discrimination; during the year, the office received no such complaints.

In May 2010, the Association of the Liechtenstein Friends of Yad Vashem, in collaboration with the Jewish Museum of Hohenems, and the Liechtenstein Cultural Foundation sponsored a special exhibit on the history of Jews in Liechtenstein, which ran through February 6.

The International School for Holocaust Studies and the International Tracing Service (ITS) offered training and teaching materials to interested teachers during two five-day workgroup sessions held in February and October. Approximately 10 pedagogical instructors attended the workshop.

On January 25, the photographic exhibition “A Code of Honor: Albanian Muslims who Rescued Jews in the Holocaust” opened in Tyrol, Austria. The government was a co-sponsor for the event.

There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts against persons or property. The country’s Jewish community consists of fewer than 30 people, and there is no formal organizational structure. The Association of the Liechtenstein Friends of Yad Vashem represents the Jewish community’s interests. There are no synagogues or Jewish cemeteries in the country.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

Embassy officers met with the Office of Foreign Affairs to discuss religious freedom issues.