

NAURU

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 no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief, affiliation, or practice; however, some elements of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities occasionally voiced discomfort with religious groups viewed as unorthodox, in particular The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses.

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 has an area of eight square miles and a population of 9,300. Christianity is the primary religion. According to the 2002 census, approximately two-thirds of Christians are Protestant, and the remaining one-third is Catholic. Ethnic Chinese residents, estimated to constitute 5 percent of the population, are variously Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, or nonreligious. Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons stated they had small numbers of followers in the country.

Missionaries representing several Christian groups are active in the country and operate freely.

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>.

Under the constitution the rights to freedom of conscience, expression, assembly, and association may be restricted by any law "which is reasonably required...in the interests of defense, public safety, public order, public morality or public health." The government had in the past cited this provision as a basis for preventing foreign churches from proselytizing native-born citizens but did not do so during the reporting period.

There is no state religion.

The government informed Mormon and Jehovah's Witnesses leaders that under the provisions of the Birth, Death, and Marriage Ordinance, their churches must register with the government to operate in an official capacity, which includes proselytizing, building churches, holding religious services, and otherwise practicing their religion. The legal counsel for the Mormons asserted that while the ordinance in question permits the government to recognize a religious denomination, it requires such recognition only if a denomination's ministers wish to solemnize marriages. Only the Catholic Church and two long-established Protestant denominations, the Nauru Congregational Church and the Kiribati Protestant Church, are officially registered to operate. A small breakaway Protestant congregation, catering principally to expatriate workers, is not registered. Jehovah's Witnesses representatives reported that although they have not registered, they have not had any problems with the government granting visas to their missionaries. The government has never interfered with their religious services. The Mormon Church reported that it submitted a registration request in 1999; however, the government had not responded either to the original request or to follow-up inquiries.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Easter and Christmas.

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 no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Economic problems resulting from sharply declining income from the country's phosphate mining industry have led to social strains, and some elements of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities occasionally voiced discomfort with religious groups perceived as foreign, in particular Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses; however, those latter groups stated their missionaries have not faced any social hostility.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

Although the U.S. government does not maintain an embassy in the country, the U.S. ambassador to Fiji is also accredited to the government. The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.