

## NEW ZEALAND

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### Section I. Religious Demography

The country is an island nation with an area of 103,000 square miles and a population of 4.3 million. According to 2006 census data, percentages of religious affiliation are: Anglican, 14.8 percent; Roman Catholic, 13.6 percent; Presbyterian, 10.7 percent; Methodist, 3.3 percent; other Protestant denominations, 8.2 percent; Christian (no affiliation specified), 5 percent; Buddhist, 1.7 percent; Hindu, 1.7 percent; and Muslim, 1 percent. More than 90 additional religious groups together constituted less than 1 percent of the population. In addition 39 percent stated they had no religious affiliation.

The indigenous Maori (estimated at 15 percent of the population) tend to be followers of Presbyterianism, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), or syncretistic Maori Christian groups such as Ratana and Ringatu.

### 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>.

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections. Providing that religious practices do not breach the peace, religious expression is unrestricted.

The government does not specifically promote any religion; however, a Christian prayer is recited at the opening of every parliamentary session.

During the reporting period, the government-funded Human Rights Commission (HRC) continued implementation of its 2007 Statement on Religious Diversity, which aims to assure equal treatment of all religious groups under the law, the right to safety for religious individuals and communities, freedom of religious expression, the right to recognition and reasonable accommodation for religious groups, and the promotion of understanding in education. The HRC facilitated a national interfaith network with a monthly electronic newsletter.

The law provides 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 for the purposes of religious instruction given by voluntary instructors; however, attendance at religious instruction or observances is not compulsory. According to the Ministry of Education, public secondary schools also may permit religious instruction at the discretion of individual school boards. The ministry does not keep data on how many schools permit religious instruction or observances; however, the curriculum division stated that religious instruction, if provided at a school, usually was scheduled after normal school hours.

During the reporting period, the HRC received 1,301 complaints of unlawful discrimination under the Human Rights Act. Of these complaints, 53 were classified as unlawful discrimination on grounds of religious belief or lack of religious belief. This percentage was generally consistent with the proportion of complaints relating to religion since 2005.

In the event that a complaint to the HRC is not resolved satisfactorily with the assistance of HRC mediation, the complainant may proceed to the Human Rights Review Tribunal. The tribunal has the authority to issue restraining orders, award monetary damages, or declare a breach of the Human Rights Act (which is

reported to parliament). During the reporting period, the tribunal did not issue any decisions relating to religious discrimination, nor were any such cases pending.

Conduct that is prohibited by the Human Rights Act may also be prosecuted under other laws. Therefore, in addition to the dispute resolution mechanism offered by the HRC, a complainant may initiate proceedings in the court system. According to the Department of Justice, there were no such proceedings considered by the courts during the reporting period.

The government does not require the licensing or registration of religious groups; however, if a religious group desires to collect money for any charitable purpose, including the advancement of its religion, and wishes to obtain tax benefits, it must register with the Inland Revenue Department as a charitable trust. There is no fee for this registration.

In May the agriculture minister announced a requirement for preslaughter stunning for commercial killing of livestock in the country, a regulation that violates some interpretations of Jewish and Muslim dietary laws. The Jewish community reportedly planned to file an appeal for an exemption.

The country has two registered Christian-associated political parties. There are no other religiously affiliated parties, although the law does not prevent the registration of parties based on other religions.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter Sunday, 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.

Some businesses were fined up to NZD 1,000 (\$750) if they attempted to operate on the official holidays of Good Friday, Easter Sunday, or Christmas Day. The government prosecuted 32 businesses for violating this law during the reporting period. The government exempts businesses providing essential supplies, convenience items, and food and drink.

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 few reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

The police have introduced Police Community Liaison Officers for the Jewish community and have published *A Practical Reference to Religious Diversity* for all staff. Collaborators on this publication included the Office of Ethnic Affairs, the Human Rights Commission, and several community-based organizations.

Incidents of religiously motivated violence were extremely rare, and none were reported to the HRC or in the news media during the reporting period.

The HRC actively promoted religious tolerance. In addition to its efforts to implement its Statement on Religious Diversity, the HRC maintained an ongoing Diversity Action Program, which included respect for religious diversity.

### 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. The U.S. ambassador continued to meet with representatives of all major religious communities throughout the country to understand religion's role in society. The embassy's public diplomacy efforts regularly included faith-based communities.

The embassy organized a three-day outreach campaign for Farah Pandith, the U.S. State Department's Special Representative to Muslim Communities, who visited in December. Her program included an interfaith discussion in the embassy and events for youth, women, educators, business persons, and government leaders from the Muslim community.