EUROPE

ALBANIA

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 land area of 11,100 square miles, and its population is approximately 3,490,000. It has a largely homogeneous ethnic population, consisting of Ghegs in the north and Tosks in the south. The southern part of the country has ethnic Greek communities estimated at 3 percent of the population. Other small minorities include the Roma, Egyptian people (an ethnic group similar to the Roma but which does not speak the Roma language), Vlachs, Macedonians, and Chams.

The majority of citizens are secular in orientation after decades of rigidly enforced atheism under the Communist regime, which ended in 1990. In spite of this secularism, most citizens traditionally associate themselves with a religious group. Albanians of Muslim background make up the largest traditional religious group (roughly 65 to 70 percent of the population) and are divided into two communities: those associated with a moderate form of Sunni Islam and those associated with the Bektashi school (a particularly liberal form of Shi'a Sufism). The country is the world center of the Bektashi school, which moved from Turkey to Albania in 1925 after the revolution of Ataturk. Bektashis are concentrated mainly in central and southern regions of the country and claim that 45 percent of the country's Muslims belong to their school.

The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania (referred to as Orthodox) and the Roman Catholic Church are the other large denominations. An estimated 20 to 30 percent of the population belong to communities that are traditionally Albanian Orthodox, and 10 percent are associated with Roman Catholicism. The Orthodox Church became independent from Constantinople's authority in 1929 but was not recognized as autocephalous, or independent, until 1937. The Church's 1954 statute states that all its archbishops must be of Albanian citizenship. However, the current archbishop is a Greek citizen, because there are no Albanian clerics who meet the Orthodox requirement that higher clergy must be celibate.

The Muslims are concentrated mostly in the middle of the country and somewhat in the south; the Orthodox are concentrated mainly in the south, and Catholics in the north of the country; however, this division is not strict. The Greek minority, concentrated in the south, belongs to the Orthodox Church. There are no data available on active participation in formal religious services, but unofficial sources state that 30 to 40 percent of the population practice a religion. Foreign clergy, including Muslim clerics, Christian and Baha'i missionaries, members of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and many others freely carry out religious activities.

According to updated data provided by the State Committee on Cults during the reporting period, there are 12 different Muslim societies and groups with some 60 to 70 representatives in the country. There are 50 Christian societies and groups and more than 1,100 missionaries representing Christian or Baha'i organizations. The largest foreign missionary groups are American, British, Italian, Greek, and Arab.

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. According to the 1998 Constitution, there is no official religion and all religions are equal. However, the predominant religious communities (Muslim, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic) function as juridical persons and enjoy a greater social recognition and status based on their historical presence in the country. All registered religious groups have the right to hold bank accounts and to own property and buildings. Official holidays include religious holidays from all three predominant faiths.

Religious movements—with the exception of the three de facto recognized religions—can acquire the official status of a juridical person only by registering under the Law on Associations, which recognizes the status of a nonprofit association irrespective of whether the organization has a cultural, recreational, religious, or humanitarian character. The Government does not require registration or licensing of religious groups; however, the State Committee on Cults, founded in September 1999, is currently registering all foreign religious organizations. No groups reported difficulties registering during the period covered by this report.

The State Committee on Cults, created by executive decision and based on the Constitution, is charged with regulating the relations between the State and religious communities. The Committee recognizes the equality of religious communities and respects their independence. The Committee works to protect freedom of religion and to promote interreligious development, cooperation, and understanding. It organized seminars in December 2000 and February 2001 to discuss religious tolerance. The Committee claims that registration facilitates the granting of residence permits by police to foreign employees of various religious organizations; however, some foreign religious organizations have complained that obtaining registration has not made gaining residence permits any less cumbersome administratively. There is no law or regulation that forces religious organizations to register with the Committee. There is no law on religious communities, although one is mandated by the new Constitution. Most religious communities recognize the need for such a law to clarify their rights and responsibilities and relationship to the Government. The Committee has shown a willingness to act as a mechanism for creation and passage of such a law; however, no movement on the issue was made during the period covered by this report.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The country is a secular state and religion is not taught in public schools. According to official figures, there are 29 religious schools in the country with approximately 2,745 students. The State Committee on Cults has the right to approve the curricula of religious schools. Students are not allowed to demonstrate their religious affiliations in public schools. In one recent case, the Government prohibited three female students from wearing headscarves in a public school. No restriction is imposed on families regarding the way they raise their children with respect to religious practices.

In 1967 the Communists banned all religious practices and expropriated the property of the established Islamic, Orthodox, and Catholic Churches. The Government has not yet returned all the properties and religious objects under its control that were confiscated under the Communist regime. In cases where religious buildings were returned, the Government often failed to return the land that surrounds the buildings, sometimes due to redevelopment claims by private individuals who began farming it or using it for other purposes. The Government does not have the resources to compensate churches adequately for the extensive damage many religious properties suffered. Although it recently recovered some confiscated property, including one large parcel of land near Tirana's main square, the Orthodox Church has complained that it had difficulty in recovering some religious icons for restoration and safekeeping.

The Albanian Evangelical Alliance, an association of more than 100 Protestant churches throughout the country, complained that it encountered administrative obstacles to building churches, accessing the media, and receiving exemptions from customs duties. The growing evangelical community continues to seek official recognition and participation in the religious affairs section of the Council of Ministers.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 groups are generally amicable, and tolerance is widespread. Society is largely secular. Intermarriage among religious groups is extremely common. There are amicable relations between the three main religions in the country, and religious communities take pride in the tolerance and understanding that prevails among them.

The Archbishop of the country's Orthodox Church has noted incidents in which the Orthodox and their churches or other buildings have been the targets of vandalism. However, he concluded that the problem was largely due to the country's weak public order. There were no new incidents of vandalism reported during the period covered by this report. Members of the ethnic Greek minority as well as ethnic Albanian and Greek members of the Orthodox Church left the country in large numbers between 1990 and 1991, with another large exodus between 1997 and 1998 because of the lack of security and poor economic prospects. Ethnic Greek Albanians, among others, continue to leave the country in search of employment and/or permanent residence elsewhere.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government has numerous initiatives to foster the development of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in the country, and to further religious freedom and tolerance. The U.S. Embassy periodically has urged the Government to return church lands to the denominations that lost them under Communist rule. Embassy officers, including the Ambassador, meet frequently (both in formal office calls and at representational events) with the heads of the major religious communities in the country. The U.S. Embassy has been active in urging tolerance and moderation on the part of the Government's Committee on Cults.

ANDORRA

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. There is no state religion; however, the Roman Catholic Church enjoys some privileges not available to other faiths.

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 an area of 180.7 square miles and a population of 66,824. Very few official statistics are available relative to religion; however, traditionally approximately 90 percent of the population are Roman Catholic. The population consists largely of immigrants, with full citizens representing less than 20 percent of the total. The immigrants, who are primarily from Spain, Portugal, and France, also are largely Roman Catholic. It is estimated that, of the Catholic population, about half are active church attendees. Other religious groups include Muslims (which predominantly are represented among the approximately 2,000 North African immigrants and are split between two groups, one more fundamentalist); the New Apostolic Church; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons); several Protestant denominations, including the Anglican Church; the Reunification Church; and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Foreign missionaries are active and operate without restriction. For example, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses proselytize from door to door.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution acknowledges a special relationship with the Roman Catholic Church "in accordance with Andorran tradition" and recognizes the "full legal capacity" of the bodies of the Catholic Church, granting them legal status "in accordance with their own rules." One of the two constitutionally-designated princes of the country (who serves equally as joint head of state with the President of France) is Bishop Joan Marti Alanis of the Spanish town of La Seu d'Urgell.

The Catholic Church receives no direct subsidies from the Government. However, the Government continues to pay monthly stipends to each of the seven parishes (administrative units of government, though the term originally was religiously determined) for the continuance of their historic work in maintaining vital records, such as birth and marriage, despite having a fully legal civil registry system in the country.

There is no law that clearly requires legal registration and approval of religions and religious worship. However, the Government is considering completing a draft law on associations that may ultimately govern some aspects of religious activity. Although the terms of the draft law are not publicly known, the authorities reportedly are considering how to treat the activity of so-called "sects" or other groups whose activities may be considered injurious to public health, safety, morals, or order. However, a report from the Ombudsman issued in 2000 maintains that there is no real risk of negative influence from such so-called destructive sects, because of their low membership numbers and because of the orientation of their theology. The report notes that for instance, the few Unification Church members known to reside in the country are very directly involved in social work with the underprivileged. Under a 1993 law, associations must be registered. This register has documented civic associations, but to date no religious organization, including the Roman Catholic Church, has requested registration or been asked by the Government to register.

Instruction in the tenets of the Catholic faith is available in public schools on an optional basis, outside of both regular school hours and the time frame set aside for elective school activities, such as civics or ethics. The Catholic Church provides teachers for religion classes, and the Government pays their salaries. Some parental groups and Co-Prince Bishop Marti reportedly prefer restoring the optional religion classes to the time frame set aside for elective activities.

The Government has not taken any official steps to promote interfaith understanding, nor has it sponsored any programs or forums to coordinate interfaith dialog. However, it has been responsive to certain needs of the Muslim community, such as expeditiously providing an imam with the documentation necessary to establish himself in the country. On occasion the Government has made public facilities available to various religious organizations for religious 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 persons to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Societal attitudes between and among differing religious groups in general appear to be amicable and tolerant. For example, the Catholic Church of la Massana lends its sanctuary twice per month to the Anglican community, so that visiting Anglican clergy can conduct services for the English speaking community. Although those who practice religions other than Roman Catholicism tend to be immigrants and otherwise not integrated fully into the local community, there appears to be little or no obstacle to their practicing their own religions.

There are no significant ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater mutual understanding among adherents of different religions.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. officials discuss religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Both the U.S. Ambassador, resident in Madrid, and the Consul General, resident in Barcelona, have met with Bishop Marti, the leader of the Catholic community.

ARMENIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the law specifies some restrictions on the religious freedom of adherents of minority faiths, and there were some restrictions in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Armenian Apostolic Church, which has formal legal status as the national church, enjoys some privileges not available to adherents of other faiths. Jehovah's Witnesses continue to have their application for legal recognition as a registered religion rejected and report individual acts of discrimination. Other denominations occasionally report acts of discrimination, usually by mid-level or lower level government officials.

Relations among religions in society are generally amicable; however, societal attitudes towards some minority religions are ambivalent, and antipathy towards Muslims remains a problem.

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 11,496 square miles, and its population is approximately 2 million.

The country is ethnically homogenous, with approximately 95 percent of the population classified as ethnic Armenian. About 90 percent of citizens belong nominally to the Armenian Apostolic Church, an Eastern Christian denomination whose spiritual center is located at the cathedral and monastery of Echmiatsin. Religious observance was discouraged strongly in the Soviet era, leading to a sharp decline in the number of active churches and priests, the closure of virtually all monasteries, and the nearly complete absence of religious education. As a result, the level of religious practice is relatively low, although many former atheists now identify themselves with the national church.

For many citizens, Christian identity is an ethnic trait, with only a loose connection to religious belief. This identification was accentuated by the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988–94, during which Armenia and Azerbaijan expelled their respective Azeri Muslim and Armenian Christian minorities, creating huge refugee populations in both countries. The head of the Church, Catholicos Karekin II (alternate spelling Garegin) was elected in October 1999 at Echmiatsin with the participation of Armenian delegates from around the world.

In 2001 the Armenian Apostolic Church engaged in a dispute with its Moscow archbishop, who was removed from office and excommunicated in May.

There are comparatively small, but in many cases growing, communities of the following faiths: Yezidi (a Kurdish religious/ethnic group which includes elements derived from Zoroastrianism, Islam, and animism, with some 50–60,000 nominal adherents); Catholic, both Roman and Mekhitarist (Armenian Uniate) (approximately 180,000 adherents); Pentecostal (approximately 25,000); Armenian Evangelical Church (approximately 5,000); Greek Orthodox (approximately 6,000); Baptist (approximately 2,000); Jehovah's Witnesses (approximately 6,000); unspecified "charismatic" Christian (about 3,000); Seventh-Day Adventist; Mormon; Jewish (500–1,000); Muslim; Baha'i; Hare Krishna; and pagan. Yezidis are concentrated primarily in agricultural areas around Mount Aragats, northwest of Yerevan. Armenian Catholic and Greek Orthodox Christians are concentrated in the northern region, while most Jews, Mormons and Baha'is are located in Yerevan. There is a remnant Muslim Kurdish community of a few hundred persons, many of which live in the Abovian region; a small group of Muslims of Azeri descent live primarily along the eastern or northern borders. In Yerevan there are approximately 1,000 Muslims, including Kurds, Iranians, and temporary residents from the Middle East.

Jehovah's Witnesses continue their missionary work fairly visibly and reported net gains in membership during 2000 and 2001. Evangelical Christians and Mormons also are engaged in missionary work.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the law specifies some restrictions on the religious freedom of adherents of faiths other than the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Constitution also provides for freedom of conscience, including the right either to believe or to adhere to atheism. The 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience, amended in 1997, establishes the separation of church and state, but grants the Armenian Apostolic Church official status as the national church. A 1993 presidential decree, later superseded by the 1997 law, supplemented the 1991 law and further strengthened the position of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The 1991 law requires all other religious denominations and organizations to register with the State Council on Religious Affairs. The State Council on Religious Affairs is a state agency under the Prime Minister, without cabinet level representation. The Council does not include representatives of minority religions in its activities. Petitioning organizations must "be free from materialism and of a purely spiritual nature," and must subscribe to a doctrine based on "historically recognized Holy Scriptures." To qualify a religious organization must have at least 200 adult members (increased in 1997 from the previous figure of 50). A religious organization that has been refused registration may not publish newspapers or magazines, rent meeting places, broadcast programs on television or radio, or officially sponsor the visas of visitors. No previously registered religious group seeking re-registration under the 1997 law has been denied; however, the Council still denies registration to Jehovah's Witnesses. Several other religious groups are unregistered, specifically the Molokhany, a branch of the Russian "Old Believers," and some Yezidis. According to an official of the State Council on Religious Affairs, those two groups, which number in the hundreds, have not sought registration. As of June 30, 2001, there were 50 religious organizations, some of which are individual congregations from within the same denomination, registered with the State Council on Religious Affairs. All existing denominations have been reregistered annually. Almost all existing denominations, except for Hare Krishnas and Jehovah's Witnesses, have been reregistered. The Hare Krishnas do not have enough members to qualify, as their numbers by 1998 had dropped below even the previous membership threshold of 50. Although Jehovah's Witnesses have enough members, the State Council on Religious Affairs continues to deny them registration.

Current legislation permits religious education in state schools only by instructors appointed by the Armenian Apostolic Church. If requested by the school principal, the Armenian Apostolic Church will send priests to teach classes in religion and religious history in those schools. Other religious groups are not allowed provide religious instruction in schools, although they may do so in private homes to children of their members.

As a result of extended negotiations between the Government and the Armenian Apostolic Church, a memorandum was signed in April 2000 that provides for the two sides to negotiate a concordat, presently scheduled to be signed in September, 2001, in time for the 1,700th anniversary celebrations of the country's conversion to Christianity. The document is expected to regulate relations between the two bodies, settle disputes over ecclesiastical properties and real estate confiscated during the Soviet period, and define the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in such fields as education, morality, and the media.

In July 1998, President Kocharian created a Human Rights Commission, which has met with many minority organizations. The Law on Religion states that the State Council on Religious Affairs is to serve as a mediator in conflicts between religious groups; however, the Council has not yet done so.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, most registered religious groups reported no serious legal impediments to their activities. However, members of faiths other than the Armenian Apostolic Church are subject to some government restrictions. In particular the 1991 law forbids "proselytizing" (undefined in the law) except by the Armenian Apostolic Church, and requires all other religious denominations and organizations to register with the State Council on Religious Affairs. The State Council on Religious Affairs continued to deny registration to Jehovah's Witnesses during the period covered by this report. The President's Human Rights Commission declined to intervene and recommended that Jehovah's Witnesses challenge their registration denial through the courts, as provided by law. Although Jehovah's Witnesses officials stated that they had filed such a legal challenge, it had not been heard by the courts by the end of the period covered by this report. An assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses approved slight changes to their charter in order

to meet the country's legal requirements (for example, changing a commitment to "proselytize" into one to "witness"), but cautioned that they could not change fundamental articles of faith, such as opposition to military service. The court previously had stated that the denial was due to the group's opposition to military service; however, in 1999 and 2000 the Council defended its refusal to accept applications by the Jehovah's Witnesses by stating that the group cannot be registered because "illegal proselytism" is allegedly integral to its activities. Discussions between Jehovah's Witnesses and the Council temporarily were suspended in 2001 due to a lack of progress on this issue. According to Jehovah's Witnesses officials, council representatives have met with them but have refused to assist in the group's efforts to gain registration.

Although the law bans foreign funding for foreign-based churches, the ban on foreign funding has not been enforced and is considered unenforceable by the State Council on Religious Affairs. The law also mandates that religious organizations other than the Armenian Apostolic Church need prior permission from the State Council on Religious Affairs to engage in religious activities in public places, to travel abroad, or to invite foreign guests to the country. However, in practice travel by religious personnel is not restricted. No action has been taken against missionaries, although groups such as the Mormons are allowed by the Council to have only a limited number of official missionaries present in the country. A 1993 presidential decree requires the State Council on Religious Affairs to investigate the activities of the representatives of registered religious organizations and to ban missionaries who engage in activities contrary to their status. However, the Council largely has been inactive, due in part to lack of resources, except for registering religious groups.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

At the end of the period covered by this report, 13 members of Jehovah's Witnesses still remained in prison charged with draft evasion or, if forcibly drafted, with desertion due to refusal to serve. During the year, 14 were released but still under house arrest, and 21 more were free on probation. Two more were in detention pending trial and seven had been released unconditionally and were not subject to future trials. A group estimated by an official of Jehovah's Witnesses to be approximately 50 members reportedly were in hiding from draft officials. Representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses officials said that the increase in the number of those imprisoned persons was due to the fact that members of Jehovah's Witnesses who had been called for military service were going directly to police and turning themselves in rather than waiting until induction to declare conscientious objection.

As part of its required undertakings for joining the Council of Europe (COE), in January 2001, the Government pledged to pass a new law conforming to European standards on alternative military service within 3 years. Government officials stated that, according to their interpretation of COE regulations, those presently in prison as conscientious objectors were not required to be released until the new law was passed. However, COE officials stated that their interpretation was that the Government's undertaking required immediate release of such conscientious objectors. As of June 2001, no alternative on military service was passed before Parliament.

There are reports that hazing of new conscripts is more severe for Yezidis and other minorities. Jehovah's Witnesses are subject to even harsher treatment by military and civilian security officials, because their refusal to serve in the military is seen as a threat to national survival.

According to law, a religious organization that has been refused registration may not publish newspapers or magazines, rent meeting places, broadcast programs on television or radio, or officially sponsor the visas of visitors. Jehovah's Witnesses continue to experience difficulty renting meeting places and report that private individuals willing to rent them facilities are visited by police and warned not to do so. Lack of official visa sponsorship means that Jehovah's Witnesses visitors must pay for tourist visas. When shipped in bulk, Jehovah's Witness publications are seized at the border. Although members of Jehovah's Witnesses supposedly were allowed to bring in small quantities of printed materials for their own use, Jehovah's Witnesses officials reported that "spiritual letters" from one congregation to another, which they said were meant for internal rather than prostelyizing purposes, continued to be confiscated by customs officials.

In August 2000, the mayor and the council of the town of Talin, in the western part of the country, expelled two members of Jehovah's Witnesses after residents alleged that they were going from door to door preaching and disturbing residents.

Members of Jehovah's Witnesses reported that the women were mocked and cursed by the mayor and bystanders, and that a resident of Talin who rented them rooms was threatened by the mayor with arrest and expulsion. Government officials

refused to intervene in the action, stating that the women had been preaching illegally on behalf of an unregistered group.

Other than Jehovah's Witnesses who were conscientious objectors, there were no other reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 religions in society are generally amicable; however, societal attitudes towards some minority religions are ambivalent, and antipathy towards Muslims remains a problem.

The Armenian Apostolic Church is a member of the World Council of Churches and, despite doctrinal differences, has friendly official relations with many major Christian denominations, including the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and major Protestant churches. Catholicos Karekin II visited the Vatican in November 2000, and the Vatican announced that Pope John Paul II intends to visit the country in September 2001. Relations between foreign-based religious groups and the dominant Armenian Apostolic Church are also strengthened through cooperation in assistance projects. Various registered Christian humanitarian organizations are working with the Armenian Apostolic Church to distribute humanitarian assistance and educational religious materials.

Although such activities contribute to mutual understanding, they take place in an undercurrent of competition. Suppressed through 70 years of Soviet rule, the Armenian Apostolic Church has neither the trained priests nor the material resources to fill immediately the spiritual void created by the demise of Communist ideology. Nontraditional religious organizations are viewed with suspicion, and foreign-based denominations operate cautiously for fear of being seen as a threat by the Armenian Apostolic Church. After his election in October 1999, one of the first actions of Karekin II was to create a Secretariat for Ecumenical Outreach to other Christian denominations.

Societal attitudes toward most minority religions are ambivalent. Many citizens are not religiously observant, but the link between religion and Armenian ethnicity is strong. As a result of the Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan, most of the country's Muslim population was forced to leave the country. Antipathy towards Muslims remains a problem, and the few Muslims remaining in the country keep a low profile, despite generally amicable relations between the Government and Iran. There is no formally operating mosque, although Yerevan's one surviving 18th century mosque, which was restored with Iranian funding, is open for regular Friday prayers on a tenuous legal basis.

There was no officially sponsored violence reported against minority religious groups during the period. Yezidi children on occasion report hazing by teachers and classmates. Some observers report increasingly unfavorable attitudes towards Jehovah's Witnesses among the general population, both because they are seen as "unpatriotic" for refusing military service and because of a widespread but unsubstantiated belief that they pay money to the desperately poor for conversions. The press reported a number of complaints lodged by citizens against Jehovah's Witnesses for alleged illegal proselytizing. They are the focus of religious attacks and hostile preaching by some Armenian Apostolic Church clerics.

Although it is difficult to document, it is likely that there is some informal societal discrimination in employment against members of certain religious 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. The US Ambassador and embassy officials maintain close contact with the Catholicos at Echmiatsin and with leaders of other major religious and ecumenical groups in the country. In 2000 and 2001, embassy officials met with the Military Prosecutor to discuss, among other topics, hazing of minority conscripts and the status of Jehovah's Witnesses, and in 2000, met with the State Council on Religions to urge that progress be made towards registering Jehovah's Witnesses. The Embassy also maintains regular contact with traveling regional representatives of foreign-based reli-

gious groups such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and raises their concerns with the Government.

AUSTRIA

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.

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious groups. However, there is widespread societal mistrust and discrimination against members of some nonrecognized religious groups, particularly those referred to as "sects." Initially the installation of a new right-of-center coalition Government in February 2000 led to by members of minority religions expressing concerns over increased intolerance. There was no marked deterioration in the atmosphere of religious tolerance in the country during the period covered by this report.

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 32,368 square miles and its population is an estimated 8.1 million. Approximately 98 percent of the population are of Germanic origin. The largest minority groups are Croatian, Slovene, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, and Roma. In recent years, the country has experienced a rise in immigration from countries such as Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which has increased the number of Muslims in the country.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the memberships of the 12 officially recognized religions are as follows: Roman Catholic Church—78.14 percent; Lutheran Church (Augsburger and Helvetic Confessions)—5 percent; Islamic community—2.04 percent; Old Catholic Church—0.24 percent; Jewish community—0.09 percent; Eastern Orthodox (Russian, Greek, Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian)—1.5 percent; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)—0.2 percent; New Apostolic Church—0.2 percent; Syrian Orthodox Church—under 0.1 percent; Armenian-Apostolic Church—under 0.1 percent; Methodist Church of Austria—under 0.1 percent; Buddhist community—under 0.1 percent. Approximately 2 percent of the population belong to nonrecognized "other faiths," while 8.64 percent consider themselves atheists. Four percent did not indicate a religious affiliation. Only about 17 percent of Roman Catholics actively participate in formal religious services. According to the Catholic Church, 44,359 Catholics left the Church in 1999, an increase of 14 percent over the previous year.

The provinces of Carinthia and Burgenland have somewhat higher percentages of Protestants than the national average, as the Counter-Reformation was less successful in those areas. The number of Muslims is higher than the national average in Vienna and the province of Vorarlberg, due to the higher share of guestworkers from Turkey in these provinces.

The vast majority of groups termed "sects" by the Government are small organizations, having under 100 members. Among the larger groups are the Church of Scientology, with between 5,000 and 10,000 members, and the Unification Church, with approximately 700 adherents throughout the country. Other groups found in the country include: Brahma Kumaris, Divine Light Mission, Divine Light Center, Eckankar, Hare Krishna, the Holosophic community, the Osho movement, Sahaja Yoga, Sai Baba, Sri Chinmoy, Transcendental Meditation, Landmark Education, the Center for Experimental Society Formation, Fiat Lux, Universal Life, and The Family.

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 status of religious organizations is governed by the 1874 Law on Recognition of Churches and by a 1998 law that establishes the status of "confessional communities." Religious organizations may be divided into three legal categories (listed in descending order of status): officially recognized religious societies, religious confessional communities, and associations.

Religious recognition under the 1874 law has wide ranging implications, such as the authority to participate in the state-collected religious taxation program, to engage in religious education, and to bring into the country religious workers to act as ministers, missionaries, or teachers. Under the 1874 law, religious societies have "public corporation" status. This status permits religious societies to engage in a number of public or quasi-public activities that are denied to other religious organizations. The Constitution singles out religious societies for special recognition. State subsidies for religious teachers at both public and private schools are provided to religious societies but not granted to other religious organizations.

Previously, some nonrecognized religious groups were able to organize as legal entities or associations, although this was not possible for all groups. Some groups have organized, even while applying for recognition as religious communities under the 1874 law.

In July 1998, Jehovah's Witnesses received the status of a confessional community. According to the January 1998 law, the group is now subject to a 10-year observation period before they are eligible for recognition.

When the law on the status of religious confessional communities came into effect in January 1998, there were 12 recognized religious societies. Although the law allowed these 12 religious societies to retain their status, it imposed new criteria on other churches that seek to achieve this status, including a 10-year observation period between the time of the application and the time it is granted.

The 1998 law allows nonrecognized religious groups to seek official status as "confessional communities" without the fiscal and educational privileges available to recognized religions. To apply groups must have at least 300 members and submit to the Government their written statutes describing the goals, rights, and obligations of members; membership regulations; officials; and financing. Groups also must submit a written version of their religious doctrine, which must differ from that of any existing religion recognized under the 1874 law or registered under the 1998 law, for a determination that their basic beliefs do not violate public security, public order, health and morals, or the rights and freedoms of citizens. The 1998 law also sets out additional criteria for eventual recognition according to the 1874 law, such as a 20-year period of existence (at least 10 of which must be as a group organized as a confessional community under the 1998 law) and membership equaling at least two one-thousandths of the country's population. Many religious groups and independent congregations do not meet the 300-member threshold for registration under the 1998 law. Only Jehovah's Witnesses currently meet the higher membership requirement for recognition under the 1874 law. In April 2001, the Constitutional Court upheld a previous Education Ministry finding that Jehovah's Witnesses must fulfill the required 10-year observation period.

Religious confessional communities, once they are recognized officially as such by the Government, have juridical standing, which permits them to engage in such activities as purchasing real estate in their own names, contracting for goods and services, and other activities. The category of religious confessional community did not exist prior to the adoption of the 1998 Law on the Status of Religious Confessional Communities. A religious organization that seeks to obtain this new status is subject to a 6-month waiting period from the time of application to the Ministry of Education and Culture. According to the Ministry, as of June 30, 2001, 11 organizations had applied for the status of religious confessional community. Nine were granted the new status. The Church of Scientology and the Hindu Mandir Association withdrew their applications. The Hindu Mandir Association reapplied under the name Hindu Religious Community. The Ministry rejected the application of the Sahaja Yoga group in 1998.

The nine religious groups that have constituted themselves as confessional communities according to the 1998 law are: Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baha'i Faith, the Baptists, the Evangelical Alliance, the Movement for Religious Renewal, the Pentecostalists, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Coptic-Orthodox Church, and the Hindu Religious Community.

Religious associations that do not qualify for either religious society or confessional community status may apply to become associations under the 1951 Law on Associations. Associations are corporations under law and have many of the same rights as confessional communities, including the right to own real estate.

The Government provides subsidies to private schools run by any of the 12 officially recognized religions.

There are no restrictions on missionary activities. Although in the past nonrecognized religious groups had problems obtaining resident permits for foreign religious workers, administrative procedures adopted in 1997 have addressed this problem in part. The Austrian Evangelical Alliance, the umbrella organization for nonrecognized Christian organizations, has reported no significant problems in obtaining

visas for religious workers. While visas for religious workers of recognized religions are not subject to a numerical quota, visas for religious workers who are members of nonrecognized religions do have a numerical cap; however, this appears to be sufficient to meet current demand.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The 1998 law allowed 12 previously recognized religious societies to retain their status; however, it imposed new criteria on other churches that seek to achieve that status. Numerous religious groups not recognized by the State, as well as some religious law experts, dismiss the benefits of obtaining status under the 1998 law and have complained that the law's additional criteria for recognition under the 1874 law obstruct claims to recognition and formalize a second class status for nonrecognized groups. Some experts have questioned the 1998 law's constitutionality.

Following a 1997 denial of recognition and a court appeal, in 1998 the Education Ministry granted Jehovah's Witnesses the status of a confessional community and the group immediately requested that it be recognized as a religious group under the 1874 law. The Education Ministry denied the application on the basis that, as a confessional community, Jehovah's Witnesses would need to submit to the required 10-year observation period. The group appealed this decision to the Constitutional Court, arguing that a 10-year observation period was unconstitutional. In April 2001, the Constitutional Court upheld the Education Ministry's finding. Jehovah's Witnesses filed an appeal with the Administrative Court, arguing that the law is illegal on administrative grounds. The group also has filed an appeal with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France.

The Government continued its information campaign against religious sects considered potentially harmful to the interests of individuals and society. In 1999 the Ministry for Social Security and Generations issued a new edition of a controversial brochure that described numerous nonrecognized religious groups in negative terms, which many of the groups deemed offensive. This brochure includes information on Jehovah's Witnesses, despite its status as a confessional community. The Federal Office on Sects continues to collect and distribute information on organizations considered sects. Under the law, this office has independent status, but its head is appointed and supervised by the Minister for Social Security and Generations.

Despite initial fears that the inclusion of the Freedom Party (FPO) in government would lead to a decrease in tolerance for nonrecognized religious groups, the situation regarding religious freedom did not change significantly during the period covered by this report. In April 2000, then Minister for Social Security and Generations, Elisabeth Sickl (FPO), announced additional measures to "protect citizens from the damaging influence of sects, cults, and esoteric movements;" however, no new measures were implemented during her tenure. Sickl left office in October 2000 and her successor has announced no new initiatives on this subject by the end of the period covered by this report.

The former head of the Freedom Party and current Governor of Carinthia, Joerg Haider, repeatedly has made intolerant and anti-Semitic statements, including during the period covered by this report. These included verbal attacks against the head the Jewish Community and a prominent Jewish-American campaign advisor prior to the Vienna local elections in March 2001. Although Haider repeatedly followed such statements with expressions of regret, his statements contributed to the widespread belief that he and some extreme elements of the FPO have contributed to a climate of intolerance in the country.

In April 1999, the conservative Austrian People's Party (OVP) convention formally accepted a decision made by the party's executive board in 1997 that party membership is incompatible with membership in a sect.

In 1999 the Constitutional Court ruled that denying prisoners who are members of Jehovah's Witnesses access to pastoral care because the organization was not a recognized religious society was a violation of the Constitution's provisions on religious freedom. The verdict stressed that pastoral care should be available to any person of any religious belief. Following this verdict, the Justice Ministry issued a decree on February 28, 2000, in which it instructed prison officials to make pastoral care available to prisoners who are members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Since this ruling, members of Jehovah's Witnesses have not reported any problems associated with prisoner access and pastoral care.

It remains unclear how the Constitutional Court verdict affects prisoners of other religious confessions, in particular those who are members of neither a recognized religious society nor a confessional community. Some groups have reported experiencing problems with access to pastoral care in isolated instances; however, there are no allegations of widespread problems. Access by the clergy of nonrecognized re-

ligious societies to hospitals and the military chaplaincy continues to be an area of concern.

The Government provides partial funding for religious instruction in public schools and churches for children belonging to any of the 12 officially recognized religions. The Government does not offer such funding to nonrecognized religious groups. A minimum of three children is required to form a class. In some cases, officially recognized religions decide that the administrative cost of providing religious instruction is too great to warrant providing such courses in all schools. Unless students age 14 and over (or their parents for children under age 14) formally withdraw from religious instruction (if offered in their religion) at the beginning of the academic year, attendance is mandatory.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 12 officially recognized religious groups are generally amicable. Fourteen Christian churches, among them the Roman Catholic Church, various Protestant confessions, and eight Orthodox and old-oriental churches are engaged in a dialog in the framework of the so-called "Ecumenical Council of Austrian Churches." The Baptists and the Salvation Army have observer status in the Council. The international Catholic organization "Pro Oriente," which promotes a dialog with the Orthodox churches, also is active in the country.

The Austrian Roman Catholic Church traditionally has been active in fostering amicable relations and promoting a dialog among the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic communities. The international Catholic group "Pax Christi," which pursues international interreligious understanding with projects involving Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism, has a chapter in the country.

There were no reports of violence or vigilante action against members of religious minorities. However, there is widespread societal mistrust and discrimination against members of some nonrecognized religious groups, particularly against those considered to be members of sects. A large portion of the public perceive such groups as exploiting the vulnerable for monetary gain, recruiting and brainwashing youth, promoting antidemocratic ideologies, and denying the legitimacy of government authority. Societal discrimination against sects is, at least in part, fostered by the Government (see Section II).

The English-speaking United Methodist Church of Austria reported no incidents of discrimination during the period covered by this report.

Muslims have complained about societal discrimination. In upper Austria, a controversy over a mosque in Traun received widespread press coverage. The mosque was demolished by authorities in March 2001, who cited building code violations. Members of the Muslim community alleged that the violations were only a pretext for authorities. They have reported problems in obtaining a new site for their religious services and believe that this is an attempt to encourage Muslims, most of whom are immigrants, to leave the area. The National Organization of Muslims in Austria has not intervened on behalf of the community in Traun.

Sensitivity to the practice of Scientology in the country remains high. The Church of Scientology has reported problems in opening bank accounts, now resolved, and obtaining credit cards. Individual Scientologists have experienced discrimination in hiring. In June 2000, a singer who previously was affiliated with the Church of Scientology was harassed at his performances. Police fined the demonstrators and offered police protection to the singer. In October 1999, Austria Telekom transferred a computer specialist from a sensitive position in an emergency-phone-line coordination office to a comparable but nonsensitive position due to concerns over his access to sensitive information.

Following the inclusion of the FPO in the Government, there were incidents involving members of various religious groups. In February 2000, the head of the Lutheran Church in Burgenland was subjected to hate mail and threats after she spoke out against intolerance and xenophobia. In 2000 the leader of the country's Jewish community also reported that several members of the community were subjected to verbal and written threats after taking a stand against racism and xenophobia.

According to the Interior Ministry's 2000 annual report on rightwing extremism, there was a decrease in the number of complaints of anti-Semitic incidents. Com-

pared with 1999, the number of complaints decreased by 40 percent, from 15 to 9 complaints.

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.

In September 2000, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted resolution HR 588, criticizing the country, among others, because of "conscious propaganda against religious minorities."

The U.S. Embassy monitors the Government's adherence to religious tolerance and freedom of expression as part of its evaluation of the Government's policies and commitments to freedom of expression.

The Ambassador regularly meets with religious and political leaders to reinforce the U.S. Government's commitment to religious freedom and tolerance and to discuss the concerns of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) and religious communities regarding the Government's policies towards religion. In March 2001, the U.S. Government issued a statement that strongly criticized Joerg Haider's verbal attack against the leader of the country's Jewish community. In July 2000, the Ambassador met with the Minister for Social Security and Generations to stress U.S. views on the problems inherent in the country's laws on religion as well as the work of its Office on Sects. The Ambassador previously had discussed the same issue with the Chancellor. Other officials at the Embassy maintain close contact with political leaders and members of the various religious communities. The Embassy's Public Affairs Office highlights religious freedom and tolerance in the majority of its programs.

AZERBAIJAN

The Constitution provides that persons of all faiths may choose and practice their religion without restrictions, and the Government generally respected these rights for most citizens; however, there were some abuses and restrictions.

There was no overall change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Following President Aliyev's public statements on religious freedom in November 1999, the Government's respect for religious freedom improved in late 1999 and much of 2000; however, some problems continued. Religious groups reported delays in and denials of registration. The authorities interfered in the importation of religious literature. Low-level officials at times harassed nontraditional religious organizations.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, reaction in recent years to evangelical activity on behalf of religious faiths new to the country has run contrary to its tradition of tolerance. There is widespread popular hostility towards groups that proselytize (largely evangelical Christians, but also Muslim missionary groups), and towards Muslims who convert to other faiths.

The U.S. Government 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 Embassy maintained a wide variety of religious contacts and addressed issues of concern with the Government's Religious Affairs Department, its successor agency the State Committee for Work with Religious Structures (SCWRS), and other government officials.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

According to official figures the country has a total area of 33,774 square miles and its population is approximately 8 million persons. The population is approximately 90 percent Muslim, 3 percent Christian, and less than 1 percent Jewish. The rest of the population adheres to other faiths or consists of nonbelievers. Among the Muslim majority, religious observance is relatively low, and Muslim identity tends to be based more on culture and ethnicity than religion. The Muslim population is approximately 60 percent Shi'a and 40 percent Sunni; differences do not appear to be defined sharply, and those Shi'a and Sunni Muslims who are observant intermingle freely on religious occasions. The vast majority of the country's Christians are Russian Orthodox whose identity, like that of Muslims, tends to be based as much on culture and ethnicty as religion. Christians are concentrated in the urban areas of Baku and Sumgait. Most of the country's Jews belong to one of two groups: The "Mountain" Jews are descendents of Jews who sought refuge in the northern

part of the country more than 2,000 years ago, and a smaller group of "European" Jews are descendents of Jews who migrated to the country during Russian and Soviet rule.

These four groups (Shi'a, Sunni, Russian Orthodox, and Jewish) are considered "traditional" religious groups. There also have been small congregations of Evangelical Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Baptists, and Baha'is in the country for more than 100 years. In the last 10 years, a number of new religious groups that are considered "foreign" or "nontraditional" have been established. These include "Wahhabist" Muslims, Pentecostals, evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Hare Krishnas. Religious leaders may not engage in political activities and their facilities may not be used for political purposes.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides that persons of all faiths may choose and practice their religion without restrictions, and the Government generally respects these rights for most citizens; however, there were some abuses and restrictions. Under the Law on Religious Freedom, each person has the right to choose and change his or her own religious affiliation, including atheism, to join or form the religious group of his choice, and to practice his or her religion. The State generally is prohibited expressly from interfering in the religious activities of any individual or group; however, there are exceptions, including cases where the activity of a religious group "threatens public order and stability."

A number of legal provisions enable the Government to regulate religious activity, including a requirement in the Law on Religion that all religious organizations be registered by the Government in order to function legally. Throughout most of the period covered by this report, registration was accomplished by obtaining approval from the Religious Affairs Department, subordinated to the Cabinet of Ministers, and then applying for formal registration with the Ministry of Justice. Following the liquidation of the Department in June 2001, registration of all religious groups was halted temporarily, while the government reorganized its procedures for overseeing religious organizations.

Registration enables a religious organization to maintain a bank account, rent property, and generally act as a legal entity. Lack of registration makes it more difficult, but not impossible, for a religious group to function. The process is burdensome and there are frequent, lengthy delays in obtaining registration for religious and nonreligious groups. Religious groups are permitted to appeal registration denials to the courts. Following a number of attacks against unregistered, nontraditional religious groups in late 1999, President Heydar Aliyev spoke publicly and in detail about the government's commitment to religious freedom. As a result, a number of groups with long-pending registration applications were registered. These included Pentecostal and Baptist churches, as well as Jehovah's Witnesses. The Law on Religious Freedom also subordinates all Islamic religious organizations to the Azerbaijan-based Spiritual Directorate of Caucasus Muslims. Another provision in the Law on Religious Freedom permits the production and dissemination of religious literature after approval is received from the Religious Affairs Department and with the agreement of local government authorities; however, the authorities also appeared selectively to restrict individuals from importing and distributing religious materials.

Officials other than the President issued public statements in support of religious freedom and tolerance. For example, in May 2001, Speaker of the Parliament Murtuz Aleskerov encouraged acceptance of citizens who had converted to Christianity. In October 2000, the Constitutional Court hosted a conference on religious freedom, which was attended by senior religious authorities as well as foreign and domestic specialists on religion.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The acting Chairman of the Religious Affairs Department and other lower-level and local government officials continued to restrict religious activity by some foreign and nontraditional groups. The key concerns relate to the Government's authority to register religious groups to oversee the import and production of religious literature and to restrict what it regards as political activity carried out under the guise of religion.

By the end of the period covered by this report, several religious groups continued to report that they had not been registered. These included Azerbaijani Presbyterian, Living Stones, New Life, and Baptist congregations from the towns of Aliabad, Sumgait, and Neftchala. In late 2000, two congregations, the nondenomina-

tional Baku Christian Fellowship and a branch of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, were denied registration by the Religious Affairs Department and the Ministry of Justice. In both cases, the reasons for denial appeared to have no basis in the law and contradicted the President's 1999 commitment to religious freedom. The authorities also appeared selectively to restrict individuals from importing and distributing religious materials. In September 2000, customs authorities held up a shipment of religious materials destined for the shop allegedly because the owner "did not have a right to import such books into the country." Half of these books eventually were released. The government has taken action against a number of Islamic figures (including foreigners) and organizations that it believes to have engaged in illegal political and terrorist activities.

Three religious groups in Baku continued to seek the return of places of worship seized during the Soviet period. These were the city's European (Ashkenazi) synagogue, the Lutheran church and a Baptist church. Government authorities reportedly are resisting return of these properties.

There were no repetitions during the period covered by this report of earlier instances in which officials or those allied with the Government used veiled anti-Semitic comments against perceived opponents for politically motivated reasons.

Press reports indicate that in the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region, a predominantly ethnic Armenian area over which the authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan have no control, the Armenian Apostolic Church enjoys a special status. Courses in religion are mandatory in Nagorno-Karabakh schools and local officials frequently underline their commitment to supporting the church, which is the oldest Armenian national institution. This status also results in serious restrictions on the activities of other confessions, mostly various Christian groups. The region's military atmosphere has led to hostility toward Jehovah's Witnesses, whose beliefs prohibit the bearing of arms.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Sporadic violations of religious freedom by some officials continued. In many instances, abuses by officials reflected the popular prejudice against conversion to Christianity and other nontraditional religions. For example, local authorities in the Zagatala region (in the northwest of the country) denied a newborn boy a birth certificate for several months before finally issuing one, allegedly because his parents were members of the local Baptist church and had given their son a "non-Azeri" name. Services at a legally registered Baptist church in Baku were reportedly under routine surveillance by local police. When a police officer was seen attending a service, he was fired from his job. Later, police questioned the church's pastor and members of the congregation about their activities and employment.

There have been isolated instances of harassment of religious groups by local officials. The most prominent of these is the harrassment of the legally registered evangelical Greater Grace Church. Since December 2000, the local pastor and several members of the Greater Grace Church in Ismayli repeatedly have been detained and questioned by local police, apparently at the instigation of local Muslim authorities. This harassment persisted through April 2001, when the pastor and several members of the church were detained while on a picnic in the countryside. Two members of the congregation were arrested and sentenced to 7 days' imprisonment for disobeying police orders. One was released prior to serving his full sentence due to poor health. In May 2001, Greater Grace services at a private apartment in Sumgait were interrupted by local authorities who demanded to see congregants' identification papers. The police took a key to the apartment, as well as several samples of Christian literature, video cassettes, and music. Although services resumed without interference the following week, local authorities were reviewing the Church's right to continue using the apartment for services at the end of the period covered by this report.

Government authorities took various actions during the reporting period to restrict what they claimed were political and terrorist activities by Iranian and other clerics operating independently of the organized Muslim community. The Government outlawed several Islamic humanitarian organizations because of credible reports about connections to terrorist activities. The Government also deported foreign Muslim clerics it suspected of engaging in political activites.

In September 1999, at the instigation of a local security official, the management of a state factory near Baku subjected six employees to public humiliation then fired them because they had become Jehovah's Witnesses. Following President Aliyev's November 1999 reaffirmation of religious freedom, the employees were reinstated with back pay. In an April 2001 letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Tolerance, a senior Jehovah's Witness official applauded the Government for its tolerant attitude towards Jehovah's Witnesses since that time.

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; however, there is widespread popular antipathy towards groups that proselytize (largely evangelical Christians, but also Muslim missionary groups), and towards Muslims who convert to other faiths. Azerbaijani Muslims who convert to non-Muslim faiths are considered alien by some of the religious traditions.

Religious proselytizing by foreigners is against the law, and there is vocal opposition to it. During a March 2001 opposition Civil Solidarity Party press conference, participants claimed that missionary activity undermined the country's morals and that certain missionaries operated in the political interests of Western countries. An article published in a local daily in February 2001 criticized Western pressure on religious issues and the President's decision to register nontraditional evangelical faiths in late 1999. Russian Orthodox Church officials publicly blamed nontraditional Christian faiths for promoting discord between Christians and Muslims in the country.

In June 2001, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) became the subject of several negative press reports on independent television stations. These reports accused both the Adventist church and ADRA of religious proselytism in the country. Local Muslim leaders and government officials were featured warning such agencies that they should be closed. The press also accused the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) in Baku, of supporting religious groups after the ICRC distributed a publication that some believed recognized the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh as independent. The ICRC—a purely secular organization—immediately and publicly refuted the accusations about supporting religious groups.

Hostility also exists toward foreign (mostly Iranian and "Wahhabist") Muslim missionary activity, which in part is viewed as seeking to spread political Islam and thus as a threat to stability and civil peace.

Hostility between Armenians and Azeris, intensified by the unresolved conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, continues to be strong. In those portions of the country controlled by Armenians, all ethnic Azerbaijanis have fled and those mosques that have not been destroyed are not functioning. Animosity toward ethnic Armenians elsewhere in the country forced most ethnic Armenians to depart, and all Armenian churches, many of which were damaged in ethnic riots that took place over a decade ago, remain closed. As a consequence, the estimated 10,000 to 30,000 ethnic Armenians who remain in the country are unable to attend their traditional places of worship.

Prominent members of the Russian Orthodox and Jewish communities report that there are no societal restrictions on their freedom to worship.

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. The Ambassador and embassy officers maintain close contacts with senior Muslim and other religious authorities from a wide variety of religious groups. The Embassy helped organize a conference on religious freedom hosted by the Constitutional Court in October 2000. Attendees included the Ambassador and a visiting U.S. Congressional counsel on religious freedom who later met with government officials and religious groups to discuss recent developments. The Embassy communicated its concerns about reported violations of the Law on Religion to officers in the Department of Religious Affairs, its successor agency, Parliament, and the Presidential Administration. In January 2001, embassy officers traveled to Ismayli to meet with members of the Greater Grace Church and local authorities following reports of harassment. The Embassy remained in close contact with various church members and government authorities to urge compliance with the country's commitments to religious freedom. In April 2001, the Ambassador met with the President's senior adviser on religious issues to underscore the U.S. government's interest in religious freedom and to encourage continued implementation of the president's policy. The Embassy continued to raise concerns with government officials, particularly regarding actions taken by local police, security, and other authorities. The Embassy also has worked

on a regular basis with religious groups and the President's Office to resolve issues related to registrations and the import of religious literature.

BELARUS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the regime restricts this right in practice.

The status of respect for religious freedom continued to worsen during the period covered by this report. Head of State Alexander Lukashenka has pursued a policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church, currently the country's majority religion, and the authorities have increased harassment of other denominations and religions. Some of these, including many Protestant denominations, the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church (BOAC), and some eastern religions, repeatedly have been denied registration by the regime. Without registration, many of these groups find it difficult, if not impossible, to rent or purchase property to conduct religious services. The authorities continued to enforce a 1995 Cabinet of Ministers decree that restricts the activities of religious workers in an attempt to protect Russian Orthodoxy and curtail the growth of evangelical religions. Some Protestant denominations have been the subject of judicial action by the regime for allowing foreigners to preach in their churches. Despite continued harassment, some minority faiths have been able to function if they maintain a low profile.

There are, for the most part, amicable relations among registered, traditional religious communities; however, societal anti-Semitism persisted, and sentiment critical of minority faiths increased.

The U.S. Government discussed with the regime the poor human rights situation in the country and raised problems of religious freedom during such discussions. US Embassy officials also discussed specific cases with the Government.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 76,810 square miles, and its population is 9,990,000.

Sustained repression of the once majority Greek Catholic population under the Russian and Soviet empires, persecution of the Roman Catholic Church during the same period, and Soviet repression of much of the Russian Orthodox clergy have radically altered the natural religious landscape and turned the Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate into the majority church in the country. Furthermore, seven decades of religious repression under the Soviet regime have resulted in a culture that is largely secular in orientation. According to one opinion poll taken during 1998, less than half of the population believes in God. At the same time, approximately 60 percent identify for cultural or historical reasons with the Russian Orthodox Church. The State Committee on Religious and National Affairs (SCRNA) indicates that approximately 80 percent of all persons who profess a religious faith belong to the Russian Orthodox Church. Approximately 15 to 20 percent of the population are estimated to be either practicing Roman Catholics or identify themselves with the Roman Catholic Church (the second largest religious grouping). The current number of persons identifying themselves as Jews is between 60,000 and 80,000 persons. There are a number of Protestants and adherents to the Greek Rite Catholic Church. Other minority religious faiths include, but are not limited to, the following: Seventh-Day Adventist, Old Believer, Muslim (the Supreme Administration of Muslims, abolished in 1939, was reestablished in early 1994), Jehovah's Witnesses, Apostolic Christian, Calvinist, and Lutheran.

The country was designated an Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1989, thereby creating the Belarusian Orthodox Church. Patriarchal Exarch Filaret celebrated his 20th anniversary as head of the Orthodox community on October 24, 1998. Under Filaret's leadership, the number of Orthodox parishes throughout the country has grown to 1,172 as of January 1, 2001.

Situated between Poland and Russia, the country historically has been an area of interaction, as well as competition and conflict, between Russian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Cardinal Kazmierz Swiatek, Archbishop of the Minsk-Mogilev Archdiocese, heads the approximately 400 Roman Catholic parishes. The Roman Catholic presence traditionally has been stronger in areas under Polish influence; however, the ethnic Polish community, currently numbering at least 400,000 persons, does not account for the total number of Roman Catholics. Although Roman Catholic parishes can be found throughout the country, most Roman Catholics reside in areas located in the west and north, near the border with Poland and Lith-

uania. This concentration is due in part to the more thorough suppression of the Roman Catholic Church in eastern oblasts in imperial and Soviet times. Sensitive to the dangers of the Roman Catholic Church being viewed as a "foreign" church or as a political threat, Cardinal Swiatek, who himself spent 10 years in a Soviet labor camp, has tried to keep the Church out of the country's internal political problems. Although the Cardinal has prohibited the display of Polish national symbols in churches and encouraged the use of Belarusian, rather than Polish, in church services, some priests continued to conduct services in Polish.

It is estimated that approximately 120,000 citizens were considered to have Jewish "nationality" near the end of the Soviet period in 1989, compared to between 60,000 and 80,000 at the end of the period covered by this report. At least half of the present Jewish population is thought to live in or near the capital city of Minsk. A majority of the country's Jews are not actively religious. Of those who are, most are believed to be either Reform or Conservative. There is also a small but active Lubavitch-run Orthodox synagogue in Minsk.

Adherents of Protestant faiths, although representing a relatively small percentage of the population, are growing in number. Since 1990 the number of Protestant congregations, registered and unregistered, has more than doubled and now totals over 1,000, according to state and independent sources. Protestant faiths, although historically small in comparison with Orthodoxy, have been active in the country for hundreds of years. During the Soviet period, a number of Protestant faiths were placed forcibly under the administrative umbrella of a joint Pentecostal-Baptist organization. The two largest Protestant groups are registered under separate Pentecostal and Baptist unions. A significant number of Protestant churches, including charismatic and Pentecostal groups remain unregistered.

There are a number of congregations of the Greek Rite Catholic Church, which was once the majority religion. The Greek Catholic Church was established in the 16th century and once had a membership of approximately three-quarters of the population, until it was banned by the Russian Government in 1839 and severely persecuted in the 1860's and again in 1946. Following the 1991 reestablishment of Belarusian independence, the attempt to revive the Church, which maintains Orthodox rituals but is in the communion with the Vatican, has met with only limited success. The Lukashenka regime treats the Greek Catholic Church with disfavor because of its emphasis on the use of the Belarusian language as well as historical tensions between the Greek Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches.

SECTION II. STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the regime restricts this right in practice. Although Article 16 of the 1996 amended Constitution—which resulted from an illegal referendum used by Lukashenka to broaden his powers—reaffirms the equality of religions and denominations before the law, it also contains restrictive language that stipulates that cooperation between the State and religious organizations "is regulated with regard for their influence on the formation of spiritual, cultural, and country traditions of the Belarusian people."

Since his election as the country's President in July 1994, Lukashenka, who has called himself an "Orthodox atheist," has pursued a policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church as the country's chief religion and harassing other non-Russian Orthodox denominations and religions. In December 1999, Lukashenka asserted that politicians and the head of state bear responsibility for preserving Christian values, for maintaining religious peace in society, and for harmonious cooperation between the state and the Church. Lukashenka also called for the church to be more active in promoting the unity of Slavic nations because Slavic integration is in the interests of both the State and the Russian Orthodox Church.

The State Committee on Religious and National Affairs (SCRNA), which was established in January 1997, categorizes religions and denominations. Some are viewed as "traditional," including Russian Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam (as practiced by a small community of ethnic Tatars with roots in the country dating back to the 11th century); some are viewed as "nontraditional," including some Protestant and other faiths; and some are viewed as "sects," including eastern religions and other faiths. The authorities deny permission to register legally at the national level to some faiths considered to be "nontraditional," and to all considered to be "sects." The SCRNA claims that 26 religious denominations are registered officially; however, the significance of this figure is uncertain. Some congregations are registered only on a local basis, which entails only limited rights. Only congregations registered nationally are allowed to invite foreign religious workers and open new churches. While all registered religious organizations enjoy

tax-exempt status, government subsidies appear limited to the Russian Orthodox Church. Government employees are not required to take any kind of religious oath or practice elements of a particular faith.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Since his election as the country's President in July 1994, Lukashenka, who has called himself an "Orthodox atheist," has pursued a policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church as the country's chief religion and harassing other non-Russian Orthodox denominations and religions. The authorities encourage a greater role for the Russian Orthodox Church, largely as part of an overall strategy to strengthen "Slavic unity" in the region and promote greater political unification between Belarus and Russia. Lukashenka grants the Russian Orthodox Church special financial advantages that other denominations do not enjoy and has declared the preservation and development of Russian Orthodox Christianity a "moral necessity." On April 30, 2000, Lukashenka said on state radio that "nobody will disturb our Orthodoxy" and pledged that the State "will do everything for the Church to be a pillar of support for our state in the future." In 1998 Lukashenka pledged state assistance to the Russian Orthodox Church and stressed that Orthodoxy would remain the "main religion." Following a $100,000 donation to the Russian Orthodox Church in January 2001, Lukashenka was awarded the prize of the Unity of Slavic Peoples by Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Aleksiy II, for his efforts to defend Russian Orthodoxy. In a public meeting with members of the Parliament's human rights committee in May 2001, Russian Orthodox Archbishop of Mogilev and Mstislavl Maksim publicly called for a new law on religion that would protect the "dominant" status of the Russian Orthodox Church in the country, introduce religious education in secondary schools, and ban the spread of "non-traditional" denominations. Valery Lipkin, chairman of the committee, asserted the new law would ban the spread of "destructive sects" in the country.

The authorities deny permission to register legally at the national level to some faiths considered to be "nontraditional," and to all considered to be "sects." The authorities assert that they deny some groups permission to register as religious organizations because their activities "run counter to the Constitution." With or without official registration, some religious faiths have great difficulty renting or purchasing property in which to establish places of worship, in building churches (e.g., the Greek Catholics, sometimes disparaged as "Uniates") or in openly training clergy. Police have disrupted some services or religious meetings, which were being conducted peacefully in private homes when held by religious groups that have not been able to register.

The authorities continued to refuse to register the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church (BOAC). Local courts have refused to hear appeals made by the BOAC, to overturn the authorities' decision not to register their churches. The BOAC is unable to train a sufficient number of priests to meet the growing needs of its parishioners in its 70 parishes because of ongoing registration problems, including the inability to register a seminary.

A number of Protestant faiths are refused registration because they do not have a legal address; however, they are refused property that could qualify as a legal address because they are not registered. The Full Gospel Pentecostal churches regularly are refused registration in this way. According to independent estimates, as many as 70 percent of Protestant churches have been denied registration, have lost their registration in a recent government-imposed reregistration exercise, or have not attempted to register. Article 272 of the Civil Code states that property may only be used for religious services once it has been converted from residential use; however, the authorities decline to issue permits for such conversions to unregistered religions. Religious groups that cannot register often are forced to meet illegally or in the homes of individual members. Several charismatic and Pentecostal churches have been evicted from property they were renting because they were not registered as religious organizations. A number of "nontraditional" Protestant and other faiths have not attempted to register because they do not believe that their applications will be approved.

In 1998 SCRNA official Vyacheslav Savitskiy asserted that "11 destructive religious organizations, which have been denied registration after expert examination are confirmed as functioning in the country. In April 1999, a conference organized by the Russian Orthodox Church and Lukashenka's National Assembly discussed the need to introduce legislation to combat "destructive sects" that operate illegally. On April 12, 2001, the official newspaper of the armed forces, Vo Slavu Rodinu, published an article that listed 74 "destructive sects," including many eastern religions, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses, and urged all military personnel to avoid such organizations.

On June 16, 2000, Minsk city authorities banned an annual Catholic procession in the center of Minsk commemorating the feast of Corpus Christi. The march, which regularly attracted up to 5,000 participants, had been held annually since 1991. A second appeal by the organizers also was denied. The denial of the march was considered by many human rights observers to be part of a larger crackdown on non-Orthodox religious groups.

Citizens theoretically are not prohibited from proselytizing; however, while individuals may speak freely about their religious beliefs, the authorities have intervened to prevent, interfere with, or punish individuals who proselytize on behalf of an unregistered religion. For example, the regime continued to enforce a July 1995 Council of Ministers decree that regulates the activities of religious workers in an attempt to protect Russian Orthodoxy and prevent the growth of evangelical religions. A 1997 Council of Ministers directive prohibits teaching religion at youth camps. In February 1999, the Council of Ministers passed Decree No. 280, which expanded upon these earlier regulations. The decree appears to stipulate, among other things, that among foreign religious workers, only male clergy may engage in religious work upon invitation from a religious organization already officially registered, a provision that could be invoked to prohibit female religious clergy, such as Roman Catholic nuns, from engaging in religious activity. However, this provision has not been tested in the courts.

Foreigners generally are prohibited from preaching or heading churches that the authorities view as "nontraditional faiths" or "sects," which include Protestant groups. Foreign missionaries may not engage in religious activities outside the institutions that invited them. One-year validity, multiple-entry "spiritual activities" visas, which are required officially of foreign missionaries, can be difficult to obtain, even for faiths that are registered with the authorities and have a long history in the country. Foreign clergy or religious workers who do not register with the authorities or who have tried to preach without government approval or without an invitation from, and the permission of, a registered religious organization, have been expelled from the country. Approval often involves a lengthy bureaucratic process. In November 2000, a pastor of a Protestant church in Brest was warned and later fined by city authorities for allowing a foreigner to preach at a church conference.

In April 2000, the Council of Ministers changed the regulations to allow internal affairs agencies to expel foreign clergymen from the country by not extending their registration or by denying them temporary stay permits. Under the new regulations, these authorities are allowed to make decisions on expulsion on their own or based on recommendations from Religious Affairs Councils, regional executive committees, or from the Religious Affairs Department of the Executive Committee of the city of Minsk. There is no provision for appeal to judicial bodies. In April 2001, relying on these new regulations, Minsk city authorities refused to extend the registration of the foreign pastor of a Pentecostal church.

The regime increased its efforts to curb the role of foreign clergymen during the period covered by this report. In March 2001, the regime approved additional changes to the regulations governing invitations to foreign clergy and the activities of foreign clergy in the country. Under the new regulations, representatives of foreign religious organizations can only be invited upon agreement with the SCRNA, even if their visit is for nonreligious purposes, such as charitable activities. The inviting organization must make a written request to invite foreign clergy, including the dates and reason for the visit. The SCRNA has 20 days in which to respond and there is no provision for appeal of the SCRNA's decision. In April 2001, the regime enacted changes to the civil code to restrict "subversive activities" by foreign organizations in the country. A new clause prohibits the establishment of offices of foreign organizations, "the activities of which are aimed at . . . the inciting of national, religious and racial enmity, as well as activities which can have negative effects on the physical and mental health of the people." Most human rights monitors believe that the current regime could interpret the clause to restrict further, or deny altogether, activities of foreign religious organizations or their Belarusian associates.

As a result of its revival since 1991, the Roman Catholic Church has experienced a shortage of qualified native clergy. At times the Church has had difficulty getting permission from government authorities to bring in a sufficient number of foreign religious workers, mostly from Poland, to make up for the shortage. After a long delay, the Lukashenka regime has given permission to the Catholic Church to open a seminary in Pinsk in September 2001. The regime indicated that, in light of this development, foreign priests no longer would be allowed to work in the country. However, this change may not be enforced at the local level, and at least some foreign priests still are allowed to work in the country. Bishops must receive permission from the SCRNA before transferring a foreign priest to another parish.

Restitution of religious property remained limited during the period covered by this report. There is no legal basis for restitution of property that was seized during the Soviet and Nazi occupations, and legislation restricts the restitution of property that is currently being used for cultural or educational purposes. Many former synagogues in Minsk are used as theaters, museums, sports complexes, and even a German-owned beer hall; the Jewish community's requests to have these synagogues returned has been refused. The few returns of property to religious communities have been on an individual and inconsistent basis, and local government authorities in general are reluctant to cooperate. Over the past several years, the Jewish community has lobbied the authorities successfully to return several properties in Minsk and other cities; however, most properties have not been returned. The Russian Orthodox Church appears to have had the most success on the issue of property restitution.

Regime officials took a number of actions that indicated hostility or insensitivity toward the Jewish community. The authorities have done little to counter the spread of anti-Semitic literature. For example, in March 2000, a Minsk court dismissed a complaint filed by Jewish organizations against the Orthodox Initiative (a state owned publishing company) for publishing an anti-Semitic book, "The War According to Mean Laws, which, among other anti-Semitic writings, included the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and blamed Jews for societal and economic problems in the country. The judge in the case declared that the book contained "scientific information" and, therefore, was not within the jurisdiction of the court. In May 2000, a Minsk city court refused to hear the Jewish organizations appeal and the book remains on sale at the main Orthodox Church bookstore and other state-run bookstores. In December 2001, a Minsk synagogue was fire bombed; and no discernible effort has been made by the authorities to find those responsible for the incident (see Section III). As in previous years, authorities attempted to prohibit the distribution of matzoh for Passover among members of the Jewish community. In April 2001, local Jewish charity organizations also had difficulty distributing matzoh for Passover. The Committee on Humanitarian Aid stated that the matzoh could not be considered humanitarian aid, but their decision was overturned at the last minute and Jewish charity organizations were able to distribute a limited amount of matzoh in time for Passover.

Officially sanctioned state newspaper and state television attacks on minority faiths increased in frequency during the period covered by this report. For example, on August 5, 2000, Narodnaya Gazeta, a state-owned and published newspaper, carried an article with the headline "The Prospect Looms for Belarus to become a Protestant republic." Among other allegations, the article stated that Protestant groups engage in "fanatical rituals," including the ritual use of human blood and human sacrifice. The article claimed that these groups threaten Russian Orthodox priests with physical violence and present a threat to the country, its psychological health, and its security. The article also called on the authorities to take steps to protect Russian Orthodoxy. Appeals to the SCRNA by Protestant leaders to halt distribution of the article were unsuccessful. The author, Nina Yanovich, as well as Narodnaya Gazeta journalists Nina Chaika and Mikhail Shimansky, who also authored articles hostile to other minority faiths, later were given honorary awards by Orthodox Church Metropolitan Filaret for their articles defending the Russian Orthodox Church. A series of state television documentaries, entitled "Expansion," targeted Protestants, especially Pentecostals, and Catholics as destructive groups that engage in fanatical rituals and pose a threat to society. In March and April 2001, another series shown on state television accused Protestant churches of engaging in human sacrifices, poisoning children, and other "destructive rituals." In the series, SCRNA officials claimed that Protestant groups were undermining the authority of the regime, were agents of the West, and needed to be banned from the country. Efforts by Catholic and Protestant groups to halt these broadcasts were rejected by SCRNA authorities and the courts.

There were no reports of restrictions on the importation of religious literature. However, there were repeated instances of authorities preventing the distribution of religious literature, through holding or seizures of the materials.

A practitioner of a "nontraditional" faith, especially one not permitted to register, could be at a disadvantage in regard to advancement within the government bureaucracy or the state-owned sector of the economy.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In July 2000, security forces twice raided the Parish of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (BOAC) in the village of Pogranichniki, near Grodno, for conducting religious services without registration. On July 27, 2000, security forces arrested BOAC priest Ivan Spasyuk on charges of conducting services

without a permit. He later was sentenced to 5 days' imprisonment for allegedly resisting arrest. On May 21, 2001, authorities again arrested Spasyuk while he was attempting to hold a service in the village of Radaulyany (Berestavitsky district). Authorities then summoned Spasyuk and his wife to a local court where, in a closed hearing and without the ability to call witnesses or obtain legal assistance, Spasyuk was detained and then fined for petty hooliganism.

In May 2001, 20 members of a messianic Jewish group were detained in Minsk while they were attempting to distribute religious literature. Also, in May 2001, the organization attempted to hang posters in central Minsk congratulating veterans of World War II on victory day. While attempting to hang posters, police under orders from the city department of the SCRNA, detained members of the group. The SCRNA informed the group that "it would be offensive for veterans to receive congratulations from the Jews." The group was detained for several hours and then released. Several members of the group had some of their property confiscated.

There were other reports of the detention of members of Protestant religious groups, usually for several hours, for distribution of unregistered religious materials.

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 are, for the most part, amicable relations among the registered, traditional, religious communities; however, societal anti-Semitism persisted and sentiment critical of minority faiths rose during the period covered by this report.

There have been some instances of vandalism that appeared related to societal anti-Semitism. There was a noticeable lack of government action in response to them. For example, on December 27,2000, unidentified assailants threw firebombs at a synagogue in Minsk. A security guard was able to extinguish the fire before serious damage occurred. No progress was reported on the investigation of the incident by the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of arrests in the April 1999 or December 2000 arson attacks on local Minsk synagogues or in a number of cases of desecration of Jewish cemeteries from previous years. According to the Anti-Defamation League and the World Jewish Congress, there are a number of small ultra-nationalist organizations on the fringes of society, and a number of newspapers regularly print anti-Semitic material. One of these newspapers Slavianskaia Gazeta, although distributed locally, reportedly was published in Moscow. The State Committee on the Press issued an official warning in June 1999 to the local newspaper Lichnost for anti-Semitic articles. Anti-Semitic material from Russia also circulates widely.

Many in the Jewish community remain concerned that the Lukashenka regime's plans to promote greater unity with Russia may be accompanied by political appeals to groups in Russia that tolerate or promote anti-Semitism. Lukashenka's calls for "Slavic solidarity" were well received and supported by anti-Semitic, neo-Fascist organizations in Russia. For example, the organization Russian National Unity (a neofascist, antiforeign, antiminority faith group) has an active local branch and its literature is distributed in public places in Minsk. The concept of a "greater Slavic union," the leadership of which Lukashenka seeks, is a source of concern to the Jewish community given the nature of support that it engenders.

There have been constant attacks on Protestant groups during this reporting period.

The country's small Muslim community, with roots dating to the Middle Ages, does not report significant societal prejudice. While in the past there was at least one report of vandalism of a mosque, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report.

On April 22, 1999, during a religious conference held in Minsk Patriarchal Exarch Filaret stated that the Orthodox Church does not seek the role of interconfessional leader or to become a state-run church. However, he stressed that the Orthodox Church would cooperate only with religious faiths that have "historical roots" in the country. Filaret also remarked that he was against the "invasion of those foreign religions that corrupt souls." In a May 2001 speech to the All Belarusian People's Congress, Filaret called for the authorities to cooperate with the Russian Orthodox Church to protect the "spiritual security" of the people, and to limit the presence of "destructive and pseudo-Christian societies that destroy the spiritual, social, and cultural unity of the people."

Most local human rights nongovernmental organizations do not focus significant resources on religious freedom concerns.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy has raised problems of religious freedom with the authorities in the context of frequent demarches on the poor human rights situation in the country. In July 2000, following the arrest of BOAC priest Spasyuk, representatives of the Embassy met with government officials to press for his release and to urge authorities to respect the rights of BOAC parishioners to gather and worship. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy have had frequent contacts with leaders and members of religious communities throughout the period covered by this report, and have worked with Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) representatives to promote religious freedom.

Officials of the U.S. Department of State met on a number of occasions with representatives of the Government of Belarus in Washington, D.C. to support respect for religious freedom and to address other human rights concerns.

BELGIUM

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government took action against groups that it considers "harmful sects."

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 free practice of religion.

There are generally amicable relations among different religious groups in society; however, several religious groups complain of discrimination, particularly groups which have not been accorded official "recognized" status by the Government and those associated primarily with immigrant communities.

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 11,800 square miles and its population is approximately 10.3 million.

The population is predominantly Roman Catholic. Approximately 75 percent of the population belong to the Catholic Church. The Muslim population numbers approximately 350,000, 90 percent of which are Sunni. Protestants number between 90,000 and 100,000. Greek and Russian Orthodox churches have approximately 100,000 adherents. The Jewish population is about 40,000, and the Anglican Church has approximately 21,000 members. In addition to the recognized faiths, the largest nonrecognized religions are Jehovah's Witnesses, with approximately 27,000 baptized members, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), with approximately 3,000 members. Unofficial estimates indicate that approximately 10 percent of the population does not identify with any religion.

According to a 1999 survey by an independent academic group, only 11.2 percent of the population attend weekly religious services. However, religion does still play a role in major life events—65 percent of the children born in Belgium are baptized; 49.2 percent of couples opt for a religious marriage; and 76.6 percent of funerals include religious services.

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 accords "recognized" status to Roman Catholicism, Protestantism (including Evangelicals), Judaism, Anglicanism, Islam, and Orthodox Christianity (Greek and Russian), and these religions receive subsidies from government revenues. The Government also supports the freedom to participate in nonreligious philosophical organizations. These secular humanist groups (or "laics") serve as a seventh recognized "religion" and their organizing body, the Central Council of Non-Religious Philosophical Communities of Belgium, receives funds and benefits similar to those of the six other recognized religions. According to the Government, the non-

confessional philosophical organizations have 350,000 members. However, the laics claim 1.5 million members.

By law, each recognized religion has the right to provide teachers at government expense for religious instruction in schools. The Government also pays the salaries, retirement, and lodging costs of ministers and subsidizes the construction and renovation of church buildings for recognized religions. The ecclesiastical administrations of recognized religions have legal rights and obligations, and the municipality in which they are located must pay any debts that they incur. Some subsidies are the responsibility of the federal government while the regional and municipal governments pay others. According to an independent academic review, government at all levels spent $523 million (23 billion Belgian francs) on subsidies for recognized religions in 2000. Of that amount, 79.2 percent went to the Catholic Church, 13 percent to secular humanist groups, 3.5 percent to Muslims, 3.2 percent to Protestants, 0.6 percent to Jews, 0.4 percent to Orthodox Christians, and 0.1 percent to Anglicans. Taxpayers who object to contributing to these subsidies have no legal recourse.

The Government applies the following five criteria in deciding whether or not to grant recognition to a religious group: 1) the religion must have a structure or hierarchy; 2) the group must have a sufficient number of members; 3) the religion must have existed in the country for a long period of time; 4) it must offer a social value to the public; and 5) the religion must abide by the laws of the State and respect public order. The five criteria are not listed in decrees or laws. The law does not further define "sufficient," "a long period of time," or "social value." A religious group seeking official recognition applies to the Ministry of Justice, which then conducts a thorough review before recommending approval or rejection. Final approval of recognized status is the sole responsibility of the Parliament but in practice the Parliament generally accepts the decision of the Ministry of Justice. A group whose application is refused by the Ministry of Justice may appeal the decision to the Council of State.

The lack of recognized status does not prevent religious groups from practicing freely. Nonrecognized groups do not qualify for government subsidies but can qualify for tax-exempt status as nonprofit organizations.

In 1999 the Federal Synod of Protestant and Evangelical Churches in Belgium (a group of evangelical Christian organizations) claimed discrimination based on the Government's refusal to grant it recognized status separate from the recognized Protestant group. The Government insisted that its decision was consistent with its treatment of other groups such as Islam and Orthodox Christianity in which different branches are represented by a single Executive Council. In late 2000, the Ministry of Justice facilitated discussions between the Evangelical group and the recognized Protestant group, which resolved the dispute by including Evangelical representatives on the existing Protestant Executive Council.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In response to a number of highly publicized mass suicides in France, Switzerland, and Canada by members of the Solar Temple cult (including some Belgian citizens) in the mid-1990's, the Parliament in 1996 established a special commission to examine the potential dangers that sects may represent to society, especially children, and to recommend policies to deal with those dangers. The parliamentary commission released its report in 1997. It divided sects into two broadly defined categories. The report defined the first category of sects as "organized groups of individuals espousing the same doctrine within a religion." The commission considered sects in this sense to be respectable and to reflect the normal exercise of freedom of religion and assembly provided for by fundamental rights. The second category, "harmful sectarian organizations," are defined as groups having or claiming to have a philosophical or religious purpose whose organization or practice involves illegal or injurious activities, harms individuals or society, or impairs human dignity. Attached to the report was a list of 189 sectarian organizations that were mentioned during testimony before the commission (including groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Church of Scientology, and even the Young Women's Christian Association). Although the introduction to the list clearly stated that there was no intent to characterize any of the groups as "dangerous," the list quickly became known in the press and to the public as the "dangerous sects" list. The Parliament eventually adopted several of the report's recommendations but it never adopted the list itself.

Some religious groups included in the 1997 parliamentary list continue to complain that their inclusion has resulted in discriminatory action against them. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses has been holding its annual convention at the Brussels Exhibition Center since 1935. In March 2001, church officials received a letter notifying them that they could not use that facility for their 2001 meeting. The re-

jection letter specifically mentioned the appearance of Jehovah's Witnesses on the parliamentary list as reason for the refusal.

In May 1998, to implement one of the report's recommendations, Parliament passed legislation creating a "Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations." The Center opened its offices in September 2000. The Center collects open source information on a wide range of religious and philosophical groups and provides upon request information and advice to the public regarding the legal rights of freedom of association, freedom of privacy, and freedom of religion. The Center's library is open to the public and contains information on religion in general as well as on specific religious groups. The library also includes publications provided by various religious organizations including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and other religious groups. The Center is authorized to propose policy or legislation to the Government on the problem of sects; however, it is not authorized to provide assessments of individual sectarian organizations to the general public.

The law creating the Center stipulates that the harmful nature of a sectarian group is to be evaluated in reference to principles contained in the Constitution, orders, laws, decrees, and in international human rights instruments ratified by the Government. The Center is required by law to publish a report on its activities every 2 years. The first report is expected to be released in the fall of 2001.

Parliament implemented another of the report's recommendations, when it passed legislation in October 1998 creating an interagency body that works in conjunction with the Center to coordinate government policy on sects. This interagency coordination group, which includes representatives from law enforcement agencies as well as a number of government ministries, held its first meeting in October 2000 and now meets on a quarterly basis. A subgroup of law enforcement officials meets bimonthly to exchange information on sect activities. Most law enforcement agencies have an official specifically assigned to deal with sect issues. The Government also has designated one national magistrate in the District Court of First Instance and one local magistrate in each of the 27 judicial districts to monitor cases involving sects.

The parliamentary report also recommended that the country's municipal governments sponsor information campaigns to educate the public, especially children, about the phenomenon of harmful sects. In December 1998, Parliament enacted legislation formally charging the country's State Security with the duty of monitoring harmful sectarian organizations as potential threats to the internal security of the country. This legislation uses the same language as the Parliamentary Commission's report and defines "harmful sectarian organizations" as any religious or philosophical group that, through its organization or practices, engages in activities that are illegal, injurious, or harmful to individuals or society.

Some courts in the Flanders region continue to stipulate, in the context of child custody proceedings and as a condition of granting visitation rights, that a noncustodial parent who is a member of Jehovah's Witnesses may not expose his or her children to the teachings or lifestyle of that religious group during visits. These courts have claimed that such exposure would be harmful to the child; however, other courts have not imposed this restriction.

Some recognized religions complain of incidents of religious discrimination. The Muslim Executive Council reported that women and girls wearing traditional dress or headscarves in some cases face discrimination in employment and public and private school admissions even though the law does not prohibit such dress.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools; however, students are not required to attend religion classes. Public school religion teachers are nominated by a committee from their religious group and appointed by the Minister of Education. All public schools have a teacher for each of the six recognized religions. A seventh choice, a nonconfessional course, is available if the child does not wish a religious course. Private Catholic schools receive government subsidies for working expenses and teacher salaries.

On September 30, 1999, police raided offices and homes of members of the Church of Scientology and seized computers and documents belonging to the Church, including parishioners' confidential spiritual counseling folders. At the end of the period coveredby this report, no arrests or prosecutions had resulted from this raid. A second, smaller raid on the Church of Scientology's Brussels headquarters took place on February 8, 2001 at which time additional documents were seized. Most of the seized computer equipment has been returned to the Church but the documents are still held by the investigating magistrate. The Government has refused to provide additional information on the case since it is still under investigation. The Church of Scientology has stated that the Government's seizure of its computers, materials, and files impedes its ability to practice freely. The Church of Scientology took legal

action in 2001 to obtain its documents and has filed a complaint claiming that the Prosecutor's Office provided prejudicial statements to the press in violation of the country's secrecy laws regarding investigations. On March 6, 2001, the Church of Scientology filed a formal complaint against the Government with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance.

In April 2000, the Belgian Consulate in Los Angeles refused to issue visas for missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) to enter the country for missionary work. Similar visas had been processed for decades without problems. The Government explained that this change in policy was an unintended result of the Foreign Worker's Act of 1999 that required religious workers to obtain work permits before applying for a visa to enter the country for religious work. However, the Act specifically exempted workers for the six recognized religions from this requirement. Mormon missionaries were told that they should reapply for visas after obtaining the appropriate work permits. However, since Mormon missionaries are strictly volunteers who pay their own way and receive no salary or subsidy from the Church, they do not qualify for the required work permit. Negotiations between representatives of the Mormons and the Ministry of Interior, facilitated by the U.S. Embassy, led to a resumption of the issuance of visas in July 2000 under special temporary procedures. Visas are now being issued on a regular basis, although at a much slower pace than in the past. The Government still has not devised a permanent solution for the problem.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 are generally amicable relations among different religions groups in society; however, several religious groups complain of discrimination, particularly groups which have not been accorded official "recognized" status by the Government and those associated primarily with immigrant communities.

At the national level, there is an annual general assembly of the National Ecumenical Commission to discuss various religious themes. The Catholic Church sponsors working groups at the national level to maintain dialog and promote tolerance among all religious groups. At the local level, every Catholic diocese has established commissions for interfaith dialog.

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.

U.S. Embassy representatives discussed the issue of religious freedom throughout the period covered by this report with officials from the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, and Interior, as well as with Members of Parliament. There is an ongoing dialog between the Embassy and the Ministry of Justice at the cabinet level regarding the implementation of recommendations of the 1997 parliamentary report on sectarian organizations. Embassy officials also met regularly with the Director of the Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations and closely monitored the Center's activities. Embassy officials continued to monitor the Government's progress toward implementing a permanent solution to the Mormon visa problem.

Officers from the U.S. Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom visited the country in October 2000 to discuss religious freedom with representatives of various religious groups, nongovernmental organizations, and the Government. The visit reinforced U.S. Government concerns that policies that appear to target some religious groups may become institutionalized and could have the effect of appearing to justify restrictive laws in other countries.

Embassy officials met with representatives of both recognized and nonrecognized religions that reported some form of discrimination during the period covered by this report.

The Embassy Public Affairs Office, through the International Visitors Program, sponsored a tour of the United States for the President of the Muslim Executive Council to discuss religious freedom and religious tolerance issues with American religious leaders and academics.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The State Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entity Constitutions of both the Federation and the Republika Srpska (RS) provide for freedom of religion, and individuals generally enjoy this right in areas that are ethnically mixed or where they are adherents of the majority religion. However, despite constitutional protections, the ability of individuals to worship in areas where theirs is a minority faith was restricted, sometimes violently.

Respect for religious freedom did not change overall during the period covered by this report, but the increased number of refugees returning to areas in which they constitute a religious minority suggested increased confidence among refugees that their religion and culture would be respected. On the other hand, these returns provoked a reaction by ethnic nationalists in some areas, who at times met the returnees' efforts to follow their faith with violence.

Religious intolerance in the country directly reflects ethnic intolerance because the identification of ethnicity with religious background is so close as to be virtually indistinguishable. In some communities, local religious figures contributed to intolerance and an increase in nationalist feeling through public statements and, on occasion, in sermons. In addition, increasing refugee returns and the resulting growth in ethnic/religious minorities, combined with sustained pressure from the international community on nationalist political parties, led to severe tension and several violent incidents during the first half of 2001. Minority religious believers, clerics, and properties associated with them sometimes became targets.

The U.S. Government sought to encourage leaders from all three major religious communities to play a more supportive role in promoting a multiethnic society that is conducive to religious freedom. Strong U.S. Government support for full implementation of the Dayton Accords, refugee returns, and politically moderate, multiethnic, government is intended, over time, to improve respect for religious freedom in the country.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two entities, the Federation and the Republika Srpska (RS). The country has a total area of 19,781 square miles and its population is approximately 3.4 million.

Reliable statistics on the numbers of believers of different faiths are unavailable. However, ethnic groups are identified with distinct religions or religious/cultural traditions. The three largest are: Bosniaks, who are generally Muslim or of Muslim background (46 percent); Serbs, who are generally Serbian Orthodox or of Orthodox background (31 percent); and Croats, who are generally Roman Catholic or of Catholic background (14 percent). There are also small numbers of Romani and Jews. Protestants and other religious groups constitute a very small part of the population. Missionary activity is limited.

Ethnic cleansing during the 1992–95 war caused forced internal migration which almost completely segregated the population into separate ethnic/religious areas. Despite the increasing return of refugees, the majority of Serbian Orthodox adherents still live in the RS, and the majority of Muslims and Catholics still live in the Federation. Within the Federation, distinct Muslim and Catholic majority areas remain.

While the practice of religion is low among all groups, it reportedly is increasing among the young and is likely an expression of increased identification with their ethnic heritage. Religious practice is reportedly highest among Croats in the Herzegovina region.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for religious freedom; however, free exercise of this right is often denied to minorities, particularly in the RS and some areas of Herzegovina.

While the majority of the population of the Federation consists of Bosniaks and Croats, neither Islam nor Catholicism enjoys special status under the Federation Constitution. In July 2000 the Bosnian Constitutional Court struck down a provision in the RS Constitution directing the State to "materially support the Orthodox Church and cooperate with it in all fields." However, constitutional changes required by the decision have not yet been implemented.

The leaders of the Muslim, Catholic, Serbian Orthodox, and Jewish communities jointly presented a draft law that would define the legal status of religious organiza-

tions, including property rights. The draft law also grants a right to property restitution "in accordance with the law," but no such law has been established. Some international observers believe that a legal framework that accords equal status to all religious communities would decrease the dependence of religious leaders on the political process. However, the draft law has not yet been introduced in the State Parliament.

On May 10, 2000, the Education Ministers of both entities and the Deputy Federation Education Minister agreed on a standard curriculum, which requires all schools to teach the shared cultural heritage of all three communities. Government and religious leaders in the RS agreed in May 2000 that RS public schools would offer classes in all religions beginning in September 2001. However, this agreement has not yet been implemented.

Parties dominated by a single ethnic group remain powerful in the country, particularly in Serb and Croat-dominated areas. These parties have identified themselves closely with the religion associated with their predominant ethnic group. Some clerics have characterized hardline nationalist political sympathies as part of "true" religious practice. Many political party leaders are former Communists who have adopted the characteristics of ethnicity, including religion, to strengthen their credibility with voters.

However, the nationalists lost power in the Federation and in the State governments as a result of the November 2000 general elections. Following the elections, the multiethnic Social Democratic Party, the Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and several smaller parties formed the Alliance for Change coalition now in control of the Federation and State governments. However, the Bosniak Party for Democratic Action (SDA) (which continues to be identified as a nationalist party) and the Croat-nationalist Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) remain powerful, particularly in areas where nationalist politicians can more easily prey on the fears of the population. The nationalist Serb Democratic Party (SDS) remained ideologically committed to Serb cultural and religious authority in the territory of the RS, where it won a significant plurality in the November 2000 elections. While the Party for Democratic Progress (PDP) of RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic is relatively moderate, it is heavily dependent on the SDS in order to remain in office.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In certain cases, local officials have blocked the return of minority religious leaders by using administrative obstacles. For example, on June 4, 2001, the Islamic community, in consultation with the international community, agreed to abandon a plan to lay the cornerstone at the central mosque in Stolac. Instead, a fence will be placed around the site for the time being. The mayor of Croat-dominated Stolac recently denied permission for the Islamic community to reconstruct the mosque, which stood near the center of the city. The mayor claimed that the Catholic Church had requested permission to reconstruct a church that was on the site before the mosque. In light of these "competing claims" the mayor stated that the site should be turned into a park. RS authorities frequently delay or deny building permits for reconstruction of religious buildings destroyed during the 1992–95 war. For example, the mayor of Trebinje has hinted that further information, gathered from archeological studies of the site of the Oman Pasha mosque (see Section III), destroyed during the war, could prevent reconstruction. The Islamic Community also has requested permission to rebuild a number of other destroyed mosques in the RS, but has received permission only in a few cases where a large number of Bosniaks have returned and are the only residents of villages that were deserted after the war. The Catholic Church reports that local authorities in Pecnik are threatening to demolish a Catholic church currently being rebuilt because the work is being done without a building permit. In December 2000, the Human Rights Chamber concluded that local authorities in Bijelina prevented reconstruction of five mosques that were destroyed in 1993 and allowed buildings to be constructed on two of the former mosque sites, a parking lot on one, and flea markets on the remaining two. RS authorities ignored an order by the Chamber in 1999 to halt construction on one site. The Chamber ordered that permits be granted for reconstruction of the five mosques. No action by the authorities was taken by the end of the period covered by this report.

In the Federation, Ivan Mandic, a Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ) hard-liner and the head of Mostar Municipality Southwest (MSW), refused to grant permission in December 2000 for reconstruction of Baba Besir Mosque, one of three mosques in MSW that were destroyed during the war.

In August 1998, the municipal government of Prnjavor, in the RS, ordered a Bosniak to move his deceased wife's remains from the Muslim cemetery to a "new" Muslim cemetery. The municipal authorities claimed that the Muslim cemetery in

which the deceased had been buried was closed. At a February 1999 Human Rights Chamber hearing concerning the case, evidence indicated that there was in fact no "new" Muslim cemetery in the area and that no reasonable grounds existed for closing the old Muslim cemetery (nearby Catholic and Orthodox cemeteries remained open). In February 2000, the Human Rights Chamber determined that the municipal government of Prnjavor had discriminated against the Islamic community by closing the cemetery. Prnjavor municipal authorities were ordered to allow burials within a month. As of June 30, 2001, Prnjavor authorities had not complied with the order.

All three major religious groups and the Jewish community have claims to property confiscated during World War II, the Communist period, or the 1992–95 war. While the Federation and the RS legislatures have passed laws on restitution of property, the High Representative has suspended action on both until an economically acceptable restitution plan is developed. Currently, municipal and canton authorities have broad discretion regarding disposition of contested property that was nationalized under the Communist government. Many use this as a tool of political patronage, rendering religious leaders dependent on politicians to regain lost property.

Public schools offer religious education classes. In theory, these classes are optional. However, in some areas, children who do not choose religion classes are subject to pressure and discrimination from peers and teachers. In many areas, schools do not hire teachers to offer religious education classes to students of minority religions. Sarajevo Canton's public schools tend to offer only Islamic religion classes. In Croat-majority West Mostar minority students theoretically have the right to take classes in non-Catholic religions; however, this option reportedly does not exist in practice. Orthodox symbols are present in public schools throughout the RS.

An estimated 1.2 million citizens remained internally displaced persons (IDP's) or refugees abroad as a result of the 1992–95 war. Virtually all of them had fled areas where their ethnic/religious community had been in the minority or had ended up in the minority as a result of the war.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

The RS government, local governments, and police forces frequently allowed or encouraged an atmosphere in which abuses of religious freedom can take place. For example, during the violent riots by Serb demonstrators to prevent reconstruction of mosques in Trebinje and Banja Luka, local authorities failed to intervene to stop violent attacks on bystanders including elderly people, high-ranking government officials, and representatives of the international community (see Section III). The absence of a police force willing to protect religious minorities and a judicial system willing to prosecute crimes against them are major obstacles to safeguarding the rights of religious minorities. While new officers are accepted into the police academies under strictly observed ethnic quotas, it will take years of concentrated effort to establish effective, professional multiethnic police forces throughout the country.

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

A significant number of citizens remained IDP's or refugees abroad as a result of the 1992–95 war. Virtually all had fled areas where their ethnic/religious community had been in the minority or had ended up in the minority as a result of the war. However, both organized and spontaneous returns significantly increased during the period covered by this report.

In some cases the returns are directly associated with increasing religious pluralism. In the RS, reconstruction has been completed on five mosques that were destroyed during the war. All of the completed mosques are in areas with large numbers of Bosniak returnees. Three of the reconstructed mosques are in two small villages in the Prijedor municipality, two in Kozarac, and one in Kozars. Before the war, there were several mosques in the town of Prijedor. Unfortunately, Prijedor city authorities continue to refuse permission to reconstruct any of the mosques that were located within the city limits; however, reconstruction of a Catholic church is near completion. In other parts of the RS, the Islamic community has been able to reconstruct one destroyed mosque in the village of Jelic, Foca municipality, and one in Zvornik municipality.

In Bosniak-dominated Gradina, Konjic municipality, the Islamic community has voluntarily decided to remove a mosque constructed by the army during the war because the mosque is partially located on Serb-owned land.

On April 24, 2001, the foundation stone for a new synagogue was laid in Mostar. The synagogue will form part of a future Jewish Cultural Center. The Muslim and Croat members of the State Presidency attended the ceremony.

An Orthodox prayer is no longer offered at the beginning of Repubika Sprska National Assembly (RSNA) sessions. When a new RSNA is sworn into office, each deputy may choose a religious oath according to his or her own religious tradition or a nonreligious civil oath. When the new RSNA was sworn in following the November 2000 general elections, the Orthodox Church marked the occasion with a service in a nearby church, not in the RSNA building.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Until the 19th century, most Bosnians identified themselves by religious affiliation. With the rise of Balkan nationalism in the 19th century, Bosnians came to identify themselves in ethnic, as well as religious terms. This tendency increased during the Communist era when the regime discouraged religious affiliation. Under the Communists, most Bosnians identified themselves by ethnic group, or simply as "Yugoslavs." Since the country's independence, there have continued to be Bosnians who decline to accept either ethnic or religious identification and consider themselves simply as "Bosnians."

The 1992–95 war in Bosnia was not a religious conflict as such. However, the association of ethnicity and religion is so close that the bitterness engendered by the war and the 270,000 deaths it caused has contributed to mutual suspicion among members of all three major religious groups.

Despite the constitutional provisions for religious freedom, a degree of discrimination against minorities occurs in virtually all parts of the country. Discrimination is significantly worse in the RS, particularly in the eastern RS, and in Croat-dominated areas of the Federation. However, incidents of discrimination occurred in Bosniak-majority areas as well. During the period covered by this report, Catholic cemeteries were vandalized in Tuzla and Tesanj in Bosniak-majority areas of the Federation and in Lukavac and Bosanski Brod in the RS. Catholic Church officials also reported the following incidents in the RS. On August 9, 2000, a hand grenade was thrown at a church in Zasavica, Bosanski Samac county. On September 9, 2000, in Donji Kladari the words "This is Serbia" were written on the wall of a Catholic church. Finally, on December 16, 2000, a parish priest was attacked in Turic, Gradacac county.

While Sarajevo, the Bosniak-majority capital of the country, has preserved in part its traditional role as a multiethnic city, instances of discrimination continue to occur there, especially in education. Attacks against Orthodox and Catholic clerics and religious edifices have occurred in Sarajevo. On May 28, 2001, a Muslim woman walking with her husband and children physically and verbally assaulted a Catholic nun in central Sarajevo. On June 3, 2001, a group of Muslim youths harassed Catholic seminary students in front of the Catholic cathedral in central Sarajevo.

Throughout the country, religious minorities felt pressure and were intimidated by the ethnic/religious majorities in their regions. Numerous buildings belonging to the Islamic, Serbian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic communities were damaged or destroyed during the 1992–1995 war, usually in a deliberate attempt at ethnic intimidation. Among the religious buildings destroyed during the war were 618 mosques in the territory of the RS. Efforts to rebuild the destroyed Oman Pasha Mosque in Trebinje and the Ferhadija Central Mosque in Banja Luka resulted in violent riots in those cities in early May 2001. The violence started on May 5, 2001 in Trebinje when an estimated 1,500 Serb demonstrators attacked Islamic clerics and believers, international community representatives, and Federation government officials who had gathered to mark the laying of the cornerstone for reconstruction of the Oman Pasha Mosque. A number of people were beaten and injured while local authorities and police looked on and failed to intervene. On May 6, 2001, a grenade was thrown at the house of the leader of Trebinje's Muslim community. On May 9, 2001, the RS Interior Minister dismissed Trebinje police chief Jovo Cokoril. Local police officers arrested four persons in connection with an attack on the Office of the High Representative special envoy, and six other persons were arrested on other charges related to the riot. However, the Banja Luka court handed down extremely light sentences to those arrested. The RS Government released a statement expressing regret about the riot; however, the statement stressed that the reconstruction of religious buildings is being used for political purposes and is "causing tension" in the RS.

On May 7, 2001, an estimated 2,000 to 5,000 Serb demonstrators violently disrupted a similar ceremony on the site of the destroyed Ferhadija Central Mosque in Banja Luka. The mosque, deliberately destroyed by Serb nationalists during the war, had become a symbol of the ravages of ethnic cleansing, and efforts to rebuild it were politically sensitive. Before the ceremony could begin, about 200 protestors broke through police lines and violently attacked participants including elderly people, high-ranking government officials, and representatives of the international community. Violent Serb protestors trapped over 300 people in a building on the site owned by the Islamic community for about 8 hours until RS police were able to evacuate them. Protestors attacked the building with stones and removed Islamic symbols from the building. About 30 people were injured during the riot, including a Muslim man from Cazin, who died from his wounds on May 26, 2001. Protestors also burned Bosniak-owned businesses and destroyed the Bosnian Foreign Minister's car and several buses.

In the Banja Luka riots, RS government officials belatedly attempted to defuse the situation and the local police acted to safely evacuate the people trapped at the site, but they did not do so immediately. Some police officers reportedly joined the demonstrators. In the aftermath of the riots, RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic publicly accepted responsibility on behalf of the RS government for failure to ensure security. The Joint State Presidency strongly condemned RS authorities as "unprepared and incompetent in providing the respect of basic human rights and the freedom of religious confessions." Five senior RS police officers were suspended after the riots, and Interior Minister Ivica Bundalo resigned. However, on May 30, 2001 the RSNA adopted a report blaming the Islamic community and the international community for creating a situation, by seeking to rebuild destroyed mosques, which was likely to cause violent demonstrations. In a May 8, 2001 statement, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia President Vojislav Kostunica exacerbated the tensions when he, while condemning the violence, questioned whether the mosque should be rebuilt. RS leaders have suggested that the presence of international community figures and the use of Islamic symbols and music were provocative.

On June 18, 2001, Islamic community leaders finally were able to lay the cornerstone of the Ferhadija mosque. The RS government ordered a large security operation for the event. RS police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse hundreds of demonstrators, who sang nationalist songs and chanted anti-Muslim slogans to protest the ceremony.

Scattered reprisals by Bosniaks in the Federation to the violence in Banja Luka typify the problem of religious freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Religious buildings, clerics, and individual believers in any area where they are a minority bear the brunt of retaliation for discrimination and violence perpetrated by other members of their religious/ethnic groups in areas where they are the majority. Because they are powerful symbols of religious identification and, therefore, ethnicity, clerics, and religious buildings are favored targets. Most religious leaders condemn violence and nationalism, but their message is undermined by other clerics who continue to support nationalist causes and separatism.

Serb Orthodox buildings and believers in Bosniak-dominated areas were targeted in the days following the riots in the RS. In contrast to events in the RS, protests in Bosniak majority areas against events in Trebinje and Banja Luka were well-organized and usually peaceful. However, there were some violent acts, a number of them directed against buildings of the Serb Orthodox Church, the primary symbol of the Serb ethnic group. On May 8, 2001, two Bosniaks threw a hand grenade at a Serb Orthodox Church in the Bosniak-dominated town of Sanski Most. The windows of a nearby cafe owned by a Serb were also smashed. Local police detained two Bosniak men in connection with the incidents. Also on May 8, a group of displaced Bosniaks originally from the RS refused to allow a group of displaced Serbs, originally from Sarajevo, to enter the Osjek cemetery in Ilidza, a suburb of Sarajevo that was predominantly Serb before the war. On May 9, 2001, about 20 Bosniaks stoned a house inhabited by Serbs in Sarajevo. Local police responded immediately to the attack, but no arrests have been made. Also on May 9, 2001, 11 tombstones in an Orthodox cemetery in Tuzla were desecrated and the cemetery chapel vandalized. Three Bosniak juveniles were arrested and charged in the case and local government officials condemned the vandalism. On May 25, 2001, a large group of Bosniaks stoned the houses of two Serb returnees in Bosniak-dominated Bocinja. In Croat-dominated Glamoc, Serb returnees' houses and the Orthodox Monastery Veselinje were shot with automatic weapons. Police have no suspects in the case.

In May 2001, leaflets were distributed in Doboj, in the RS, calling on Muslims to leave the city and urging Serbs to protest against the reconstruction of the city's mosque.

Leaders of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish communities have committed themselves publicly to building a durable peace and national reconciliation. The leaders of these four communities are members of the Interreligious Affairs Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which operates with the active involvement of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and OHR facilitate interfaith meetings at the local level as well. On June 8, 2001 in Rome, the Catholic conflict resolution group Sant'Egidio hosted a conference on religious reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish communities sent representatives to the conference, which released a joint statement supporting reconstruction of all religious sites in the country.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government supports the return of refugees, democratization, and protection of human rights throughout the country. The U.S. Government also encourages leaders from all major religious communities to promote a multiethnic society that is conducive to religious freedom. The U.S. Government provides financial support to the Human Rights Chamber, which hears cases on religious discrimination. The Ambassador frequently meets with the principal religious leaders, individually and collectively, to urge them to work toward moderation and multiethnicity. In addition, the Embassy publicly condemns instances of religious discrimination and attacks against religious communities or buildings, and encourages leaders from all ethnic groups and members of the international community publicly oppose such attacks. The U.S. Agency for International Development provides funding to train lawyers and judges concerning human rights, including religious freedom.

BULGARIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice for some non-Orthodox religious groups. These restrictions are manifested primarily in a registration process that is selective, slow, and nontransparent. The Government prohibits the public practice of religion by groups that are not registered.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In contrast to earlier practice, there were no reported instances during the period covered by this report of any direct government, police, or societal harassment against religious workers or worshippers during the practice or propogation of their faith. The Parliament refrained from enacting a proposed draft law regulating religious denominations, which had created serious religious freedom concerns. However, there was a trend during the period covered by this report toward the enactment of new ordinances in a number of cities (including Burgas, Pleven, and Stara Zagora) aimed at severely curtailing religious freedom rights.

Relations between the major religious communities generally were amicable; however, public opinion and periodic media articles continued to suggest a somewhat hostile and alarmist attitude toward nontraditional religious groups, although there were fewer manifestations of this sentiment than in earlier years.

The U.S. Government has raised the issue of religious freedom repeatedly in contacts with government officials and Members of Parliament. The Ambassador and other embassy officers periodically have urged the Government to expedite registration of church groups, and on numerous occasions pointed out problems with several aspects of the proposed law on religion previously under discussion in the Parliament.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 42,855 square miles and its population is approximately 8.3 million. Official census statistics from December 1992, the latest available, indicate that almost 86 percent of citizens are Orthodox Christians, 9.5 percent are Muslim, 1 percent are Catholic, and most of the remainder belong to a variety of Protestant faiths. The country's Jewish community, with only a few thousand persons, constitutes less than 1 percent of the population and generally is well accepted and integrated into society. Some observers believe that this census lists a disproportionately high number of members of the Orthodox Church, in part because many essentially nonreligious or antireligious persons reportedly were list-

ed as Orthodox by default. Muslim leaders claim that their adherents constitute up to 20 percent of the population.

Some religious minorities are concentrated geographically. The Rhodope Mountains (along the country's southern border with Greece) are home to many Muslims, including ethnic Turks, Roma, and Pomaks (descendents of Slavic Bulgarians who converted to Islam centuries ago under Ottoman rule). At the western extreme of the Rhodopes, there are greater numbers of Pomaks, and on the eastern end, more ethnic Turks. Muslim ethnic Turks and Roma also live in large numbers in the northeast of the country, primarily in and around the cities of Shumen and Razgrad, as well as along the Black Sea coast. There are comparatively large numbers of Roman Catholics in Plovdiv, Assenovgrad, and in cities along the Danube River. Eastern Rite Catholic communities are located in Sofia and Smolyan. Many members of the country's small Jewish community live in Sofia, Ruse, and along the Black Sea coast. However, Protestant groups are dispersed more widely throughout the country. While clear statistics are not available, evangelical Protestant church groups have had particular success in attracting numerous converts from among the ethnic Roma minority, and these churches tend to be the most active denominations in predominantly Roma-inhabited areas.

Although no exact data are available on attendance levels, most observers agree that evangelical Protestants tend to participate in religious services more frequently than other religious groups. Members of the country's Catholic community also are regarded as more likely than members of other faiths to regularly attend religious services.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government restricts this right in practice for some non-Orthodox religious groups.

The Constitution designates Eastern Orthodox Christianity as the "traditional" religion. The Government provides financial support for the Eastern Orthodox Church, as well as for several other religious communities perceived as holding historic places in society, such as the Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Jewish faiths. These groups generally benefit from a relatively high degree of governmental and societal tolerance.

For most registered religious groups there were no restrictions on attendance at religious services or on private religious instruction. Four Islamic schools (including a university-level Muslim divinity school), a Muslim cultural center, a multi-denominational Protestant seminary, university theological faculties, and religious primary schools operated freely. Bibles and other religious materials in the Bulgarian language were imported or printed freely, and Muslim, Catholic, and Jewish publications were published regularly.

The Ministry of Education has cooperated with the country's Chief Mufti to initiate a pilot program of optional Islamic education classes in primary schools. In Sliven, classes with children willing to study Islam for 1 hour per week were formed in 5 villages; 130 children participated. The children used a textbook proposed by the Chief Mufti and approved by the Ministry of Education. If the pilot program is successful, the program purportedly would be made more broadly available in the school system. The classes are conducted in Bulgarian and are paid for by the Office of the Chief Mufti.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government restricted religious freedom through its registration process that is selective, slow, and nontransparent. The Government prohibits the public practice of religion by groups that are not registered.

The Government generally has encouraged greater religious tolerance since early 1998 by generally seeking to promote greater understanding among different faiths. However, while the observance of religious freedom has improved for some nontraditional groups, other groups have faced official disfavor and been disadvantaged by the Government's persistent refusal to grant registration. Other church groups have obtained registration from the national Government, but continued to face some discrimination and antipathy from many local governments. The national Government has on some occasions, but not systematically, stopped local governments from enforcing restrictive municipal government decisions, which appear to fall into a gray area of the law. Burgas, Plovdiv, and Stara Zagora are among the municipalities that have reported the greatest number of complaints of harassment of nontraditional religious groups. Some observers note with concern a tendency by certain municipalities to enact preemptively regulations that may be used to limit religious

freedom if a perceived need arises. For example, a regulation passed by Sofia municipality in February 1999 forbids references to miracles and healing during religious services, a provision that many fear may be employed as a pretext to ban or interrupt services by charismatic evangelical groups. The regulation cites a Communist-era law dating from 1949, which is technically still in effect, and which forbids foreigners from proselytizing and administering religious services in the country. Other municipalities have enacted similar regulations. The 1949 law also has been criticized as an outmoded potential impediment to free religious activity. However, despite the law's continued technical validity, foreign missionaries can and do receive permission to proselytize.

The legal requirement that groups whose activities have a religious element must register with the Council of Ministers remained an obstacle to the activity of some religious groups, such as the Unification Church, the Sofia Church of Christ, and the Church of the Nazarene (which has tried repeatedly to register for over 6 years). Furthermore, several municipal governments including those of Burgas, Plovdiv, Pleven, Gorna Oryahovitsa, and Stara Zagora have, within the period covered by this report, established local registration requirements and/or adopted other restrictive laws curtailing the free practice of religious activities, often in contravention of the country's constitution and international law. These laws, variously, have imposed bans on such things as distribution of religious literature, proselytizing in public, references to faith-healing, preaching to minors without parents' express permission, and holding of prayer services at facilities not registered with the municipal authorities. Some municipal ordinances have also imposed intrusive financial reporting requirements that apply specifically to church organizations. It is not yet clear, however, if all of these new provisions are being actively enforced by local authorities. By the end of the period covered by this report, the local registration requirements were suspended by the governors of the regions where they were passed, and legal proceedings were initiated to formally invalidate the requirements. Despite these new institutional and procedural barriers, there were no reported incidents during the period covered by this report of street-level harassment of religious groups by the authorities, as was seen in previous years.

Parliament deliberated extensively during the year on a proposed new law regulating religious organizations. The various proposals, including the final version adopted by the relevant committee, contained numerous provisions and ambiguous passages of serious potential concern, and would have given the Government a controlling role in overseeing the activities of religious groups. Final action on the draft bill was deferred pending a review and comment from the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe's commentary criticized numerous aspects of the draft law and the parliamentary term ended without a final vote on the bill (See Section IV).

In July and August 2000, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) encountered a number of politically inspired legal and administrative obstacles at the local and regional levels to its efforts to build a new church and administrative center in Plovdiv. One political party in particular, which has several seats on the city council in Plovdiv, led protest marches as well as filed several administrative challenges to the construction. Ultimately with the support of the local mayor, the building was completed.

A government licensing commission denied without explanation approval for a new nondenominational Christian radio station "Glas Nadezhda" ("Voice of Hope"), despite the support of the Government's Directorate of Religious Affairs. Several sources reported that the unofficial position of commission members was that non-Orthodox Christian groups should not be allowed to have a radio station, at least until the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has one of its own. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church gave no indication of any interest or intent to establish a radio station.

In April 2001, officials of the Studentski Grad district of Sofia refused to allow the showing of a documentary-style film on the life of Jesus, after written application was made for the screening. Notwithstanding regulations that prescribe a written reply, the official simply advised organizers that he would not allow such a film to be shown in his district at Easter time. Also in April 2001, Nova Zagora city officials likewise refused permission for the showing of the film on the life of Jesus, asserting that the film violated the tenets of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

There were several incidents of harassment of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses by police and local authorities in recent years. For example, in July 1999, police in Stara Zagora interrupted a Mormon church service, demanded that worshippers produce their identity documents, and recorded the names and identification numbers of everyone present. They also required that church leaders present registration papers and a contract for the use of the building, which the church representatives did not have with them. The police alleged that the Mormon church was not registered properly with the city authorities.

On July 15, 1999, a member of Jehovah's Witnesses was required to pay approximately $250 (500 leva) because of his participation in a June 1998 Bible study meeting in Plovdiv, which was deemed unlawful because Jehovah's Witnesses was an unregistered denomination. Jehovah's Witnesses alleges that the accused man and his lawyer were not present for the hearing at which the fine was imposed because the venue was changed without notice, and they therefore arrived 5 minutes late for the proceedings. Two other members of Jehovah's Witnesses who have been ordered to pay approximately $250 (500 leva) fines for similar offenses still await a final determination on their cases.

In December 1999, police in Pernik interrupted a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses. The police examined and recorded the identity documents of those present, and warned that such meetings should not be held in the future. The group was cited for violation of a city ordinance.

In March 2000, two members of Jehovah's Witnesses in Turgovishte were detained briefly by police and charged with disruption of public order under a city ordinance because of their public proselytizing.

In April 2000, several Mormon missionaries in Plovdiv were challenged by police while distributing literature and were required to go to the police station. They were charged with distributing brochures without a license.

In April 2000, a member of Jehovah's Witnesses was refused entry into the country by border police, reportedly on the grounds that she had been deported from the country in 1997 for practicing her then-unregistered faith.

A number of religious groups have complained that foreign-national missionaries and religious leaders experience difficulties in obtaining and renewing residence visas in the country; the issuance of residence visas appears to be subject to the whim of individual authorities. New amendments to the Law on Foreign Persons, which went into effect on May 1, 2001, have created problems for foreign national missionaries and religious workers in Bulgaria. The revised law has no visa category which explicitly applies to missionaries or religious workers, and rules for other categories of temporary residence visa (such as self-employed or business-owner) have been tightened in ways that seem to make it more difficult for religious workers to qualify. This problem has been exacerbated by the fact that key government institutions have not yet developed implementing regulations or procedures to handle their new responsibilities under the law, despite the fact that the new law is in force.

The Ministry of Education initiated a course on religion in the high school curriculum beginning with the 1998/1999 school year. The original plan called for a world religion course that avoided endorsing any particular faith; however, members of other religions, especially ethnic Turkish Muslims, maintain that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church receives privileged coverage in the textbooks. The religion course is optional and is not available at all schools. Optional Islamic education classes in primary schools are being conducted on a pilot basis.

At the Department of Theology of Sofia University all students are required to present an Orthodox Church baptismal certificate, and married students must present an Orthodox marriage certificate, in order to enroll in the Department's classes. These requirements make it impossible for non-Orthodox students to enroll in the Department.

The Government has abolished the construction and transportation battalions, to which ethnic and religious minorities previously were assigned in order to segregate them from the regular military forces. The conscript troops of the military are now integrated; however, the professional officer corps contains few members of ethnic or religious minority groups.

Several court decisions have been handed down in the March 1999 case of the Gabrovo schoolteacher who claimed she was forced to leave her position because of her Pentecostal Christian faith. In June 2000, she won a ruling that expunged a letter of reprimand from her personnel record after the court ruled that the reprimand was improper, and she was awarded a modest compensation. In July 2000, an appeals court upheld a lower court ruling that rejected the schoolteacher's libel charge against several media outlets for coverage she considered defamatory in describing the circumstances under which she resigned. An appeal remains pending before the Supreme Court of Cassation. In September 2000, she lost the case in which she alleged that she was forced to resign under duress, for lack of evidence to support the allegation.

There were no indications that the Government discriminated against members of any religious group in making restitution to previous owners of properties that were nationalized during the Communist period. The Government has supported in principle the need for restitution, although actual progress apparently has stalled on two lucrative commercial properties believed to belong rightfully to the Jewish

community. The Orthodox Church and the Muslim community each claim significant numbers of properties currently held by the Government, although the validity of some of these claims appears open to dispute.

The previous government refused to recognize an alternative Patriarch elected by supporters in 1996, and the schism that opened in the Orthodox Church in 1992 continued, despite the death of this alternative Patriarch in April 1999. The Government nevertheless encouraged the feuding factions to heal their prolonged rift. To date, these efforts have not been successful.

The National Assembly passed a law on alternatives to military service in October 1998, which entered into force on January 1, 1999. Under this law, alternative service is now 2 years, more than twice as long as regular military service. Universal conscripted military service has been reduced to 9 months for most recruits, while university graduates are to serve just 6 months. Reportedly, several individuals currently are serving in an alternative civilian capacity in lieu of military service; however, human rights observers complain that procedures for invoking this alternative as a conscientious objector are unclear. Among those already performing alternative service is Krassimir Savov, a member of Jehovah's Witnesses previously imprisoned for refusing mandatory military service, who was released from prison by presidential pardon in March 1999. There were no new reports of incarcerations on religious grounds during 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 the major religious communities generally were amicable; however, discrimination, harassment, and general public intolerance of nontraditional religious minorities (primarily newer evangelical Protestant groups) remained an intermittent problem. Strongly held suspicion of evangelical denominations among the Orthodox populace is widespread and pervasive across the political spectrum and has resulted in discrimination. Often cloaked in a veneer of "patriotism," intolerance of the religious beliefs of others is common. Such mainstream public pressure for the containment of "foreign religious sects" inevitably influences policymakers. Nevertheless, human rights observers agreed that such discrimination has gradually lessened over the last 3 years as society has appeared to become more accepting of at least some previously unfamiliar, "non-traditional," religions.

Non-Orthodox religious groups continued to be affected adversely by periodic negative media coverage. For example, in the Pleven region, a local television station broadcast several times an inflammatory statement purportedly representing the views of the local Bulgarian Orthodox bishop. The statement accused missionaries of the Evangelical Baptist Church of being "agents of foreign influence" and of distributing expired and second-rate goods through its charitable aid program. It further alleged that the Baptists' efforts to build a new medical facility in the region were effectively a bribe to local authorities to gain permission to build a Baptist church in the area.

On November 12, 2000, unknown vandals sprayed anti-Turkish and anti-Roma graffiti on the mosque in Silistra.

On December 13, 2000, about 2,000 Orthodox clergy and Church members marched in Sofia to protest the Government's refusal to register the Holy Synod headed by Patriarch Maksim. The Government refuses to register the synod citing an administrative court ruling that there are two Orthodox Churches in the country.

In May 2000, in Maritsa volunteer workers representing the Christian Unity Foundation were beaten, one severely, when they attempted to conduct a scheduled screening of a documentary-style film on the life of Jesus Christ. The film itself was stolen from their car. The attack was carried out by six to eight youths, under the apparent direction of a local Bulgarian Orthodox priest. No further investigation into the case was reported.

In August 1999, the Mormon Church in Burgas was vandalized when stones were thrown through two of the church windows. In October 1999, in Kotel, a group of youths who claimed to be members of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) political party chased a representative of the Lutheran Church and his family from the home in which there were staying. In December 1999, the Zion Christian Church in Stara Zagora was vandalized with hate graffiti.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy regularly monitors religious freedom in ongoing contacts with government officials, clergy, lay leaders of minority communities, and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). Embassy officers have met with Orthodox clergymembers (from both sides of the schism), the Chief Mufti and other senior Muslim leaders, with religious and lay leaders of the Jewish community, as well as with the leaders of numerous Protestant denominations. During the period covered by this report, the Embassy has remained closely engaged with the Government and Parliament in discussions of the proposed law on religious denominations. The Ambassador met with senior members of the Government and Parliament to convey the U.S. Government's concern about many aspects of the proposed law. After the Embassy's repeated urging to seek the view of international scholars of religion law, Parliament forwarded the draft to the Council of Europe (COE) in December 2000 for review and comment. Action on the law was deferred indefinitely once it was sent to the COE, and the bill lapsed permanently when the 38th Parliament was dissolved in April 2001.

CROATIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religion and free public profession of religious conviction, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and the democratic coalition Government continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion. There is no official state religion; however, the Roman Catholic Church is one of the most powerful national symbols and enjoys a historic relationship with the State not shared by other denominations, and receives some state support.

Notions of religion and ethnicity are closely intertwined in society. During the past 10 years, religious institutions of all faiths have been targets of violence, reflecting the conflicts underway. Such incidents still occur, particularly in the Danubian region (Eastern Slavonia), where there were persistent reports of vandalism directed against Serb Orthodox buildings and cemeteries.

The U.S. Government continues to encourage the Government to respect religious freedom in practice. Embassy officials frequently meet with representatives of religious and ethnic minority communities and with government officials to promote respect for religious freedom and protection of human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 21,829 square miles and its population is approximately 4,677,000. The religious breakdown of the country is approximately: Roman Catholic, 85 percent; Orthodox Christian, 6 percent; Muslim, 1 percent; Jewish, less than 1 percent; other, 4 percent; and atheist, 2 percent. These numbers are approximate because the results of the April 2001 census—the first to be conducted since 1991, before the war and its associated population shifts—are not yet available. These statistics correlate closely with the country's ethnic makeup. The Orthodox can be found in Serb areas, notably cities and the war-affected regions, and members of other minority religions can be found mostly in urban areas. Most immigrants are Roman Catholic ethnic Croats.

Protestants from a number of denominations and foreign clergy actively practice and proselytize, as do representatives of Eastern religions. Missionaries from a number of different groups are present in the country, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah's Witnesses, Greek Catholics, Pentecostals, Hare Krishnas, and a wide range of evangelical Protestant Christians (including Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Church of Christ, and various nondenominational organizations such as the Campus Crusades for Christ). Contrary to the situation in past years, there were no reports of missionaries experiencing difficulties in obtaining missionary visas during the period covered by this report.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religion and free public profession of religious conviction, and the Government generally respects these

rights in practice. There is no official state religion; however, the Roman Catholic Church receives some state support.

The Government is drafting a new law on religious communities in consultations with the religious communities; it is expected to be debated by Parliament during autumn 2001. Religious leaders expressed satisfaction with their level of participation in the drafting procedure. Among other issues, the law is expected to regulate religious education in public schools and government funding for religious minorities.

In the past, the dividing line between the Catholic Church and the State often was blurred, as the then-ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) party periodically attempted to identify itself more closely with the Catholic Church. However, parliamentary elections in January 2000 brought to power a democratic Government committed to respecting human rights and to improving cooperation with all religious communities.

Representatives of minority religious communities indicate that the overall climate for religious freedom has improved since the January 2000 election of a democratic coalition government. For example, leaders of the Islamic community expressed satisfaction with both the Government's approach and media coverage of religious communities. While the new Government has expressed interest in eliminating religious discrimination, its approach is ad hoc, treating problems as they arise and addressing specific issues (for example, the validity of religious marriage ceremonies) with individual religious communities rather than setting uniform nondiscriminatory standards and practices.

In July 2000, the Catholic Church signed an agreement with the state-run Croatian State Radio and Television (HRT) to provide regular, extensive coverage of Catholic events (as much as 10 hours per month). Other denominations receive about 10 minutes broadcast time per month or less. The Catholic Church operates the country's only private national radio station, Catholic Radio, which is financed by private contributions. The Jewish community reports no restrictions on religious broadcasting. Jewish topics are covered periodically on weekly religious programming of HRT, for example, at times of Jewish holidays. The Muslim community has 4.5 minutes of radio broadcast time per month, as well as 4.5 minutes per month on Radio Zagreb. In addition, the Bairam ceremony from the Zagreb mosque is telecast annually.

Muslims have the right to observe their religious holidays. They are granted a paid holiday for one Bairam and have the right to observe the other as well (although they are not paid for the day).

The Government requires that religious training be provided in schools, although attendance is optional; however, in general, the lack of resources, minority students, and qualified teachers impeded instruction in minority faiths, and the Catholic catechism was the one predominantly offered.

Missionaries do not operate registered schools, but the Mormon community provides free English lessons, which normally are followed by some sort of religious class. In December 2000, the Ministry of Education began recognizing the diploma conferred by the Muslim community's secondary school in Zagreb. Enrollment in this school subsequently increased by 50 percent. An estimated 4,000 primary and secondary school children in 35 schools in the Danubian region (Eastern Slavonia) attend Orthodox religion classes. The classes are led by 20 Orthodox priests and 4 laypersons. Orthodox officials organizing these classes stated that they cooperated well with the Ministry of Education, which organized a series of orientation seminars for the teachers.

There is no government-sponsored ecumenical activity.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government imposes no formal restrictions on religious groups, and all religious communities are free to conduct public services and to open and run social and charitable institutions. Contrary to past years, there were no reports of missionaries experiencing difficulties in obtaining missionary visas during the period covered by this report.

While there is no official state religion, the Roman Catholic Church receives direct subsidies, as well as state financing for some salaries and pensions for priests and nuns through the government-managed pension and health funds. Other religious communities still do not have such an agreement with the State, nor is there a law that regulates these issues. (Orthodox priests and imams have been paying their contributions to the health and pension funds from their own resources, in order to be covered by a pension plan.)

Facilitating the return of refugees is a challenge for the new Government, which has made progress in a number of areas relating to returns. However, many ethnic

Serbs who wish to return to Croatia, including Serbian Orthodox clergy, continued to encounter difficulties recovering their prewar property and reconstructing damaged or destroyed houses. There were no reports of specific discrimination against Orthodox clergy beyond that faced by other ethnic Serb citizen refugees. Notions of religion and ethnicity are linked closely in society, but the majority of incidents of discrimination are motivated by ethnicity rather than religion or religious doctrine. A pattern of often open and severe discrimination continues against ethnic Serbs, and, at times, other minorities in a wide number of areas, including the administration of justice, employment, housing, and freedom of movement. The then-HDZ party government often maintained a double standard of treatment based on ethnicity; effects of this double standard continue.

The Government requires that religious training be provided in schools, although attendance is optional. Schools filling the necessary quota of seven minority students per class offered separate religion classes for these students. In classes not meeting this quota, minority students could fulfill the religion requirement by bringing a certificate that they had received classes from their religious community. Generally, the lack of resources, minority students, and qualified teachers impeded instruction in minority faiths, and the Catholic catechism was the one predominantly offered. Although religious training is not obligatory, in the past some students reportedly felt pressured to participate. Jewish officials noted that basic information about Judaism provided to students was inaccurate, and their offers to improve the material continued to receive no response.

The Ministry of Defense employs 20 Catholic priests to minister to Catholics in the military. However, neither Orthodox nor Muslim clerics were given this opportunity. A Catholic priest is present and gives a blessing at the oath-giving ceremony upon entering the army, but other clerics have not been invited to participate.

The previous HDZ Government implemented property restitution in a discriminatory manner. In 1998 the Government signed a concordat with the Vatican that provided for the return of all Catholic Church property confiscated by the Communist regime after 1945. This agreement stipulates that the Government would return seized properties or compensate the Church where return is impossible. Some progress has been made with some returnable properties being restituted, but there has been no compensation to date for nonreturnable properties. Three other agreements with the Vatican regulate Catholic marriages, public school catechism, and military chaplains.

There have been no property restitution agreements between the Government and other religious groups. The Orthodox community has filed several requests for the return of seized properties, and some cases have been resolved successfully, particularly cases involving buildings in urban centers. However, several buildings in downtown Zagreb have not been returned, nor have properties that belonged to monasteries, such as arable land and forest. This uneven progress may be the result of a slow judicial system rather than a systematic effort to deny restitution of Orthodox properties. Several Jewish properties, including some Zagreb buildings, have not been returned. No properties have been returned to the Jewish community since March 2000. The Jewish community identifies property return as one of its top priorities. The Government failed to amend discriminatory clauses of the Law on Compensation for Property Taken During Yugoslav Communist Rule that were struck down by the Constitutional Court in 1999. The Government failed to meet a court-mandated March 31, 2001 deadline to enact the amendments, obtaining an extension until July 15, 2001. The new amendments are expected to extend compensation to Jews whose property was confiscated between 1941 and 1945 as well as to foreigners.

Catholic marriages are recognized by the State, eliminating the need to register them in the civil registry office. The Muslim and Jewish communities, seeking similar status, have raised this issue repeatedly with the Government, but there had been no resolution by the end of the period covered by this report.

The World War II Jasenovac concentration camp, site of a memorial and museum, was damaged severely during the recent conflict and renovation is ongoing. In April 2001, a government delegation, led by the Minister of Culture, attended a commemoration ceremony there that also was attended by several leaders of ethnic and religious minority communities.

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

Notions of religion and ethnicity are intertwined closely in society, and religion often was used to identify non-Croats and to single them out for discriminatory practices. This caused religious institutions to be targets of violence. In the past 10 years, religious institutions of all faiths have been targets of violence. Such incidents still occur, particularly in the tense Danubian region (Eastern Slavonia), where there were persistent reports of vandalism directed against Serb Orthodox buildings and cemeteries. Monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) recorded 23 incidents of harassment or violence towards religious persons or sites during the period covered by this report; 18 of these were directed against the Serb Orthodox community, including several incidents of disruption of religious services, harassment of Orthodox clergy, and damage to cemeteries. In February 2001, the Orthodox church in Darda, in the tense Eastern Slavonian region, was vandalized for the fifth time in 18 months when windows and a door were damaged. In addition, the Orthodox church reports that the bishop of Sibenik is unable to appear in public in his clerical garments due to constant harassment. In August 2000, unidentified vandals broke into the Orthodox church in the Danubian town of Branjina and wrote anti-Serb messages on the walls; no arrests were made. In July 2000, an Orthodox priest in Ilok, Eastern Slavonia, was crossing the street in his clerical robes when a car swerved to hit him. He was uninjured and the driver was given a warning by police.

In contrast to the previous reporting period, Jewish leaders reported no serious discriminatory incidents during the period covered by this report. Anti-Semitic letters were mailed to the Jewish Center in Zagreb in April and May 2001 and were turned over to the police; no arrests were made. A serious of harsh anonymous telephone calls to the Center ceased after police began investigating.

The Catholic Church at times was openly critical of the previous government. However, conservative elements within the Catholic hierarchy in the country have shown increasing dissatisfaction with the policies of the new coalition Government. In January 2001, conservative Dalmatian bishops boycotted President Stjepan Mesic's annual reception for religious communities, apparently to register their dissatisfaction with both the Government and Catholic Archbishop Josip Bozanic's progressive stances. In February 2001, several of the Dalmatian clergy publicly supported right-wing demonstrations in support of General Mirko Norac, who is indicted for war crimes. In March 2001, a conservative editorial in the church's weekly publication, Glas Koncila, sharply criticized government policies and highlighted this policy rift within the hierarchy.

Since Catholic Archbishop Bozanic took office in 1997, the Catholic Church has sought a more proactive role in advocating reconciliation. Catholic Radio includes a monthly program on ecumenism, inviting speakers from other religious communities. Ecumenical efforts among the religious communities have developed in an atmosphere of mutual understanding. For example, religious leaders met frequently during the reporting period, both formally and informally, to provide input to the government office drafting the religious legislation and to discuss other issues of mutual interest. Participants describe these sessions as "friendly and healthy."

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government actively works to encourage the Government to respect religious freedom in practice and to support the efforts of the Catholic Church to foster a constructive environment in post-conflict society. Embassy officials have frequent meetings at all levels with representatives of the ethnic Serb (Orthodox) community as well as the Jewish and Muslim communities and are engaged in the promotion of human rights, including the religious rights, of these groups. Embassy officials meet and hold frequent discussions at all levels with government officials about respect for religious freedom and problems of discrimination against religious communities. The Embassy is a leader of the "Article 11 Commission," a group of 24 international missions in the country that deals directly with issues of ethnic and religious reconciliation and human rights.

CYPRUS

The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The basic law in the Turk-

ish Cypriot community also provides for freedom of religion, and the Turkish Cypriot 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; however, reciprocal visits to religious sites were restricted during the period covered by this report.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, there were a few instances of vandalism of unused religious sites.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the authorities 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 3,571 square miles and its population is estimated at 758,000.

Prior to 1974, Cyprus experienced a long period of intercommunal strife between its Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. In response, the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) began peacekeeping operations in 1964. The island has been divided since the Turkish military intervention of 1974, following a coup d'etat directed from Greece; the southern part of the island is under the control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, while the northern part is ruled by a Turkish Cypriot administration. In 1983 that administration proclaimed itself the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" ("TRNC"). The TRNC is not recognized by the United States or any other country except Turkey.

Approximately 96 percent of the population in the government-controlled area are Greek Orthodox. Approximately 0.6 percent are Maronite, slightly under 0.3 percent are Armenian Orthodox, 0.2 percent are Latin (Roman Catholic), and 4 percent belong to other groups; the latter category includes small groups of Cypriot Protestants and foreigners of all religious beliefs.

A 1998 opinion poll indicated that about 48 percent of Greek Cypriots attend church services regularly, while 49 percent attend only for major religious holidays and ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. The remainder does not attend religious services at all. Approximately 10 percent of the population in the north attend religious services regularly.

An estimated 99 percent of the Turkish Cypriot population is at least nominally Muslim. There is a small Turkish Cypriot Baha'i community. Most other non-Muslims in the north are foreigners from Western Europe who are frequently members of the Roman Catholic or Anglican Church.

There is some western Protestant missionary activity in the government-controlled area.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The basic law in the Turkish Cypriot community also provides for freedom of religion and the authorities generally respect this right in practice. Turkish Cypriots residing in the south and Greek Cypriots living in the north are allowed to practice their religions.

The 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus specifies that the Greek Orthodox Church (which is autocephalous and not under the authority of the mainland Greek Orthodox Church) has the exclusive right to regulate and administer its internal affairs and property in accordance with its holy canons and charter. Similarly, the Constitution states that the Turkish Cypriot religious trust, the Vakf (the Muslim institution that regulates religious activity for Turkish Cypriots), has the exclusive right to regulate and administer its internal affairs and property in accordance with Vakf laws and principles. No legislative, executive, or other act can contravene or interfere with the Orthodox Church or the Vakf. Both the Greek Orthodox Church and the Vakf are tax exempt with regard to religious activity. According to law, they are required to pay taxes only on strictly commercial activity.

Three other religious groups are recognized in the Constitution: Armenian Orthodox, Maronite Christians, and Latins (Roman Catholics). These groups also are exempt from taxes and are eligible, along with the Orthodox Church and the Vakf, for government subsidies to their religious institutions. No other religious group is recognized in the Constitution.

Both the Government of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot administration have constitutional or legal bars against religious discrimination. The basic agreement cov-

ering treatment of Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the north and Turkish Cypriots living in the south remains the 1975 Vienna III Agreement. Among other things, this agreement provides for facilities for religious worship.

Religions other than the five recognized religions are not required to register with government authorities; however, if they desire to engage in financial transactions, such as maintaining a bank account, they must register as a nonprofit company, and most do so. The registration process involves submission through an attorney of an application that states the purpose of the nonprofit organization and provides the names of the organization's directors. Annual reports of the organization's activities are required. Such nonprofit organizations are tax exempt. Registration is granted promptly and many religious groups are recognized. No religious groups were denied registration during the period covered by this report.

Instruction in the Greek Orthodox religion is mandatory for all Greek Orthodox children and is taught in all public primary and secondary schools in classes held twice per week in the government-controlled area. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses and Maronite parents can request that their children be excused from such instruction. Such requests routinely are granted. There are no reports of practitioners of other religions requesting such an exemption.

The Government of Cyprus recognizes the following religious holidays as national holidays: the Epiphany, Evangelismos, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Holy Spirit Day, Assumption Day, and Christmas Day.

There are no prohibitions against missionary activity or proselytizing in the government-controlled areas. Foreign missionaries must obtain and periodically renew residence permits in order to live in the country; normally renewal requests are not denied.

There is no government-sponsored interfaith activity.

In the northern part of the island, the Turkish Cypriot basic law refers specifically to a "secular republic," and provides for religious freedom; no specific religion is recognized in the basic law. However, based on the 1960 Constitution, the Vakf, which pays the costs of Muslim religious activities and the salaries of Muslim religious leaders, is tax-exempt in regard to its religious activities (the Vakf pays taxes on its commercial and real estate operations) and receives official subsidies. No other religious organization is tax-exempt or receives subsidies.

Religious organizations are not required to register with the Turkish Cypriot authorities unless they wish to engage in commercial activity or apply for tax-exempt status. There are no legal restrictions on missionary activity; however, such activity is rare.

There is instruction in religion, ethics, and comparative religions in two grades of the primary school system in the Turkish Cypriot community. There is no formal Islamic religious instruction in public schools and there are no state-supported religious schools.

The following religious holidays are observed widely in the Turkish Cypriot community: Kurban Bairam, Birthday of the Prophet, and Ramazan Bairam.

The Turkish Cypriot authorities do not sponsor any interfaith activity.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

On May 10, 2001, in a case brought by the Government of Cyprus against the Government of Turkey, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the Government of Turkey was responsible for restrictions imposed on Greek Cypriots resident in the north in regard to their access to places of worship and participation in other areas of religious life.

In 2001 Turkish Cypriot authorities and the Government of Cyprus came to an agreement, after 4 years, on the assignment of a second Orthodox priest to work in the north. However, the Government of Cyprus had not identified a candidate for the position at the end of the period covered by this report.

In May 2000, the Turkish Cypriot authorities eliminated the system of fees imposed in 1998 for crossing the buffer zone, although a $1.45 (1 British pound) processing fee remains in effect. Reciprocal visits to religious sites were suspended in July 2000. Such visits took place under a 1997 agreement which allowed Greek Cypriots to visit the Apostolos Andreas monastery in the north on designated Christian religious holidays, and Turkish Cypriots to visit the Hala Sultan mosque in the south on certain Muslim religious holidays. On July 31, 2000, Greek Cypriot officials responded to Turkish forces establishing a new manned checkpoint in a location adjacent to the Greek Cypriot village of Strovilia and the British eastern sovereign base area and denied Turkish Cypriots land passage to Kokkina. Visits to this area (which contains a memorial and is surrounded by the government-controlled area) are included in the 1997 reciprocal visit agreement. In August and November 2000, Turkish Cypriot officials denied access to southern Greek Cypriots to visit the

Apostolos Andreas monastery; April 2001 visits to the monastery and mosque also did not take place.

Maronites may not visit certain religious sites in the north located in military zones. Armenians may not visit any religious sites in the north.

Although missionaries have the legal right to proselytize in both communities, missionary activities are monitored closely by both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot authorities. The police may initiate investigations of religious activity based on a citizen's complaint under laws that make it illegal for a missionary to use "physical or moral compulsion" in an attempt to make religious conversions, or when missionaries may be involved in illegal activities that threaten the security of the republic, constitutional or public order, or public health and morals. There are occasional apprehensions under these laws resulting in publicity but no arrests.

In both the government-controlled areas and the Turkish Cypriot community, there were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

In both the government-controlled areas and the Turkish Cypriot community, 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.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are polite relations between the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church and the other religious communities in the south. In the north there are few non-Muslims, but there is no friction between them and the nominally Muslim population. However, there are complaints of vandalism of unused Orthodox churches. Turkish Cypriots complain that unused mosques in the south have been treated similarly. Orthodox churches and cemeteries in the north continue to deteriorate due to vandalism and neglect. An unused Orthodox Church in the north is located in the center of a resort constructed during the year 2000 on the ground surrounding the church. Greek Cypriots complain that since 1974, religious icons have been removed from Orthodox churches in the north. A previously unknown Greek Cypriot nationalist organization claimed responsibility for an arson attack on a mosque in the south in August 1999; damage was light. The authorities repaired and built a fence around the mosque and pledged to increase protection of Muslim sites. No one was arrested for the attack.

The Orthodox Church is suspicious of any attempts to proselytize among Greek Cypriots and closely monitors such activities. On occasion the Greek Cypriot media has given extensive coverage to the activities of foreign missionaries, creating a chilling effect on those activities.

There has been little effort at ecumenical activity. In recent years, an international conference on understanding among religions has been sponsored annually by a private foundation in the government-controlled areas; otherwise, there has been little interest in such activities either in the government-controlled areas or in the Turkish Cypriot community.

Religion is a significantly more prominent component of Greek Cypriot society than of Turkish Cypriot society, with correspondingly greater cultural and political influence. One example of the relationship between church and state among Greek Cypriots is the fact that the leader of the Greek Cypriot campaign for independence in the 1950's was the head of the Greek Orthodox Church, Archbishop Makarios III, who became President from independence in 1960 and served until his death in 1977.

As the largest owner of real estate in the south and the operator of several large business enterprises, the Greek Orthodox Church is a significant economic factor. Similarly, the Vakf is the largest landowner in the north.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

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

The U.S. Embassy played a key role, working closely with the United Nations, in obtaining agreement from both sides in January 2000 to initiate a project to restore the island's two most significant religious sites, the Apostolos Andreas monastery and the Hala Sultan mosque. This agreement was announced by U.N. Secretary General Annan. Restoration work began in early 2001.

The Ambassador and other Embassy officers meet periodically with Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot religious authorities regarding specific religious freedom concerns.

CZECH REPUBLIC

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 30,379 square miles and its population is an estimated 10.3 million. The country has a largely homogenous population with a dominant Christian tradition. However, largely as a result of 40 years of Communist rule between 1948 and 1989, the vast majority of the citizens do not identify themselves as members of any organized religion. In a February 2001 opinion poll, 38 percent of respondents claimed to believe in God, while 52 percent identified themselves as atheists. Nearly half of those responding agreed that churches were beneficial to society. There was a revival of interest in religion after the 1989 "Velvet Revolution;" however, the number of those professing religious beliefs or participating in organized religion has fallen steadily since then in almost every region of the country.

An estimated 5 percent of the population attend Catholic services weekly. Most of these churchgoers live in the southern Moravian dioceses of Olomouc and Brno. The number of practicing Protestants is even lower (approximately 1 percent). Leaders of the local Muslim community estimate that there are 20,000 to 30,000 Muslims, although Islam has not been registered as an officially recognized religion since the Communist takeover in 1948. There is a mosque in Brno and another in Prague. The Jewish community, which numbers only a few thousand persons, is an officially registered religion, since it was recognized by the State before 1989.

Missionaries of various religious groups, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses, are present in the country. Missionaries of various religions generally proselytize without hindrance.

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.

Religious affairs are the responsibility of the Department of Churches at the Ministry of Culture. All religions officially registered with the Ministry of Culture are eligible to receive subsidies from the State, although some religions decline state financial support as a matter of principle and as an expression of their independence. There are 21 state-recognized religions, 2 of which have been registered since 1991; no groups were seeking to register at the end of the period covered by this report. The Unification Church (UC) was denied registration in January 1999 when the Department of Churches determined that it had obtained the required proof of membership by fraud; the UC's suit contesting the decision still was before a court at the end of the period covered by this report. Registration of Islam has been discussed with the Department of Churches, but there has been no formal application. To register a religious group must have at least 10,000 adult members permanently residing in the country. For any churches, which the World Council of Churches has recognized already, only 500 adult members permanently residing in the country are necessary. These churches receive the same legal and financial benefits from the Government as do other churches. Churches registered prior to 1991, such as the small Jewish community, are not required to meet these conditions. Unregistered religious groups, such as the small Muslim minority, may not own community property legally, but often form civic-interest associations for the purpose of managing

their property and other holdings until they are able to meet the qualifications for registration. The Government does not interfere with or prevent this type of interim solution. Unregistered religious groups otherwise are free to assemble and worship in the manner of their choice.

A draft bill on "Religious Freedom and the Position of Churches and Religious Associations" was approved by the Chamber of Deputies upon first reading on May 17, 2001. The Committee on Science, Education, Culture, and Youth recommended on June 27, 2001, that the Chamber upon second reading approve the bill, which is not expected before October 2001. The draft is modeled on the Austrian Religious Registration law and would impose a two-tiered registration system. The law would create a new lower tier (nonprofit religious association with limited tax benefits) that would require a group to have at least 300 members. The draft law would require a religious group to have adult adherents equal to at least 0.2 percent of the population of the country in order to achieve full registration. This is double the current requirement of 0.1 percent of the population. The new law would also impose a 10-year observation period and an annual reporting requirement on all first-tier religious organizations wishing to obtain full registration status. Some unregistered religious groups (including the Muslims and the Church of Scientology) and nongovernmental observers criticized the proposed law and claimed that it is prejudicial against minority religions.

Churches receive approximately $88.2 million (3 billion Czech crowns) annually from the Government. Funds are divided proportionally among the 21 registered religions based on the number of clergy in each, with the exception of 4 religions (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, New Apostolic Church, and Christian Communities) that do not accept state funding. Of this sum, approximately $17 million (642 million Czech crowns) is used to pay salaries to clergymen. The rest of the funding goes to state grants for church medical, charity, and educational activities, as well as for the maintenance of church memorials and buildings.

In September 2000, Parliament passed a law outlawing Holocaust denial. The law provides for prison sentences of 6 months to 3 years for public denial, questioning, approval, or attempts to justify the Nazi genocide.

To work in the country missionaries must obtain a long-term residence and work permit if they intend to remain longer than 30 days. Previously reported delays in processing visas and permits for visiting missionaries and clergy diminished during the period covered by this report. There is no special visa category for religious workers; foreign missionaries and clergy are required to meet the relatively stringent conditions for a standard work permit even if their activity is strictly ecclesiastical or voluntary in nature.

Religion is not taught in public schools, although a few private religious schools exist. Religious broadcasters are free to operate without hindrance from the Government or other parties.

Members of unregistered religious groups can issue publications without interference.

There was no government-sponsored interfaith activity.

The two government commissions established in 1999 to improve church-state relations continued to meet during the period covered by this report. One of the commissions is a "political" commission with the presence of all parties represented in Parliament, and the second is a "specialist" commission composed of experts including lawyers, economists, and church representatives. The commissions advise the Government on church-related property questions and legislation on religious topics.

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government made progress in resolving religious-based communal and personal property restitution problems, especially with regard to Jewish property. Jewish claims date to the period of the Nazi occupation, while Catholic authorities are pressing claims to properties that were seized under the former Communist regime. Although after 1989 the Government and Prague city officials returned most synagogues and other buildings previously belonging to religious orders, many claims to properties in the hands of other municipal authorities have not yet been resolved

satisfactorily. Restitution or compensation of several categories of Jewish personal property is in progress. In addition the Catholic Church claims vast tracts of woods and farmlands.

The 1991 Law on Restitution applied only to property seized after the Communists took power in 1948. In 1994 the Parliament amended the law to provide restitution of, or compensation for, property wrongfully seized between 1938 and 1945. This amendment provided for the inclusion of Jewish private properties, primarily buildings, seized by the Nazi regime. In the late 1990's, the Federation of Jewish Communities identified 202 communal properties as its highest priorities for restitution, although it had unresolved claims for over 1,000 properties. By decree the Government returned most of the properties in its possession, as did the city of Prague; however, despite a government appeal, other cities have not been as responsive. As of June 30, 2000, only 68 of the 202 properties have been returned. In November 1998, the Government established a commission to document the status of former Jewish communal property and, to a limited extent, personal property, and to make recommendations to the Government. In July 2000, the commission's proposed legislation was signed into law. The law authorized the return of 200 communal Jewish properties in state hands. The same law also authorized the Government to return more than 60 works of art in the National Gallery to the Jewish community and an estimated 7,000 works of art in the State's possession to individual Jewish citizens and their descendants. A fourth provision of the law authorized the return of certain agricultural property in the Government's possession to its original owners. In the spring of 1999, the commission's chairman, Deputy Prime Minister Pavel Rychetsky, proposed a compensation fund to pay for those properties that cannot be restituted physically. In September 2000, the Government proposed and the Chamber of Deputies authorized approximately $7.9 million (300 million crowns) for this fund. The fund, which began operating in June 2001, is expected to provide partial compensation in those cases where the Government needs to retain the property or is no longer in possession of it, help meet the social needs of poor Jewish communities outside Prague, and support the restoration of synagogues and cemeteries. Approximately two-thirds of the funds are to be dedicated to communal property and one-third to individual claims.

Certain property of religious orders, including 175 monasteries and other institutions, was restituted under laws passed in 1990 and 1991, but the return generally did not include income-generating properties. When the Social Democratic government came to power in August 1998, it halted further restitution of non-Jewish religious communal property, including a decision of the previous government to return 432,250 acres of land and some 700 buildings to the Catholic Church. Discussions are continuing in the two church-state commissions on the form of an overall settlement of all outstanding restitution issues, including further restitution of Protestant properties. In October 2000, Prime Minister Milos Zeman visited the Vatican and discussed Czech Republic/Catholic relations and property restitution with Pope John Paul II. In April 2001, the Government agreed in principle to draft a law that would allow for the return of houses of worship, parish houses, and monasteries to the Catholic Church.

In September 2000, after months of negotiations between the Government and the Prague Jewish community, over 100 sets of Jewish remains from the middle ages found at a commercial construction site in downtown Prague were buried in the New Jewish Cemetery. The Ministry of Culture declared an additional 25 gravesites a cultural monument, and the intact remains were encased in a concrete sarcophagus.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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

The immigrant population is still relatively small, and includes persons from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the former Yugoslavia. Immigrants have not reported any difficulties in practicing their respective faiths.

Local Muslims reported that there were no incidents of religious intolerance toward their community during the period covered by this report.

A small but persistent and fairly well-organized extreme rightwing movement with anti-Semitic views exists in the country. Police were criticized on several occasions during the period covered by this report for failing to intervene against neo-Nazis shouting anti-Semitic slogans at concerts and rallies. In May 2001, the Ministry of the Interior announced a forceful effort to counter the neo-Nazis.

The legal actions against the 12 persons in Plzen arrested in February 1999 for distributing racist, Fascist, and anti-Semitic literature were resolved during the pe-

riod covered by this report. Eight of the 12 defendants were prosecuted; 4 were convicted and 4 were acquitted. Their sentences were handed down in March 2001. Three of those convicted received 18 months imprisonment and 2 years probation. One received 24 months imprisonment and 3 years probation, because of the additional charge of possession of a firearm. There were no appeals and the sentences became final in June 2001.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Government efforts on religious issues have focused largely on encouraging the Government to resolve religious property restitution claims and to avoid drafting legislation that would discriminate against minority religions.

During the period covered by this report, U.S. Government and embassy officials emphasized on numerous occasions to the Government the importance of returning property wrongfully taken from Holocaust victims, the Jewish community, and churches, or of fair and adequate compensation when return is no longer possible. During a visit to the country in November and December 2000, the Department of State's Special Advisor for Central and Eastern European Property Affairs discussed restitution issues in meetings with Jewish leaders, members of Parliament, and the Czech Bishops' Conference. The Special Advisor also met with a representative of the government Commission on Holocaust Issues, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, and with the special envoy for Holocaust issues.

Beginning in late December 1999, the Embassy, the Department of State, and the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad devoted considerable effort to facilitate a mutually acceptable settlement of the long-standing dispute over a medieval Jewish cemetery uncovered in 1997 at a commercial construction site in Prague (see Section II). The Embassy maintained close contact on this matter with the Office of the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, and the Prague Jewish community. The Embassy met on several occasions with the Culture Ministry's Department of Churches to discuss a range of topics, most importantly the Ministry's draft legislation on registration of churches. Embassy officials also responded to individual requests for assistance from Czech-American Holocaust victims seeking compensation.

DENMARK

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 Evangelical Lutheran Church is the state church and enjoys some privileges not available to other faiths.

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

The U.S. and Danish Governments discuss religious freedom issues in the context of their overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 16,640 square miles and its population is approximately 5.3 million. Over 86 percent of the population adheres to the Evangelical Lutheran Church; it is the only church that receives government funds. Other religious organizations represent approximately 5 percent of the population, with Muslims, the next largest group, accounting for 2 percent of the population. The remaining 9 percent of the citizens are without a religion.

There are missionaries operating within the country, including representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses; however, there is no detailed information available on missionary activity.

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 an official state religion. The Constitution stipulates that the Evangelical Lutheran Church is the national church, and it is subsidized by the Government. However, no individual can be compelled to pay tax or provide financial support to the national church or any other religious organization. By 1969, 11 other religious organizations had official recognition by royal decree (essentially the State's permission for a religious organization to perform religious ceremonies; for example, weddings, which have civil validity).

Since the implementation of the 1969 Marriage Act, the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs has granted permission to clergy of 60 additional, nonrecognized religious organizations to perform marriages. The Marriage Act permits weddings to be performed "within other religious organizations," provided that one of the parties to the marriage belongs to the organization, and the organization has clergy that have been granted permission to perform marriage by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Thus, religious organizations no longer need to obtain "recognition" since "approval" is given when the Ministry grants permission to perform weddings to specific religious organizations. Both recognized and approved religions enjoy certain tax exemptions. The approval process is not complicated or protracted.

In February 1998, the Government appointed an independent four-member council to prepare guidelines and principles for official approval of religious organizations. The government statement accompanying the action noted that the step was taken due to the growing number of applications in recent years for official approval as a religious organization.

In March 1999, the Council published guidelines for future approval of religious organizations. These guidelines are linked to the 1969 Marriage Act. They established clear requirements that religious organizations must fulfill, including providing the following: A written text of the religion's central traditions; descriptions of its most important rituals; an organizational structure accessible for public control and approval; and constitutionally elected representatives who can be held responsible by authorities. Additionally, the organization must "not teach or perform actions inconsistent with public morality or order."

Scientologists continue to seek official approval as a religious organization. Their first application for approval was made in the early 1980's and rejected; the second application was made in mid-1997 and withdrawn in early 1998. The second application was resubmitted in 1999 and withdrawn again in early 2000, shortly before a decision by the Government was expected. In withdrawing the application, the Church of Scientology asked the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs for additional time to respond to reports about Scientology that had appeared in the media. In January 2001, Scientology officials reported that their lawyers were preparing to resubmit their application in the summer of 2001.

There are no restrictions on proselytizing so long as proselytizers obey the law and do not act inconsistently with public morality or order. All schools, including religious schools, receive government financial support. While the Evangelical Lutheran faith is taught in the public schools, a student may withdraw from religious classes with parental consent.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In November 2000, Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen publicy criticized the practice of Muslim workers taking four "prayer breaks" during the workday. However, his comments were rejected widely, including by members of his own party, the Social Democrats. It generally was agreed that "prayer breaks" are not a problem in the workplace, and the Prime Minister publicly apologized on December 19.

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

After several years of searching for an appropriate site, the Muslim community has identified a piece of land in Broendbyoester in which they would like to build the country's first Muslim cemetery. The Muslim community is also attempting to identify a site and funding for building a full-scale mosque in the country.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The country has a long history of welcoming religious minorities and affording them equal treatment. There are generally amicable relations between religious groups, although the recent influx of a substantial Muslim population has resulted in some tension with the majority population of adherents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Minority group unemployment tends to be higher, and allegations of discrimination on the basis of religion sometimes are raised. However, it is difficult to separate religious differences from differences in language and ethnicity, and the latter may be at least as important in explaining unequal access to well-paying jobs and social advancement. There are no significant ecumenical movements that promote greater mutual understanding and religious tolerance.

Scientology officials complain of unfair treatment by the press, particularly in its extensive coverage of the church in the months preceding the anticipated government decision of the Scientologists' application for recognition as a religious organization (see Section II).

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. and Danish Governments discuss religious freedom issues in the context of their overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

ESTONIA

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 land area of 28,266 square miles and a population of 1.4 million inhabitants (65 percent ethnic Estonian, 35 percent Russian speaking). The majority of citizens are nominally Lutheran, and there is a large Christian Orthodox community. A broad range of other creeds and beliefs make up a small but growing segment of the religious community. However, 40 years of communism diminished the role of religion in society. Many new neighborhoods built since World War II do not have religious centers, and many of the surviving churches require extensive renovations. Church attendance, which had seen a surge coinciding with the independence movement in the early 1990s, now has decreased significantly. Anecdotal evidence from local Lutheran churches, indicates a 76 percent decrease in registered confirmations in that faith between 1990 and 2000.

The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church is the largest denomination, with 165 congregations and approximately 177,230 members as of May 15, 2001. The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church has 59 congregations and the Estonian Orthodox Church, subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate, has 27 congregations. Persons of varying ethnic backgrounds profess Orthodoxy. Lutherans and Orthodox Christians account for the majority of believers. There are smaller communities of Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Estonian Old Believers, and other Christian denominations. There is a small Jewish community. There are also communities of Muslims, Buddhists, and many other denominations and faiths; however, each of these minority faiths has fewer than 6,000 adherents.

The country's small Jewish community was decimated during the Nazi occupation. It now numbers 2,500 members. In December 2000, the country's only synagogue was opened in the Jewish school facility.

Many groups have sent foreign missionaries into the country in recent years; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) is the largest.

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 Constitution states that there is no state church, thus establishing the separation of church and state. However, this has not been interpreted strictly in administrative practice. For example, in response to an order by the Prime Minister, the coordination of chaplains' services to the prisons is delegated to one of the Lutheran diaconal centers. However, the center carries out this responsibility in a way that does not discriminate against non-Lutherans.

There also are other laws and regulations that directly or indirectly regulate individual and collective freedom of religion. The 1993 law on churches and religious organizations requires all religious organizations to have at least 12 members and to register with the Religious Affairs Department under the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MIA). Leaders of religious organizations must be citizens with at least 5 years' residence in the country. The minutes of the constitutive meeting, a copy of statutes, and a notarized copy of three founders' signatures serve as supporting documents for the registration application. On June 13, 2001, Parliament adopted a revised law on churches and congregations that contained a provision barring the registry of any church or union of congregations whose permanent or temporary administrative or economic management is performed by a leader or institution situated outside Estonia. Both the Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, and the Estonian Council of Churches expressed concern that such wording could prevent the registry of churches and congregations that traditionally had been active in the country. On June 29, President Lennaert Meri refused to promulgate the law, declaring, in part, that it constituted an intrusion into the sphere of autonomy of religious institutions.

Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Christmas day and Boxing Day are national holidays.

A program of basic Christian ecumenical religious instruction is available to public schools. Religious studies in public and private schools are an elective subject both for pupils and for teachers. In the primary classes parents decide about whether their children will participate in religious studies; at the gymnasium level pupils decide this independently. However, public school participation presently exists in only 41 schools, with approximately 1,820 students participating. Additionally, there are two small private church schools that have a religion-based curriculum.

The property restitution process largely has been completed except for those properties disputed by the two main branches of the Christian Orthodox faith. In a few local cases, church properties have been claimed by more than one Christian group, complicating and slowing restitution efforts. The most notable of these involves two competing hierarchies of the Christian Orthodox faith. The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EAOC), independent since 1919, subordinate to Constantinople since 1923, and exiled under the Soviet occupation, reregistered under its 1935 statute in August 1993. Since then, a group of ethnic Russian and Estonian parishes that prefer to remain under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church structure imposed during the Soviet occupation has insisted, unsuccessfully, that it should have claim to the EAOC name. In January 2001, representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate submitted an official church registration application under the name of the "Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate" to the MIA. On May 21, 2001, the MIA declined to approve the application, explaining that it could not formally register this church under its desired name as it would be confused too easily with the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church. The unregistered status of the church makes negotiations on and the settlement of the issue of the ownership of the Aleksander Nevski Cathedral, a prominent and valuable Tallinn landmark, problematic. The Cathedral currently is owned by the city of Tallinn and rented out to its Russian Orthodox congregation on a several decade lease basis. This dispute over whether the Orthodox Church should be subject to Moscow or Constantinople has taken on political overtones, as sensitivities remain from the 40-year Soviet occupation. According to local Jewish leaders, property restitution is not an issue for the community, as most prewar religious buildings were rented, not owned.

As of June 30, the Satanists, who earlier announced that they would seek to register with the Religious Affairs Department, have not applied for registration. MIA officials initially reacted with concern to the prospect of a registration application from this group. However, they more recently have viewed it as an indication of the group's intention to abide with the laws and government guidelines.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

The Churches and Congregations Act decrees that the commanding officer of each military unit shall ensure conscripts the opportunity to practice their religion. However, it is not clear whether or how this freedom is implemented in practice. The military chaplaincy is delegated by an order of the Prime Minister to an organization operated by the Lutheran Church.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 the various religious communities are generally amicable. Although the majority of citizens are nominally Lutheran, ecumenical services during national days, Christian holidays, or at public events are common. Tension between the ethnic Estonian and ethnic Russian populations generally does not extend to religious matters; however, the hierarchical dispute and legal conflict over church property does result in some resentment on the part of Christian Orthodox believers belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate (see Section II).

Although persons of varying ethnic backgrounds profess Christian Orthodoxy, most of the religious adherents among the country's Russian-speaking population are Orthodox, while the Estonian majority is predominantly Lutheran. There is a deep-seated tradition of tolerance of other denominations and religions. Although citizens are generally tolerant of new religions and foreign missionaries, some groups that are regarded widely as "cults" cause apprehension.

On November 1, 2000 (All Soul's Day), over 100 grave sites were destroyed in a cemetery in Tartu. Police attribute the crime to Satanists.

While no churches were victimized in the period covered by this report, earlier thefts of church property prompted the Estonian Council of Churches and the board of antiquities to initiate a database on items under protection. The database, which is comprised of digital photos and detailed descriptions, is expected to be shared with law enforcement agencies as needed.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Officials of the U.S. Embassy met regularly during the period covered by this report with appropriate government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and a wide range of figures in religious circles. Embassy officials met with representatives of both sides in the dispute between the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church.

FINLAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. According to law, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church are the established state churches.

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. However, the court has denied registration to the Finnish Association of Scientologists.

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 land area of 130,127 square miles, and its population is approximately 5,167,000. The majority of the population belongs to one of the two State Churches. Approximately 86 percent are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and 1 percent belong to the Orthodox Church. An additional 1 percent be-

long to a wide variety of non-state religions and 12 percent do not profess any religious affiliation.

Nontraditional religious groups freely profess and propagate their beliefs. Such groups as members of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) have been active in the country for decades. Other groups include the Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish communities.

There is an extremely small but growing immigrant population, whose members tend to practice different faiths than those of most citizens. Many immigrants are Muslims from Somalia.

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 are two state churches; the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church. All citizens who belong to one of these state churches pay a church tax as part of their income tax. Those who do not want to pay the tax must inform the applicable state church that they are leaving that church. These church taxes are used to defray the costs of running the state churches. State churches also handle services such as recording births, deaths, and marriages, which for citizens outside these churches are handled by official state registrars.

The Ministry of Education has outlined requirements for recognition of religious communities. Religious groups should have at least 20 members. The purpose of the group should be the public practice of religion, and the activities of the group should be guided by a set of rules. Forty-five of these communities currently are recognized as churches.

The Government's procedures for recognizing religious communities are still under review. The current Law on Freedom of Religion, which has been described as technically unclear, dates from 1923, and draft amendments proposed by a government commission in 1999 aim to clarify the requirements for recognizing and registering religious communities, and to increase opportunities to practice one's faith and to belong to several religious groups simultaneously. The Government is still considering the commission's proposals. The amended law would no longer ban simultaneous membership in several religious groups but would allow religious organizations themselves to regulate membership. In addition, minors over 12 years of age would have the option to change their religious affiliation from that of their parents. The proposed legislation would also reduce restrictions on the organization and operations of religious communities, facilitate the registration, as churches, of religious groups and enhance their independence. The amendments also call for a separate law on funerals. Under present practices, those not belonging to an established church often are subject to excessive burial expenses.

Instruction in the tenets of the state religions is incorporated into the curriculum of all public schools. However, students who are not members of the state churches may substitute general classes on religion and philosophy. The new amendments would allow parents or guardians belonging to other faiths/denominations to decide in what religion their children should be instructed.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In December 1998, the Education Ministry turned down the application of the Finnish Association of Scientologists to be registered as a religious community. This was the first time in the country's history that an applicant had been denied church status. The Scientologists' application had been pending for nearly 3 years while the Government awaited additional information that it had requested from the Association. In 1999, the Scientologists appealed the decision to the Parliamentary Ombudsman, who ruled that although the Education Ministry had made minor procedural errors its actions had been substantively correct under the law. The Education Ministry's decision may be appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court. The Scientologists have not yet done so but have indicated that they intend to begin the process to appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court.

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

Active members of the state Lutheran Church attend services regularly, participate in small church group activities, and vote in parish elections. However, the majority of church members are only nominal members of the state church and do not participate actively. Their participation occurs mainly during occasions such as holidays, weddings, and funerals. The Lutheran Church's Information Center reports that in 1998, an estimated 2 percent of members attended church services weekly, and 10 percent attended monthly. The average number of visits to church by church members was 1.7 during 1998.

Some citizens are not very receptive to proselytizing by adherents of nontraditional faiths, in part due to the tendency to regard religion as a private matter.

Nontraditional religious groups practice their religions freely. They are generally free from discrimination despite intolerant attitudes from some members of society.

Immigrants do not encounter difficulties in practicing their faiths; however, they sometimes encounter random discrimination and xenophobia.

Various government programs available through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor focus on ongoing discrimination, including discrimination based on religion. Studies and research, integration programs, and recommendations for further incorporation of immigrants into society have been the focal points of these programs. Religion has not been highlighted in particular, but remains a part of the Government's overall attempts to combat discrimination.

The state churches often speak out in support of the Finnish/Nordic welfare state model, couching social welfare state values in religious or moral terms.

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 promoting human rights. Embassy representatives periodically meet with representatives of the various religious communities (both mainstream and nontraditional) to discuss religious freedom issues.

FRANCE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government—including the legislative branch—has taken some actions that affect religious minorities that it considers to be "cults." The 1905 law on the separation of church and state—the foundation of current legislation on religious freedom—makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of faith.

There was no overall change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report; however, new legislation has the potential to restrict religious freedom. The new law provides for the dissolution of associations (including religious associations) whose leaders have two or more convictions on any of a variety of offenses, some of which are worded ambiguously, such as "psychological or physical subjection," "fraudulent abuse of a state of ignorance or weakness," "false advertising" or "fraud or falsifications."

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. In October 2000, over 100 anti-Semitic incidents occurred, mainly as a result of increased tensions in the Middle East. Government leaders and representatives from the country's four main religious groups strongly criticized the violence, and the Government increased police security for Jewish institutions.

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 211,210 square miles and its population is approximately 60 million.

The Government does not keep statistics on religious affiliation. The vast majority of the population is nominally Roman Catholic. According to one member of the Catholic hierarchy, only 8 percent of the population are practicing Catholics. Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in number; Islam has approximately 4 million adherents, or approximately 6 to 7 percent of the population. Protestants make up 2 percent of the population; and the Jewish and Buddhist faiths each represent 1 percent.

The Jewish community numbers between 600,000 and 700,000 persons and is divided among Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox groups. According to press reports, up to 60 percent of the Jewish community celebrates at most only the high holy days such as Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. One Jewish community leader has reported that the largest number of practicing Jews in the country is Orthodox. Jehovah's Witnesses claim that 250,000 persons attend their services either regularly or periodically. Orthodox Christians number between 80,000 and 100,000; the vast majority of these persons are associated with the Greek or Russian Orthodox churches. According to various estimates, about 6 percent of the country's citizens are unaffiliated.

Other religions present in the country include Evangelicals and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons). Membership in Evangelical churches is growing due to increased participation by African and Antillian immigrants. Examples of minority religious groups include the Scientologists (membership estimates range from 5,000 to 20,000), the Raelians with approximately 20,000 members, the Association of the Triumphant Vajra, and the Order of the Solar Temple.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right; however, during the period covered by this report, the Government, including the legislative branch, took some actions that affected religious minorities that it considers cults. The 1905 law on the separation of church and state—the foundation of current legislation on religious freedom—makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of faith.

Organizations have to register and the Government uses many categories to describe associations. Two of these categories apply to religious groups: "Associations cultuelles" (associations of worship, which are exempt from taxes) and "associations culturelles" (cultural associations, which are not exempt from taxes). Associations in these two categories are subject to certain management and financial disclosure requirements. An association of worship can organize only religious activities, defined as liturgical services and practices. A cultural association is a type of association whose goal is to promote the culture of a certain group, including a religious group. Although a cultural association is not exempt from taxes, it may receive government subsidies for its cultural and educational operations (such as schools). Religious groups normally use both of these categories; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, for example, runs strictly religious activities through its association of worship and operates a school under its cultural association.

Religious groups must apply with the local prefecture to be recognized as an association of worship and, therefore, receive tax-exempt status for their religious activities under the 1905 statute. The prefecture reviews the submitted documentation regarding the association's purpose for existence. In order to qualify, the group's purpose must be solely the practice of some form of religious ritual. Printing publications, employing a board president, or running a school can disqualify a group from receiving tax-exempt status.

According to statistics previously published by the Ministry of the Interior, 109 of 1,138 Protestant associations, 15 of 147 Jewish associations, and 2 of 1,050 Muslim associations have tax-free status. Roughly 100 Catholic associations are tax exempt; a representative of the Ministry of Interior reports that the total number of non-tax-exempt Catholic associations is too numerous to estimate accurately.

According to the 1905 law, associations of worship are not taxed on the donations that they receive. However, the prefecture can decide to review a group's status if the association receives a large donation or legacy that comes to the attention of the tax authorities. If the prefecture determines that the association is not in fact in conformity with the 1905 law, its status can be changed and it can be required to pay a 60 percent tax rate on present and past donations.

For historical reasons, the Jewish, Lutheran, Reformed (Protestant), and Roman Catholic groups in three departments of Alsace Lorraine enjoy special legal status in terms of taxation of individuals donating to these religious groups. Adherents of these four religions may choose to have a portion of their income tax allocated to their church in a system administered by the central Government.

Central or local governments own and maintain religious buildings constructed before 1905, the date of the law separating church and state. In Alsace and Moselle, special laws allow the local government to provide support for the building of religious edifices.

Foreign missionaries must obtain a 3-month tourist visa before leaving their own country. Upon arrival, missionaries must apply with the local prefecture for a carte

de sejour (a document that allows a foreigner to remain in the country for a given period of time), and then must give the prefecture a letter from their sponsoring religious organization.

Religion is not taught in public schools. Parents may home-school children for religious reasons, but all schooling must conform to the standards established for public schools. Public schools make an effort to supply special meals for students with religious dietary restrictions. The State subsidizes private schools, including those that are affiliated with churches.

Five of the country's 10 national holidays are Catholic holidays.

The Government has made efforts to promote interfaith understanding. Strict antidefamation laws prohibit racially or religiously motivated attacks. The Government has programs to combat racism and anti-Semitism through public awareness campaigns, and by encouraging dialog between local officials, police, and citizen groups. Following the numerous anti-Semitic incidents that occurred in October 2000, government leaders, along with representatives from the Jewish community, the Paris Grand Mosque, the Protestant Federation, and the French Conference on Bishops, came together to criticize the violence.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Following the 1994 mass suicide in Switzerland and Canada of members of the Order of the Solar Temple, successive Governments have encouraged public caution towards some minority religious groups that the Government may consider to be "cults." In 1995 the National Assembly formed a parliamentary commission to study so-called cults. In 1996 the Gest or Guyard Commission (named for its chairman and rapporteur, respectively) issued a report that identified 173 groups as cults, including Jehovah's Witnesses, the Theological Institute of Nimes (an evangelical Christian Bible college), and the Church of Scientology. The Commission, for purposes of its report only, defined sects as groups that place inordinate importance on finances; cause a rupture between adherents and their families; are responsible for physical as well as psychological attacks on members; recruit children; profess "anti-social" ideas; disturb public order; have "judiciary problems;" and/or attempt to infiltrate organs of the State. The Government has not outlawed any of the groups on the list; however, members of some of the groups listed have alleged instances of intolerance due to the ensuing publicity.

The Government's "Observatory on Sects/Cults" was created in 1996 to analyze the phenomenon of cults and to develop proposals for dealing with them. In 1998 the Government issued a decree disbanding the Observatory and creating an "Interministerial Mission in the Fight Against Sects/Cults" (MILS), which is responsible for coordinating periodic interministerial meetings at which government officials can exchange information and coordinate their actions. Although the Government instructed the MILS to analyze "the phenomenon of cults" its decree did not define the term "cult" or distinguish cults from religions.

On December 21, 2000, the MILS submitted its 2000 annual report. The report highlighted the globalization of cult influence, specifically in underdeveloped countries, and focused on the "infiltration" of NGO's by cults. The report evaluated the influence of cult movements in the country's three overseas departments, French Guyana, Guadeloupe, and Martinique. A case study examined the Anthroposophical Movement, founded by Rudolf Steiner, and recommended sustained vigilance over the Steiner schools.

On May 30, 2001, the National Assembly passed a private bill (known as the About-Picard Bill) that would tighten restrictions on organizations. The bill, already adopted by the Senate, was signed into law on June 14, 2001. The final legislation had been revised from earlier versions. It included the National Assembly's change stipulating that dissolution of any legal entity (including a religious association) that had been the subject of "several" criminal judgments would require a judicial decision (as opposed to a presidential decree). The About-Picard legislation does not define cults. Its framers worked from the concept of "cult-like movements" as those associations that put undue pressure on individuals, exact overly substantial contributions, encourage individuals not to vote, suggest anti-social behavior, and cut off individuals from their families. Articles of the legislation listed criminal activities for which a religious association (or other legal entity) would be subject to dissolution, including: endangering life or the physical/psychological well-being of a person; placing minors at mortal risk; violation of another person's freedom, dignity, or identity; the illegal practice of medicine or pharmacology; false advertising; and fraud or falsifications. Associations, recognized as public utilities, that defend or aid an individual or a collective entity against a person or organization that is characterized as having the goal or the effect of creating or exploiting a psychological or physical dependence, have standing in judicial proceedings.

In addition, the final text of the bill did not contain the controversial term "mental manipulation," which had appeared in an earlier version of the legislation. However, the bill reinforces existing provisions of the Penal Code by adding language covering the exploitation of the "psychological or physical subjection" or "fraudulent abuse of a state of ignorance or weakness." Government-supported language giving mayors the power to prevent cults from establishing a presence 200 meters or less from a school, hospice, or retirement home was struck from the final version. Leaders of the four major religions, such as the president of the French Protestant Federation and the president of the Conference of Bishops in France, raised concerns about the legislation. The Council of Europe issued a declaration on April 26, 2001, citing its concern that the legislation could be discriminatory and that it violates human rights standards. Many religious groups plan to monitor closely implementation of the new law, which some allege was inspired by government concerns over some religions.

Local authorities often determine the treatment of religious minorities. A number of court cases have been initiated against the Church of Scientology, generally involving former members who have sued the Church for fraud and sometimes for the practice of medicine without a license. According to Scientology representatives, there also have been cases under the Data Privacy Act brought against the group by former members who have continued to receive mailings from the parent church in the United States. In April 2001, the Church of Scientology was taken to court for fraud and false advertising in a lawsuit brought by three former members; the case was still pending at the end of the reporting period. Church of Scientology representatives report that a case filed by a parent whose child attended an "Applied Scholastics"-based school remained ongoing. Warrants in this case were executed in March 2001 and the police entered Scientology offices and removed files. Scientology representatives also report the cancellation of a music contract for a Scientology member allegedly due to her religious affiliation. In October 2000, the Paris Prefecture denied a request by the Church of Scientology for a demonstration permit. The Church alleged discrimination; however, the prefecture justified the denial based upon the proposed size and duration of the demonstration, which would make it difficult to maintain public order. The group rented a private park outside Paris, where they held their gathering.

The Association of the Triumphant Vajra has been involved in a dispute with local officials over a statue of the association's guru, which was still pending at the end of the period covered by this report. Alleging unfair treatment on religious grounds, the Association mounted a public campaign and appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, to prevent application of a Court of Cassation (the country's highest appeal body) ruling upholding a lower court order to tear down the statue, which allegedly had been erected without a permit.

Some observers are concerned about the scrutiny with which tax authorities have examined the financial records of some religious groups. The Government does not recognize all branches of Jehovah's Witnesses, or the Church of Scientology, as qualifying religious associations for tax purposes, and therefore subjects them to a 60 percent tax on all funds they receive. The tax authorities began an audit in 1996 of the French Association of Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1998 the tax authorities formally assessed the 60 percent tax on donations received between September 1992 and August 1996. Tax authorities then began proceedings to collect the assessed tax, including steps to place a lien on the property of the National Consistory of Jehovah's Witnesses. However, in June 2000, the Conseil d'Etat, the highest administrative court in the country, decided that two of the branches of Jehovah's Witnesses could be recognized as religious associations according to the 1905 law, and thus be exonerated from certain tax obligations. In July 2000, a Nanterre court decided against the French Association of Jehovah's Witnesses. In the same month, the Jehovah's Witnesses appealed the Nanterre court's decision to the Versailles Court of Appeals. At the end of the period covered by this report, the case was still pending.

Problems experienced by Muslims appear to be based on cultural differences. Debate continues over whether denying some Muslim girls the right to wear headscarves in public schools constitutes a violation of the right to practice their religion. Various courts and government bodies have considered the question on a case-by-case basis; however there has been no definitive national decision on this issue.

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 Conseil des Eglises Chretiens en France is composed of three Protestants, three Catholics, and three Orthodox Christian representatives. It serves as a forum for dialog among the major Christian churches. There is also an organized interfaith dialog among the Christians, Buddhist, Muslim, and Jewish communities, which discuss and issue statements on various national and international themes. The Ministry of Interior urged the creation of a Muslim council and in February 2001, seven Muslim organization representatives came together with a draft accord. Four of the seven associations have signed the accord while the remaining three, more fundamentalist associations have not yet done so.

The annual National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (NCCHR) report on racism and xenophobia, released in March 2001, noted an increase in the number of attacks against Jews after a steady downward trend since 1992. During October 2000, more than 100 anti-Semitic incidents, ranging from graffiti to harassment to firebombing, occurred across the country, mainly as a result of increasing tensions in the Middle East. For example, on October 10, 2000, a synagogue in Trappes was set on fire and destroyed. Between October 12 and 14, 2000, local authorities in Strasbourg uncovered several Molotov cocktails that had been planted in a synagogue. On October 14, 2000, a synagogue in Lyon was rammed by a car and then caught fire. Three synagogues in the Paris suburb of Bagnolet and a Jewish shop in Toulon were firebombed. On October 17, 2000, six incendiary devices were discovered outside a Jewish school in Paris. On October 23, 2000, a synagogue in Marseille was firebombed. It appeared that disaffected youths were responsible for many of these incidents and some arrests were made. Government leaders, members of the Jewish community, the Paris Grand Mosque, the Protestant Federation, and the French Conference on Bishops strongly criticized the violence. The Government increased police security for Jewish institutions. Several incidents occurred against members of the large Arab/Muslim community, including incidents of harassment and vandalism.

In April 2001, Panda Software International (a Spanish company) was reported in the press as founded and run by a Scientologist. Panda, which filed suit against the publication L'Express and television channel France 3, and Scientologists claim that the negative press has led to an effective banning and boycotting of Panda's products due to its founder's religious affiliation.

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.

Representatives from the Embassy have met several times with government officials and members of Parliament. Embassy officers also meet regularly with a variety of private citizens, religious organizations, and nongovernmental organizations involved in the issue. U.S. Senators have also discussed religious freedom issues with senior government officials during visits here.

GEORGIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, local authorities sometimes restricted the rights of members of nontraditional religious minority groups.

There was a deterioration in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Local police and security officials at times harassed nontraditional religious minority groups and were complicit or failed to respond to attacks by Orthodox extremists against Jehovah's Witnesses and other nontraditional religious minorities.

Citizens generally do not interfere with traditional religious groups; however, there is growing suspicion of nontraditional religious groups, and an increased number of incidents in which Orthodox extremists harassed and attacked such groups, especially Jehovah's Witnesses occurred.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Government has raised its concerns about harassment of and attacks against nontraditional religious minorities with senior government officials.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 25,900 square miles and its population is 5 million.

Most ethnic Georgians (approximately 70 percent of the population of 5 million, according to the 1989 census nominally associate themselves with the Georgian Orthodox Church. Orthodox churches serving other non-Georgian ethnic groups, such as Russians and Greeks, are subordinate to the Georgian Orthodox Church. Non-Georgian Orthodox Churches generally use the language of their communicants. In addition, there are a small number of mostly ethnic Russian believers from two dissident Orthodox schools: the Malakani Storoveriy (Old Believers); and Dukhoboriy, the majority of whom have left the country. Under Soviet rule, the number of active churches and priests declined sharply and religious education was nearly nonexistent. Membership in the Georgian Orthodox Church has continued to increase since independence in 1991. The church maintains 4 theological seminaries, 2 academies, several schools, and 27 church dioceses; and has 700 priests, 250 monks, and 150 nuns. The Church is headed by a Catholicos Patriarch, Ilya II, whose See is in Tbilisi.

Several religions, including the Armenian Apostolic Church, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam, traditionally have coexisted with Georgian Orthodoxy. A large number of Armenians live in the southern Javakheti region, in which they constitute a majority of the population. Islam is prevalent among Azerbaijani and north Caucasus ethnic communities in the eastern part of the country and also is found in the regions of Ajara and Abkhazia. About 5 percent of the population are nominally Muslim. Judaism, which has been present since ancient times, is practiced in a number of communities throughout the country, especially in the largest cities of Tbilisi and Kutaisi. Approximately 8,000 Jews remain in the country, following 2 large waves of emigration, the first in the early 1970's and the second in the period of perestroika during the late 1980's. Before then, Jewish officials estimate, there were as many as 100,000 Jews in the country. There also are small numbers of Lutheran worshipers, mostly among descendents of German communities that first settled in the country several hundred years ago. A small number of Kurdish Yezidis have lived in the country for centuries.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Protestant denominations have become more prominent. They include Baptists (composed of Russian, Georgian, Armenian, Ossetian, and Kurdish groups); Seventh-Day Adventists; Pentecostals (both Georgian and Russian); Jehovah's Witnesses (local representatives state that the group has been in the country since 1953 and has about 15,000 adherents); the New Apostolic Church; and the Assemblies of God. There also are a few Baha'is and Hare Krishnas. There are no available membership numbers for these groups but, combined, their membership most likely totals fewer than 100,000 persons.

SECTION II. STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, local police and security officials at times harassed nontraditional religious minority groups and their foreign missionaries. The Constitution recognizes the special role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the country's history, but also stipulates the independence of the Church from the State.

There are no laws regarding the registration of religious organizations. Religious groups that perform humanitarian services may be registered as charitable organizations, although religious and other organizations may perform humanitarian services without registration. Organizations that are not registered may not rent office space or import literature, among other activities. Individual members of unregistered organizations may engage in these activities as individuals, but in such cases are exposed to personal legal liability.

While the National Security Council's human rights representative, the chairwoman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, and the Government Ombudsman have been effective advocates for religious freedom in a number of instances, the Ministry of Interior (including the police) and Procuracy generally have failed to pursue criminal cases against Orthodox extremists for their attacks against religious minorities. On the few occasions in which investigations into such attacks have been opened, they have proceeded very slowly.

During the Soviet era, the Georgian Orthodox Church largely was suppressed, as were many other religious institutions; many churches were destroyed or turned into museums, concert halls, and other secular establishments. As a result of new policies regarding religion implemented by the Soviet Government in the late 1980's,

the present Patriarch began reconsecrating churches formerly closed throughout the country. The Church remains very active in the restoration of these religious facilities and lobbies the Government for the return of properties that were held by the Church before the Bolshevik Revolution. (Church authorities have claimed that 20 to 30 percent of the land at one time belonged to the Church.)

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Georgian Orthodox Church enjoys a tax-exempt status not available to other religious groups. On March 30, 2001, Parliament amended the Constitution to allow for ultimate adoption of a concordat between the Church and the State, supported by the Church, which would define relations between the two. While a final concordat draft had not been completed by mid-2001, earlier versions covered several controversial topics, including transfer to the Church of ownership of church treasures expropriated during the Soviet period and currently held in state museums and repositories; government compensation to the Church for moral and material damage inflicted by the Soviets; and government assistance in establishing after-school Orthodox religious courses in educational institutions and Orthodox chaplaincies in the military and in prisons. The prospect of such a concordat has raised concerns among nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) that believe that it would discriminate against religious minorities. However, parliamentary leaders, have indicated that prior to adoption, the final concordat draft will be sent to the Council of Europe, European Parliament, and European Union for informal expert analysis, to ensure that it accords with European norms and the country's international legal obligations.

While most citizens practice their religion without restriction, the worship of some citizens, particularly members of non-traditional faiths, has been restricted by intimidation and the use of force by right-wing nationalists whom the Government has failed to control. In addition, a February 22, 2001, Supreme Court ruling upheld a lower court decision revoking the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses on the grounds that the law does not allow for registration of religious organizations. The effect of the Court decision likely will deprive Jehovah's Witnesses of the ability to rent premises for services and importing literature.

Some nationalist politicians continue to use the issue of the continued supremacy of the Georgian Orthodox Church in their platforms, and criticized some Protestant groups, especially evangelical groups, as subversive. Jehovah's Witnesses in particular are the target of attacks from such politicians.

The revocation of the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses resulted from a 1999 court case brought by a nationalist parliamentarian seeking to ban the group on the grounds that it presented a threat to the State and the Georgian Orthodox Church. A February 22, 2001, Supreme Court ruling upheld a June 2000, Appeals Court ruling revoking the Jehovah's Witnesses' legal registration. While the Supreme Court emphasized that its ruling was based on technical legal grounds and was not to have the effect of banning Jehovah's Witnesses, many local law enforcement officials interpreted the ruling as a ban, and thus used it as a justification not to protect Jehovah's Witnesses from attacks by religious extremists. However, the court decision did not have the effect of revoking the registration of other religious organizations, since the case was brought against Jehovah's Witnesses only.

In December 1999, Jehovah's Witnesses requested permission from the city of Tbilisi to use a municipal sports palace in July 2000 for a convention. In April 2000, the city denied permission. In conversations with group leaders, city officials claimed that the decision was based on concern for the safety of the attendees. Jehovah's Witnesses appealed this decision. The group speculates that the city denied permission due to fear of pressure from the Orthodox Church. The city has not responded to their appeal.

The Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches have been unable to secure the return of their churches and other facilities closed during the Soviet period, many of which later were given to the Georgian Orthodox Church by the State. A prominent Armenian church in Tbilisi remains closed and the Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches, as with Protestant denominations, have had difficulty obtaining permission to construct new churches, reportedly in part as a result of pressure from the Georgian Orthodox Church.

The Jewish community also experienced delays in the return of property confiscated during Soviet rule. In 1997 the courts ordered that a former synagogue which had been rented from the Government by a theater group be returned to the Jewish community. The theater group refused to comply and began a publicity campaign with anti-Semitic overtones to justify its continued occupation of the building. In December 1998, President Shevardnadze promised Jewish leaders that the synagogue would be returned before the 2,600-year celebration of Jewish settlement in

the country. However, the President's order was not enforced, and the theater group brought suit, claiming that the building was never a synagogue. The court referred the issue to a panel of experts for evaluation. In May 2000, the panel informed the court that it had come to a split decision on whether the building had been a synagogue. On April 10, 2001, the Supreme Court ruled that the central hall of the synagogue should be returned to the Jewish community, but that the theater groups should retain part of the building. However, by the end of the period covered by this report, the theater group had not yet vacated the central hall.

On April 17, 2001, Jehovah's Witnesses representative Arno Tungler was denied an entry visa at Tbilisi Airport, despite the fact that he had an official accreditation from the Ministry of Justice. As of the end of the period covered by this report, Tungler still was unable to obtain permission to enter the country.

According to some local human rights groups, as a result of pressure from the Georgian Orthodox Church, the Ministry of Education prevented the use of several school textbooks on the history of religion because they did not give absolute precedence to Orthodox Christianity. The textbooks eventually were eventually published and introduced into the school system after the incorporation of changes requested by the Church. On a number of occasions, Jehovah's Witnesses encountered difficulty importing religious literature into the country. Shipments were delayed by the Customs Department for lengthy periods of time.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Local police and security officials at times harassed nontraditional religious minority groups, especially Jehovah's Witnesses. There were a number of cases in which police not only failed to intervene to protect such minorities from attacks by Orthodox extremists (see Section III), but actually participated in or facilitated the attacks.

On September 8, 2000, police broke up an assembly of 700 members of Jehovah's Witnesses in Zugdidi, after setting up roadblocks to prevent an additional 1,300 from reaching the site. More than 50 members of Jehovah's Witnesses were beaten.

On September 28, 2000, police raided a Hare Krishna meeting house in Tbilisi and confiscated a large amount of religious literature. Some of the literature was released following the intervention of a local NGO; however, the remainder of the literature was destroyed.

In March 2001, the Central Baptist Church in Tbilisi was attacked by five masked men. The five men tied up the night watchmen and used a blowtorch to force their way into the room, which all the church's valuables were kept in a safe. There has been no investigation into or prosecution of this incident.

Throughout the period covered by this report, followers of excommunicated Orthodox priest Basili Mkalavishvili (Basilists) engaged in a number of violent attacks on nontraditional religious minorities, including Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and especially, members of Jehovah's Witnesses. The attacks involved burning religious literature, breaking up religious gatherings, and beating up parishioners, in some cases with nail-studded sticks and clubs. Although law enforcement authorities were present during some of the attacks, in most instances, they have failed to intervene, leading to a widespread belief in police complicity in the activities of the Basilists. A criminal case was opened against Mkalavishvili in March 2000; however, the investigation is proceeding very slowly. While the criminal case prevented Mkalavishvili from making personal appearances during the most recent attacks, his followers have continued their violence in his absence. On occasion, members of Jvari (Cross), another Orthodox extremist group, have joined Mkalavishvili's supporters in their activities.

On September 15, 2000, Mkalavishvili and his followers destroyed the premises for a Jehovah's Witnesses conference in Marneuli and physically assaulted and robbed several dozen Jehovah's Witnesses while police looked on. Police also prevented a number of buses carrying Jehovah's Witnesses from reaching the conference. During December 2000 and January 2001, Basilists harassed several families of Jehovah's Witnesses, demanding that they stop holding meetings in their homes. On January 22, 2001, Mkalavishvili broke up a press conference in which Jehovah's Witnesses were presenting a petition with 130,000 signatures demanding government action against religious violence. Basilists seized and fled with most of the volumes of signatures. During April and May 2001, following the opening of a criminal case against Mkalavishvili, Basilists continued their attacks against members of Jehovah's Witnesses, which included several cases in which peaceful religious gatherings in Tbilisi, Rustavi, and other locales were broken up and Jehovah's Witnesses were beaten with sticks and clubs. Mkalavishvili publicly encouraged these latest attacks, although he did not participate due to fear of potential legal consequences.

On March 14, 2001, Basilists, with the assistance of traffic police, stopped a truck in Mtskheta carrying books imported by the United Bible Society and attempted to seize and burn them.

In May 2001, an appeals court overturned charges of hooliganism against a member of Jehovah's Witnesses and returned the case to the lower court for further investigation. This case began on October 1999, when a worship service of 120 parishioners in the Gldani district of Tbilisi was attacked violently by Basilists. The Gldani police refused to intervene. Sixteen persons were injured in the attack. In December 1999, the case was forwarded to the Gldani prosecutor's office for criminal charges. Despite the advocacy by the National Security Advisor for Human Rights on Jehovah's Witnesses' behalf, in January 2000, the Gldani regional prosecutor's office returned the case to the city prosecutor's office, stating that no violation had occurred. The case has been reopened and closed on several occasions since then. While it is currently open, the investigation is proceeding very slowly. In June 2000; however, the investigators charged two of the defendants with hooliganism stemming from the incident. They were convicted in court in September 2000, and received suspended sentences. One of the two appealed his conviction.

The Assemblies of God, several of whose members were beaten and abused verbally by police officials while conducting outdoor services in Tbilisi in May 1999, appealed to the European Court in Strasbourg. The police officials who interrupted the service sought to obtain the names of the church members. The Assemblies of God assert that it remains under local police surveillance. A number of members of the congregation were hesitant to return to their apartments and cars for a few days after the police actions. In September 1999 the group brought suit against the police and lost. The group alleged that the leader of a radical Orthodox group exerted pressure on the court. The suit was later appealed to the Supreme Court, which dismissed it in 2000. The group then appealed to the European Court, where the case remained pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

Despite this lack of legal redress there have been no reports that the Assemblies of God or the other three evangelical Protestant congregations in Tbilisi whose public services were discontinued for a period in 1999 due to interference from police and Basilists, have experienced further interference with public worship services. President Shevardnadze publicly condemned these acts, but there have been no investigations into the police conduct.

Regular and reliable information regarding the "Republic of Abkhazia," which is not recognized by any country and over which the Government of Georgia does not exercise control, is difficult to obtain. The Abkhaz "President," Vladislav Ardzimba, issued a decree in 1995 that banned Jehovah's Witnesses in Abkhazia. It remains in effect. A number of members of Jehovah's Witnesses have been detained subsequently; however, according to a representative of Jehovah's Witnesses, none were in detention at the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners in the area of the country under the control of the Government.

Forced Religious Conversion

There are 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 public's attitude towards religion is ambivalent. Although many residents are not particularly observant, the link between Georgian Orthodoxy and Georgian ethnic and national identity is strong.

Despite their tolerance toward minority religious groups traditional to the country—including Catholics, Armenian Apostolic Christians, Jews, and Muslims—citizens remain very apprehensive about Protestants and other nontraditional religions, which they see as taking advantage of the populace's economic hardship by gaining membership through handing out economic assistance to converts.

The Georgian Orthodox Church withdrew its membership from the World Council of Churches in 1997 in order to appease clerics strongly opposed to some of the Council's requirements and methods of operation and thereby avert a schism within the Church. Some senior church leaders remain highly exclusionary and profess theirs as the "one true faith." Some Protestant groups—especially evangelical groups—have been criticized by church officials and nationalist politicians as subversive. Eleven leaders of the Georgian Orthodox Church have argued that Christian missionaries should confine their activities to non-Christian areas.

Religious leaders of different faiths have spoken out against such criticism. Some NGO's advocate removing the clause in the Constitution concerning the Church's special role, claiming that it contradicts the Constitution's provisions regarding religious freedom.

The Muslim and Jewish communities report that they have encountered few societal problems. There is no pattern of anti-Semitism. In the past, President Shevardnadze has made statements criticizing anti-Semitic acts.

Nationalistic politicians manipulated the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in order to create public hostility. In April 2000, one politician inaccurately publicized the case of a hospitalized member of Jehovah's Witnesses who refused certain forms of medical treatment. The event was covered widely in the press and sparked a brief public debate over religious beliefs and medical ethics.

Many of the problems among traditional religious groups stem from disputes over property. The Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches have been unable to secure the return of their churches and other facilities that were closed during the Soviet period, many of which later were given to the Georgian Orthodox Church by the State. A prominent Armenian church in Tbilisi remains closed and the Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches, with Protestant denominations, have had difficulty obtaining permission to construct new churches, reportedly in part as a result of pressure from the Georgian Orthodox Church. Georgian Orthodox Church authorities have accused Armenian believers of purposely altering some existing Georgian churches so that they would be mistaken for Armenian churches. The Catholic Church successfully completed the construction of a new church in Tbilisi in 1999 and one in Batumi in June 2000.

On March 6, 2001, four Orthodox priests led a mob in an attack on members of Jehovah's Witnesses in Sachkere. The mayor and local police chief refused to intervene, and local law enforcement officials warned that there would be further attacks.

On March 24, 2001, eight visiting foreign Assembly of God members were attacked by a mob of Basilists, who stole their camera equipment and inflicted minor injuries upon them. Police reportedly were present and watching but made no effort to intervene.

On June 8, 2001, a mob of 30 Orthodox priests attacked Jehovah's Witnesses during a meeting in the western city of Martvili. The mob assaulted two women, beating one with a stick and striking the other in the face while the priests looked on.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialogue and policy of promoting human rights. On several occasions during the period covered by this report, senior U.S. Government officials, including the Ambassador and the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, raised with senior government officials, including the President, Parliament Speaker, and Internal Affairs and Justice Ministers. U.S. Government concerns regarding harassment of and attacks against nontraditional religious minorities. The Ambassador also raised this issue with the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Embassy officials frequently met with representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptist Church, and Assemblies of God, as well as with NGO's concerned with religious freedom.

GERMANY

The Basic Law (Constitution) provides for religious freedom and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government does not recognize Scientology as a religion and views it as an economic enterprise. Concerns that Scientology's ideology is opposed to a democratic state have led to the screening of firms and individuals in some sectors of business and employment.

The federal and state Offices for the Protection of the Constitution (OPC), "watchdog" agencies tasked with monitoring groups whose ideologies are deemed to be counter to the democratic order, have been "investigating" the Church of Scientology and Scientologists for approximately 4 years. During that time there have been no prosecutions or convictions of Scientology officials in the country, and the investigation has uncovered no concrete evidence that the Church is a "security" threat.

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. Many religions and denominations have been

granted public law corporation status. Among them are the Lutheran and Catholic Churches and Judaism, as well as the Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mennonites, Baptists, Methodists, Christian Scientists, and the Salvation Army. The Berlin State government has denied Jehovah's Witnesses public law corporation status (see Section II).

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. The status of Scientology was the subject of many discussions. The U.S. Government has maintained consistently that the determination that any organization is religious is for the organization itself. The U.S. Government has expressed concerns over infringement of individual rights because of religious affiliation and over the potential for discrimination in international trade posed by the screening of foreign firms for possible affiliation with Scientology.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 137,821 square miles and its population is approximately 82 million. No census that could provide official statistics on religions has been conducted since 1987. However, unofficial estimates and figures provided by the organizations themselves give an approximate breakdown of the current membership of the country's denominations. The Evangelical Church, which includes the Lutheran, Uniate, and Reformed Protestant Churches, has 27 million members, who constitute 33 percent of the population. Statistical offices in the Church estimate that 1.1 million church members (or 4 percent) attend weekly religious services. The Catholic Church has a membership of 27.2 million or 33.4 percent of the population. According to the Church's statistics, 4.8 million Catholics (or 17.5 percent) actively participate in weekly services. According to government estimates, there are approximately 2.8 to 3.2 million Muslims living in the country (about 3.4 percent to 3.9 percent of the population.) Statistics on mosque attendance are not available.

Orthodox churches have approximately 1.1 million members, or 1.3 percent of the population. The Greek Orthodox Church is the largest, with approximately 450,000 members. The Romanian Orthodox Church has 300,000 members. The Serbian Orthodox Church has 200,000 members. The Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate has 50,000 members, while the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad has approximately 28,000 members. The Syrian Orthodox Church has 37,000 members, and the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church in Germany has 35,000 members.

Other Christian churches have approximately 1 million members, or 1.2 percent of the population. These include Adventists with 35,000 members, the Apostolate of Jesus Christ with 18,000 members, the Apostolate of Judah with 2,800 members, the Apostolic Community with 8,000 members, Baptists with 87,000 members, the Christian Congregation with 12,000 members, the Church of Jesus Christ or Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) with 39,000, the Evangelical Brotherhood in Germany with 7,200 members, Jehovah's Witnesses with 165,000 members, Mennonites with 6,500 members, Methodists with 66,000 members, the New Apostolic Church with 430,000 members, Old Catholics with 25,000 members, the Salvation Army with 2,000 members, Seventh-Day Adventists with 53,000 members, the Union of Free Evangelical churches with 30,500 members, the Union of Free Pentecostal Communities with 16,000 members, the Temple Society with 250 members, and the Quakers with 335 members.

Jewish congregations have approximately 82,000 members and make up 0.l percent of the population. According to press reports, the country's Jewish population is growing rapidly, and more than 100,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union have joined the country's 30,000 Jews since 1990. The vast majority of newly arrived Jews come from countries of the former Soviet Union. Not all new arrivals join congregations, hence the discrepancy between population numbers and the number of congregation members. Statistics on synagogue attendance are not available.

The Unification Church has 850 members; the Church of Scientology has 8,000 members; the Hare Krishna society has 5,000 members; the Johannish Church has 3,500 members; the International Grail Movement has 2,300 members; Ananda Marga has 3,000 members; and Sri Chinmoy has 300 members.

Approximately 21.8 million persons or 26.6 percent of the population either have no religious affiliation or belong to unrecorded religious organizations.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Basic Law (Constitution) provides for religious freedom and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

Religious organizations need not be registered. Most religious organizations are registered and treated as nonprofit associations and therefore enjoy tax-exempt status. State level authorities review these submissions and routinely grant this status. Organizations must register at a local or municipal court and provide evidence (through their own statutes) that they are a religion and thus contribute socially, spiritually, or materially to society. Local tax offices occasionally conduct reviews of tax-exempt status.

Church and State are separate, although historically a special partnership exists between the State and those religious communities that have the status of a "corporation under public law." If they fulfill certain requirements, including assurance of permanence, size of the organization, and no indication that the organization is not loyal to the State, organizations may request that they be granted "public law corporation" status, which, among other things, entitles them to levy taxes on their members that are collected by the State for them. Organizations pay a fee to the Government for this service. All public law corporations do not avail themselves of this privilege. The decision to grant public law corporation status is made at the state level. On December 19, 2000, the Federal Constitutional Court passed a groundbreaking ruling in which it found the condition of "loyalty to the state" to be a violation of the constitutionally mandated separation of church and state. Therefore, this condition is inadmissible in the catalogue of conditions imposed on religious organizations. State governments also subsidize various institutions affiliated with public law corporations, such as church-run schools and hospitals.

State subsidies are also provided to some religious organizations for historical and cultural reasons. Some Jewish synagogues have been built with state financial assistance because of the State's role in the destruction of synagogues in 1938 and throughout the Nazi period. Repairs to and restoration of some Christian churches and monasteries are undertaken with state financial support because of the expropriation by the State of church lands in 1803 during the Napoleonic period. Having taken from the churches the means by which they earned money to repair their buildings, the State recognized an obligation to cover the cost of those repairs. Subsidies are paid out only to those buildings affected by the 1803 Napoleonic reforms. Newer buildings do not receive subsidies for upkeep.

In principle, the Central Council of Jews in Germany represents the majority of Jewish congregations in the country. However, since the founding of the first liberal congregations in the country in 1997, there are now 11 liberal/reform congregations that are represented by the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (UPJGAS), which is not represented on the Central Council. The UPJGAS is currently looking to establish a dialog with the Central Council and the Government in order to secure access to federal and state funds allocated for the purpose of development, support, and stability of all German Jewish congregations. Such funds are currently managed through contracts between the 16 states and the state-level Jewish umbrella organizations, which constitute the Central Council.

Most public schools offer religious instruction in cooperation with the Protestant and Catholic churches and will offer instruction in Judaism if enough students express interest. A nonreligious ethics course or study hall generally is available for students not wishing to participate in religious instruction. The issue of Islamic education in public schools is becoming increasingly topical in several states. In February 2000, the Federal Administrative Court upheld previous court rulings that the Islamic Federation qualified as a religious community and thus must be given the opportunity to provide religious instruction in Berlin schools. The decision drew criticism from the many Islamic organizations not represented by the Islamic Federation. The Berlin State Government has expressed its concerns about the Islamic Federation's alleged links to Milli Gorus, a Turkish group classified as extremist by the Federal OPC. In November 2000, Bavaria announced that it would offer German-language Islamic education in its public schools starting in 2003.

The right to provide religious chaplaincies in the military, in hospitals, and in prisons is not dependent on the public law corporation status of a religious community. The Ministry of Defense currently is looking into the possibility of Islamic clergymen providing religious services in the military, although none of the many Islamic communities has the status of a corporation under public law.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Jehovah's Witnesses appealed to the Constitutional Court a 1993 decision of the Berlin State government that had denied the church public law corporation status. In 1997 the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin had upheld the Berlin State Government's decision. The Court concluded that the group did not offer the "indispensable loyalty" towards the democratic state "essential for lasting cooperation" because it forbade its members from participating in public elections. The group does enjoy the basic tax-exempt status afforded to most religious organizations. On December 19, 2000, the Constitutional Court found in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses, remanding the case back to the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin. For the first time, the Constitutional Court had examined the conditions for granting the status of a public law corporation and found that for reasons of the separation of church and state, "loyalty to the state" cannot be a condition imposed on religious communities. The Constitutional Court tempered the victory for Jehovah's Witnesses by instructing the Berlin Administrative Court to examine whether Jehovah's Witnesses use coercive methods to prevent their members from leaving the congregation and whether their child-rearing practices conform to the country's human rights standards. The case had not been resolved by the end of the period covered by this report.

The Rheinland-Pfalz Superior Court (OVG) ruled in November 2000 that the German Unification Church (Moon Community) was permitted to contest an immigration order prohibiting its leader's entrance into the country. The court also left open an appeal by either the immigration authorities or the Unification Church to the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin because of the significance of the matter. The Unification Church was registered as an association in 2000.

A state's administrative court upheld on June 26, 2001 a 1998 ban in the southern state of Baden-Wuerttemburg on Muslim teachers wearing headscarves in the classroom. The case is expected to be appealed to the Federal Administrative Court.

On October 16, 2000, the Administrative Court in Lueneburg, Lower Saxony, ruled for the plaintiff. The court found that school authorities have to admit the teacher into probationary civil service status. This court found that wearing a headscarf does not constitute cause for denial of employment. An administrative court in Hamburg had already come to a similar finding in 1999. In Baden-Wuerttemberg, on the other hand, school authorities have won a case against a teacher who insists on wearing her headscarf. This case is now being appealed in a higher administrative court in Mannheim.

Several states have published pamphlets detailing the ideology and practices of nonmainstream religions. States defend the practice by noting their responsibility to respond to citizens' requests for information about these groups. While many of the pamphlets are factual and relatively unbiased, others may harm the reputations of some groups through innuendo and inclusion in a report covering known dangerous cults or movements. Scientology is the focus of many such pamphlets, some of which warn of alleged dangers posed by Scientology to the political order and freemarket economic system, and to the mental and financial well being of individuals. For example, the Hamburg Office for the Protection of the Constitution published "The Intelligence Service of the Scientology Organization," which outlines its claim that Scientology tried to infiltrate governments, offices, and companies, and that the church spies on its opponents, defames them, and "destroys" them.

The Church of Scientology remained under scrutiny by both federal and state officials who contend that its ideology is opposed to democracy. Since 1997 Scientology has been under observation by federal and state offices. (One state, Schleswig-Holstein, does not implement observation, since its constitution does not permit such activity.) In observing an organization, OPC officials seek to collect information, mostly from written materials and firsthand accounts, to assess whether a "threat" exists. More intrusive methods would be subject to legal checks and would require evidence of involvement in treasonous or terrorist activity. Federal OPC authorities stated that no requests had been made to employ more intrusive methods, nor were any such requests envisioned. Observation is not an investigation into criminal wrongdoing, and, to date, no criminal charges have been brought against the Church of Scientology by the Government.

In November 1998, the Federal OPC concluded that although there was no imminent danger of infiltration by Scientology into high levels of the political or economic power structures, there were nevertheless indications of tendencies within Scientology, supported by its ideology and programmatic goals, which could be seen as directed against the country's free and democratic order and that the public should be informed of these dangers.

The interministerial group of midlevel federal and state officials that exchanges information on Scientology-related issues continued its periodic meetings. The group

published no report or policy compendium during the period covered by this report and remains purely consultative in purpose.

In April 2001, the Federal OPC concluded in a 265 page annual report for the year 2000 that its reasons for initiating observation of Scientology stated in 1997 were still valid. The 5 pages (down from 6 last year) covering Scientology described the organization's political ideology that is deemed to be antidemocratic, quoting from the writings of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology pamphlets.

Government authorities contend that Scientology is not a religion but an economic enterprise and therefore sometimes have sought to deregister Scientology organizations previously registered as nonprofit associations and require them to register as commercial enterprises. With the exception of the Church of Scientology in Baden-Wuerttemberg, no Scientology organization in the country has tax-exempt status.

Until March 2001, the Government required firms to sign a declaration (a "sect filter") in bidding on government contracts stating that neither the firm's management nor employees were Scientologists. Firms that failed to submit a sect filter declaration were presumed "unreliable" and excluded from consideration. In response to concerns expressed by foreign governments and multinational firms unable to determine the religious affiliation of all their employees, the Economics Ministry limited the scope of the sect filter to consulting and training contracts in 2000. In March 2001, the Economics Ministry was able to persuade the federal and state interior ministries to accept new wording that would only prohibit use of the "technology of L. Ron Hubbard" in executing government contracts. Firms owned or managed by or employing Scientologists could bid on these contracts.

Scientologists continued to report discrimination because of their beliefs. A number of state and local offices share information on individuals known to be Scientologists. Some local and state government offices and businesses (including major international corporations) and other organizations also require job applicants and bidders on contracts to sign a "sect filter," stating that they are not affiliated with the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard and do not use the technologies of L. Ron Hubbard. (The term "sect filter" is misleading because the declarations are Scientology-specific and in practice do not refer to any other group; they could more accurately be described as "Scientology filters.") Some state governments also screen companies bidding contracts relating to training and the handling and processing of personal data. The private sector has followed the example set by the Federal Government and on occasion has required foreign firms that wish to do business in the country to declare any affiliation that they or their employees may have with Scientology. The Federal Property Office has barred the sale of some real estate to Scientologists, noting that the federal Finance Ministry has urged that such sales be avoided, if possible.

Scientologists reported employment difficulties and, in the State of Bavaria, applicants for state civil service positions must complete questionnaires detailing any relationship they may have with Scientology. Bavaria identified some state employees as Scientologists and has required them to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire specifically states that the failure to complete the form will result in the employment application not being considered. Some of these employees have refused and two have filed suit in the local administrative court. The two cases have been decided, both in favor of Scientology. The first case was an employee who had been employed with the city of Munich since 1990, and who refused to complete the questionnaire. The Labor Court ruled in his favor in October 2000. The second case was that of a state employee (originally employed in 1992) who had filed suit against the Bavarian State. In April 2001, the Labor Court ruled in his favor. These were the only cases actually brought to court. Others refused to complete the questionnaire, but chose to await rulings in the two mentioned cases. The Bavarian Interior Ministry commented that these were "individual" decisions, but it withdrew the questionnaire for people already employed with the State of Bavaria or the City of Munich. However, the questionnaire is still in use for persons seeking new state or municipal employment. In one case, a person was not given civil service but only employee status (a distinction which involves important differences in levels of benefits); in another case, a person quit Scientology in order not to jeopardize his career. Two teachers who had also refused to comply with the questionnaire requirement meanwhile got word that due to the latest court ruling they no longer need comply. According to Bavarian and federal officials, no one in Bavaria lost a job or was denied employment solely because of association with Scientology; Scientology officials confirm this fact. An antidrug exhibition on display in Munich in the spring of 2001 was hosted by Scientology. Neither state nor municipal authorities lodged any opposition to this exhibit. There were, however, counter-demonstrations and minor problems with the police.

In a well-publicized court case, a higher social court in Rheinland-Pfalz ruled in January 1999 that a Scientologist was allowed to run her au pair agency, for which the state labor ministry had refused to renew her license in 1994, solely based on her Scientology membership. The judge ruled that the question of a person's reliability hinges on the person herself and not on her membership in the Church of Scientology. The ruling is under appeal by the State Labor Office. The case is still in the appeals process.

The publisher "New Era," who had caused controversy during the Leipzig Book Fair of 2000, did not participate in the 2001 Fair. According to Fair organizers, no publishers associated with the Church of Scientology exhibited their books at this year's Fair.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 is becoming increasingly secular. Regular attendance at religious services is decreasing. After over four decades of Communist rule, the eastern part of the country had become far more secular than the western part. Church representatives note that only 5 to 10 percent of eastern inhabitants belong to a religious organization.

Relations between the various religious communities are amicable. Several major political parties generally hold ecumenical religious services prior to beginning their national conventions. Religious organizations and political and educational foundations hold seminars and discussion panels to promote interreligious understanding.

Religious broadcasters have access to the media. For example, television carries many programs produced by mainstream and minority religious groups.

With an estimated 4 million adherents, Islam is the third most commonly practiced religion in the country (after Catholicism and Lutheranism). All branches of Islam are represented, with the vast majority of Muslims coming from a large number of other countries. This has, at times, led to societal discord, such as local resistance to the construction of mosques or disagreements over whether Muslims can use loudspeakers in residential neighborhoods to call the faithful to prayer. There also remain areas where German law conflicts with Islamic practices or raises religious freedom issues. In November 2000, the Government published a comprehensive report on "Islam in Germany" which examined these issues in response to an inquiry from parliament.

Opposition to the construction of mosques was reported in various communities around the country. In August 2000, for instance, a protest movement in the Stuttgart suburb of Heslach tried to prevent the construction of a mosque, claiming that the planned building did not fit into the community. The city offered the Islamic organization an alternative location, which the group declined. Subsequently, the city denied a construction permit. The dispute remains unresolved.

There is also a case of a planned mosque in the Frankfurt suburb of Roedelheim. Neighbors have expressed concerns about an increase in traffic if visitors come to attend services at the mosque. Newspaper reports of open opposition to the project voiced at citizen meetings with the city administration. Leading city officials seem to support the construction of the mosque, but the case is still pending.

The right of Muslims ritually to slaughter animals was the subject of two court cases during the year. In November 2000, the Federal Administrative Court ruled that the Islamic Community of Hesse was not a religious community as provided for in Germany's animal protection laws and could not, therefore, receive a waiver of laws requiring an animal be stunned before slaughter. The Court did not rule on whether Islam prescribes the exclusive consumption of ritually slaughtered meat, noting that such decisions were beyond the scope of the courts. A similar case was heard by the Federal Constitutional Court and a decision was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

A report of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, published during the period covered by this report, does not distinguish violent crimes by the religious affiliation of the victims. Specific mention is made of the desecration of Jewish graves or cemeteries. The report lists 56 such cases (up from 47 last year.)

On April 20, 2000 (the anniversary of Adolf Hitler's birthday), three young men affiliated with a radical rightwing organization threw a Molotov cocktail at the synagogue in Erfurt. No one was injured and the damage was minor. The perpetrators

were rapidly apprehended. On July 13, 2000, they were convicted of aggravated arson. Two perpetrators were sentenced to juvenile detention of 3 months and 2 years respectively. The driver of the getaway car was sentenced to probation. The overwhelming majority of the perpetrators of anti-Semitic acts were socially marginalized, largely apolitical youths and a small core of rightwing extremists.

On July 27, 2000, an explosive device was detonated at a Düsseldorf train station, injuring ten persons, most of whom were Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union. Despite intensive police investigation, as of June 30, 2001 the case, which authorities considered a possible hate crime, had not been solved.

In October 2000, Molotov cocktails thrown at the synagogue in Düsseldorf caused slight damage to the building. In December 2000, police charged two young men of Arab origin with the attack. Police found Nazi symbols and related items in the suspects' homes. The synagogue has remained under around-the-clock police protection since the incident.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

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

The status of Scientology was the subject of many discussions. The U.S. Government has expressed its concerns over infringement of individual rights because of religious affiliation, and over the potential for discrimination in international trade posed by the screening of foreign firms for possible Scientology affiliation. U.S. Government officials have discussed with state and federal authorities U.S. concerns about the violation of individual rights posed by the use of declarations of Scientology affiliation. U.S. officials frequently have made the point that the use of such "filters" to prevent persons from practicing their professions, solely based on their beliefs, is an abuse of their rights, as well as a discriminatory business practice.

GREECE

The Constitution establishes the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ (Greek Orthodoxy) as the "prevailing" religion, but also provides for the right of all citizens to practice the religion of their choice; however, while the Government generally respects this right, non-Orthodox groups sometimes face administrative obstacles or encounter legal restrictions on religious practice. The Constitution prohibits proselytizing and stipulates that no rite of worship may disturb public order or offend moral principles.

Overall, leaders of minority religions noted a general improvement in government tolerance during the period covered by this report, citing fewer detentions for proselytizing; the conscientious objector law; and an effective, well-run Ombudsman's office, which successfully handled an increasing number of cases.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Greeks tend to link religious affiliation very closely to ethnicity. In the minds of many Greeks, an ethnic Greek is also Orthodox Christian. Non-Orthodox citizens have complained of being treated with suspicion or told that they were not truly Greek when they revealed their religious affiliation. The Government's decision in the summer of 2000 to remove a notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards sparked a national debate, which is still continuing, on the role of the Church in Greek society.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy officers meet regularly with working-level officials responsible for religious affairs in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education and Religious Affairs. Officers from the U.S. Embassy and the Consulate General in Thessaloniki also meet regularly with representatives of various religious groups, including the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic communities.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 81,934.74 square miles and its population is approximately 10.9 million. Approximately 94 to 97 percent of the population identify themselves at least nominally with the Greek Orthodox faith. There are approximately 500,000 to 800,000 Old Calendarists throughout the country. With the exception of the Muslim community (some of whose rights and privileges as well as related government obligations are covered by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne), the

Government does not keep statistics on the size of religious groups; and the 2001 census did not ask for religious affiliation. Ethnic Greeks account for a sizeable percentage of most non-Orthodox religions. The balance of the population is composed of Muslims (officially estimated at 98,000, though some Muslims claim up to 130,000 to 140,000 countrywide); accurate figures for other religious groups are not available. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses are estimated at 50,000; Catholics at 50,000; Protestants, including evangelicals, at 30,000; Jews at 5,000; and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) at 300. Scientologists claim 12,000 members, a figure observers believe to be high. The Jewish community numbers approximately 5,000 adherents; the majority are Greek citizens and live in the Athens and Thessaloniki regions. Approximately 250 members of the Baha'i Faith are scattered throughout the country, the majority of whom are Greek citizens of non-Greek ethnicity. There are also small populations of Anglicans, Baptists, and nondenominational Christians. There is no official or unofficial estimate of atheists.

The majority of noncitizen residents are not Greek Orthodox. The largest of these groups is the Albanians (approximately 700,000 including legal and illegal residents); of them, a few are Orthodox and Roman Catholics, but the majority are nonreligious.

Greek Catholics reside particularly in Athens and on the islands of Syros, Tinos, Naxos, and Corfu, as well as in the cities of Thessaloniki and Patras. Immigrants from the Philippines and Poland also practice Catholicism. The Bishop of Athens heads the Roman Catholic Holy Synod.

Some religious groups, such as the evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses, consist almost entirely of ethnic Greeks. Other groups, such as the Church of Jesus of Latter-Day Saints and Anglicans, consist of an approximately equal number of ethnic Greeks and non-Greeks.

The Muslim population, concentrated in western Thrace with small communities in Rhodes, Kos, and Athens, is composed mainly of ethnic Turks but also includes Pomaks and Roma.

Scientologists, most of whom are located in the Athens area, practice their faith through a registered nonprofit philosophical organization.

Foreign Missionary groups are active in the country, including Protestants and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; the latter states that it has approximately 80 missionaries in the country each year, for approximately 2-year terms.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution establishes the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ (Greek Orthodoxy) as the prevailing religion, but also provides for the right of all citizens to practice the religion of their choice; however, while the Government generally respects this right, non-Orthodox groups sometimes face administrative obstacles, or encounter legal restrictions on religious practice. The Constitution prohibits proselytizing and stipulates that no rite of worship may disturb public order or offend moral principles. The Orthodox Church wields significant political and economic influence. The Government, under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Religion, provides some financial support by, for example, paying for the salaries and religious training of clergy, and financing the construction and maintenance of Orthodox Church buildings.

The Orthodox Church and the Jewish and Muslim religions are the only groups considered by law to be a "legal person of public law." Other religions are considered "legal persons of private law." In practice the primary distinction is that the establishment of "houses of prayer" of religions other than the Orthodox Church, Judaism, or Islam is regulated by the general provisions of the Civil Code regarding corporations. For example, these religions cannot, as religious entities, own property; the property must belong to a specifically created legal entity rather than to the church itself. In practice this places an additional legal and administrative burden on non-Orthodox religious community organizations, although in most cases this process has been handled routinely. Members of minority religious groups that are classified as private entities also cannot be represented in court as religious entities and cannot will or inherit property as a religious entity. In July 1999, the Parliament passed a law extending legal recognition to Catholic churches and related entities established prior to 1946. By virtue of the Orthodox Church's status as the "prevailing" religion, the Government recognizes the Orthodox Church's cannon law (the official statutes of the Church). However, the Catholic Church unsuccessfully has sought government recognition of its canon law since 1999.

Two laws from the 1930's require recognized or "known" religious groups to obtain "house of prayer" permits from the Ministry of Education and Religion in order to open houses of worship. By law the Ministry may base its decision to issue permits on the opinion of the local Orthodox bishop. No formal mechanism exists to gain recognition as a known religion, but Ministry officials state that they no longer obtain the opinion of the local Orthodox bishop when considering house of prayer permit applications. According to the Ministry's officials, applications for additional houses of prayer are numerous and are approved routinely; however, in October 2000 the Ministry denied the Scientologists of Greece their application for recognition and a house of prayer permit on the grounds that Scientology "is not a religion." The only recent application for recognition as a known religion at the Ministry was submitted in February 2000 by the Scientologists of Greece. Although the deadline mandated by law for processing the applications is 3 months, it took the Ministry until October 2000 to decide that it would not recognize the Scientologist community as an "official" religion. The Church of Scientology appealed the decision with the Council of State in December 2000 and the case will be heard in December 2001.

Leaders of some non-Orthodox religious groups claimed that all taxes on religious organizations were discriminatory, even those that the Orthodox Church has to pay, since the Government subsidizes the Orthodox Church, while other groups are self-supporting. The Government also pays the salaries of the two official Muslim religious leaders ("muftis") in western Thrace and provides them with official vehicles.

The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which is still in force, gives Muslims in western Thrace the right to maintain social and charitable organizations ("wakfs") and provides for muftis (Islamic judges and religious leaders with limited civic responsibilities) to render religious judicial services.

The Treaty of Lausanne provides that the Muslim minority has the right to Turkish-language education, with a reciprocal entitlement for the Greek minority in Istanbul (now reduced to approximately 3,000 persons). Western Thrace has both Koranic and secular Turkish-language schools. In the past, government disputes with Turkey over teachers and textbooks had caused these secular schools serious problems in obtaining faculty and teaching materials in sufficient number and quality; however, this is no longer a problem. In January 2000, 19 new Turkish-language textbooks approved jointly by the Governments of Greece and Turkey were distributed in the schools, the first such distribution since 1974. There were no complaints during the period covered by this report that the Government tried to prevent Turkish teachers (who serve under a 1952 reciprocal educational protocol) from performing their duties. Approximately 8,000 Muslim children attended Turkish-language public schools and an additional 150 attended two bilingual middle schools with a religious curriculum. Approximately 600 Muslim students attended Turkish-language secondary schools, and approximately 1,600 Muslim students attended Greek-language secondary schools. Some Muslims, especially in western Thrace, reportedly attended high school in Turkey; places in Turkish language secondary schools are no longer assigned by lottery, as the number of those wanting to attend has been less than the places available. In 1999 the Government instituted a European Union-funded program for teaching Greek as a second language to Muslim children, primarily in the Greek-language schools, to improve their academic performance and chances of obtaining post-secondary education in Greece.

Government incentives encourage Muslim and Christian educators to reside and teach in isolated villages. However, in August 1999, the Ministry of Education reformed the hiring system for teachers, which previously was based on seniority and prior service as a temporary teacher. As a result, Christian educators lost the incentive to reside and teach temporarily in isolated and border villages, which in the past secured priority in hiring. However, teachers and civil servants in border areas continue to receive a special allowance and pay lower taxes.

The law permits the Minister of Education to give special consideration to Muslims for admission to universities and technical institutes. The law requires universities and technical institutes to set aside places for Muslim students each year.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

On October 17, 2000, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs rejected the application of the Scientologists of Greece for recognition and a house of prayer permit on the grounds that Scientology "is not a religion." The Scientologists had reapplied for a house of prayer permit in late February 2000 in a step toward gaining recognition as a religion. According to the president of the Greek Scientologists, the group chose previously to register as a philosophical organization because legal counsel advised that the Government would not recognize Scientology as a religion.

The Scientologists appealed the ministry decision with the Council of State and the case is scheduled to be heard in December 2001.

Minority religious groups have requested that the Government abolish laws regulating house of prayer permits, which are required in order to open houses of worship. Many provisions of these laws are not applied in practice, but local police still have the authority to bring minority churches to court that operate or build places of worship without a permit. On December 12, 2000, in Thessaloniki, 16 churches charged with operating without a house of prayer permit were acquitted.

Several religious denominations reported difficulties in dealing with the authorities on a variety of administrative matters. Privileges and legal prerogatives granted to the Greek Orthodox Church are not extended routinely to other recognized religions. The non-Greek Orthodox churches must make separate and lengthy applications to government authorities on such matters as gaining permission to move places of worship to larger facilities. In contrast Greek Orthodox officials have an institutionalized link between the church hierarchy and the Ministry of Education and Religion to handle administrative matters.

Non-Orthodox citizens have claimed that they face career limits within the military, police, and fire-fighting forces, and the civil service, due to their religions. In the military, generally only members of the Greek Orthodox faith become officers, leading some members of other faiths to declare themselves Orthodox. Few Muslim officers have advanced to the rank of reserve officer, and there were reports of pressure exerted on Greek Orthodox military personnel not to marry in the religious ceremony of their non-Orthodox partner, lest they be passed over for promotion.

The percentage of Muslims employed in the public sector and in state-owned industries and corporations is disproportionately lower than the percentage of Muslims in the population, which many observers claim is due to the Greek language barrier, not to religious discrimination. In Xanthi and Komotini, while Muslims hold seats on the prefectural and town councils, there are no Muslims among regular employees of the prefecture. Muslims in western Thrace claim that they are hired only for lower level, part-time work. According to the Government, lack of fluency in written and spoken Greek and the need for university degrees for high-level positions limit the number of Muslims eligible for government jobs.

Economically, the Muslim minority in Thrace lags behind the rest of the population. Since 1998, there have been no claims of discriminatory denial of Muslim applications for business licenses, tractor ownership, or property construction. In fact, Muslims and Christians in Thrace commended the Government for the basic public services (electricity, water, and telephone) provided to Muslim villages in recent years.

Unlike in the past, there were no reports during the period covered by this report of assertions by Muslim leaders that the Government routinely withheld permission from Muslims seeking to change their legal residence, which determines where they vote, from rural to urban communities within western Thrace or from elsewhere in Greece to Thrace.

Several religious denominations, including foreign Protestants and Mormons, reported difficulty in renewing the visas of their non-European Union citizen ministers because the Government does not have a distinct religious workers' visa category. As part of new obligations under the Schengen Treaty and the Treaty of Amsterdam, all non-European Union citizens face a more restrictive visa and residence regime than they did in the past. By the end of the period covered by this report, no progress had been made on issuing visas for foreign clergy to perform their religious work in Greece.

The approximately 10,000 member Muslim community in Athens (composed primarily of economic migrants from Thrace, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq) is without its own mosque or any state-appointed cleric to officiate at various religious functions, including funerals. Members of the Muslim community often transport their deceased back to Thrace for religious burials. In June 2000, the Parliament approved a bill allowing construction of the first Islamic cultural center and mosque in the Athens area; however, construction had not started by the end of the period covered by this report. According to official sources, a total of 287 mosques operate freely in western Thrace and on the islands of Rhodes and Kos.

Differences remain within the Muslim community and between segments of the community and the Government over the means of selecting muftis. Under a 1991 law, the Government appointed two muftis and one assistant mufti, all residents in Thrace. The appointments to 10-year terms were based on the recommendations of a committee of Muslim notables selected by the Government. The Government argued that it must appoint the muftis, because in addition to religious duties, they perform judicial functions in many civil and domestic matters under Muslim religious law, for which the State pays them. In January 2001, the mufti from Komotini

was re-appointed for another 10-year term and in May 2001 the mufti from Xanthi also was re-appointed. Some Muslims accept the authority of the two government-appointed muftis; other Muslims, backed by Turkey, have "elected" two muftis to serve their communities (although there is no established procedure or practice for "election"). The Government has prosecuted "elected" muftis for usurping authority.

Controversy between the Muslim community and the Government also continued over the management and self-government of the "wakfs" (Muslim charitable organizations), particularly in regards to the appointment of officials as well as the degree and type of administrative control. A 1980 law placed the administration of the wakfs in the hands of the appointed muftis and their representatives. In response to objections from some Muslims that this arrangement weakened the financial autonomy of the wakfs and violated the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, a 1996 presidential decree put the wakfs under the administration of a committee for 3 years as an interim measure pending resolution of outstanding problems. The interim period was extended in 1999. At the end of the period covered by this report, the Government was preparing a draft bill that would permit Muslims to elect their own administrative committee for each municipality.

In the past, Muslim activists have complained that the Government regularly lodges tax liens against the wakfs, although they are tax-free foundations in theory. Under a national land and property registry law that came into full effect in January 1999, the wakfs, along with all property holders, must register all of their property with the Government. The law permits the Government to seize any property that the owners are not able to document; there are built-in reporting and appeals procedures. The wakfs were established in 1560; however, due to the destruction of files during the two world wars, the wakfs are unable to document ownership of much of their property. They have not registered the property, so they cannot pay assessed taxes. The Government had not sought to enforce either the assessments or the registration requirement by the end of the period covered by this report.

Evangelical parishes are located throughout the country. Members of missionary faiths report having difficulties with harassment and police detention due to anti-proselytizing laws. Church officials express concern that anti-proselytizing laws remain on the books, although such laws no longer hinder their ministering to the poor and to children.

During the period covered by this report, there were no further assertions that the municipality in Thessaloniki and in some villages refused to record the conversion of former Orthodox believers to other religions.

In the summer of 2000, the Government decided to remove the notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards. This decision sparked a national debate, which is still continuing, on the role of the Church in Greek society.

In January 1998, a law providing an alternative form of mandatory national service for conscientious objectors (for religious and ideological reasons) took effect. It provides that conscientious objectors may work in state hospitals or municipal services for 36 months, in lieu of mandatory military service. Conscientious objector groups generally characterized the legislation as a "positive first step" but criticized the 36-month alternative service term, which is double the regular 18-month period of military service. Since January 1998, all members of Jehovah's Witnesses (both clergy and laymen) who wished to submit applications for alternative nonmilitary service have been permitted to do so. There were 18 religiously based conscientious objector cases still pending resolution at the end of the reporting period. These cases pertain to individuals who were in the process of contesting a prison term for refusing to serve in the military and whose cases were not covered by the 1998 law.

A 1939 law prohibits the functioning of private schools in buildings owned by non-Orthodox religious foundations; however, this law is not enforced in practice.

Religious instruction in Orthodoxy in public, primary, and secondary schools is mandatory for all Greek Orthodox students. Non-Orthodox students are exempt from this requirement. However, members of Jehovah's Witnesses have reported some instances of discrimination related to attendance at religious education classes or other celebrations of religious or nationalistic character. Members of the Muslim community in Athens are lobbying for Islamic religious instruction for their children. The neighborhood schools offer no alternative supervision for the children during the period of religious instruction. The community has complained that this forces the parents to have their children attend Orthodox religious instruction by default.

In Thessaloniki in late 1999, the Government Tax Office refused to recognize the Jehovah Witnesses as a non-profit association (Evangelicals and Baha'is are considered non-profit associations) and imposed an inheritance tax for property willed to them. The groups appealed the decision in 2000; the Court of Appeals wrote off the imposed tax in April 2001.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Church leaders report that their permanent members (nonmissionaries) do not encounter discriminatory treatment. However, police occasionally detained Mormons and members of Jehovah's Witnesses (on average once every 2 weeks) after receiving complaints that the individuals were engaged in proselytizing. In most cases, these individuals were held for several hours at a police station and then released with no charges filed. Many reported that they were not allowed to call their lawyers and that they were abused verbally by police officers for their religious beliefs. There were no proselytizing-related court cases during the period covered by this report.

Some Muslims accept the authority of the two Government-appointed muftis; other Muslims, backed by Turkey, have "elected" two muftis to serve their communities.

The Government has convicted one of the elected muftis 14 times in 5 years for usurping the authority of the official mufti. All of the respective sentences remained suspended pending appeal at the end of the period covered by this report. The other elected mufti, who was convicted in 1991 of usurping the authority of the official mufti, appealed to the European Court of Human Rights. In December 1999, the court ruled that the conviction violated his freedom of religion and self-expression, but it did not rule on the question of his legal status as mufti.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees apart from the problems of temporary police detention experienced by Mormons and members of Jehovah's Witnesses.

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.

Improvements in Freedom of Religion

Overall, leaders of minority religions noted a general improvement in government tolerance during the period covered by this report, citing fewer detentions for proselytizing, the conscientious objector law, and an effective, well-run Ombudsman's office, which successfully handled an increasing number of cases related to religious freedom.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Greeks tend to link religious affiliation very closely to ethnicity. Many attribute the preservation of Greek national identity to the actions of the Greek Orthodox Church during approximately 400 years of Ottoman rule and the subsequent nation building period. The Church wields significant social, political, and economic influence, and it owns a considerable, although undetermined, amount of property.

In the minds of many Greeks, an ethnic Greek is also an Orthodox Christian. Non-Orthodox citizens have complained of being treated with suspicion or told that they were not truly Greek when they revealed their religious affiliation.

Members of minority faiths have reported incidents of societal discrimination, such as local bishops warning parishioners not to visit clergy or members of minority faiths and neighbors, and requesting that the police arrest missionaries for proselytizing. However, with the exception of the Muslim minority of western Thrace, most members of minority faiths consider themselves satisfactorily integrated into society. Organized official interaction between religious communities is infrequent.

Some non-Orthodox religious communities believe that they have been unable to communicate with officials of the Orthodox Church and claim that the attitude of the Orthodox Church toward their faiths has increased social intolerance toward their religions. The Orthodox Church has issued a list of practices and religious groups, including members of Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelical Protestants, Scientologists, Mormons, Baha'is, and others, which it believes to be sacrilegious. Officials of the Orthodox Church have acknowledged that they refuse to enter into dialog with religious groups considered harmful to Greek Orthodox worshipers; church leaders instruct Orthodox Greeks to shun members of these faiths.

In October 1999, a rededication of a synagogue in Hania, Crete as a house of prayer and a cultural center was marred by public criticism of the event by the regional governor. However, the Minister of National Education and Religion, and other government and Greek Orthodox officials, lent their support to the rededication. A new Jewish museum opened in Thessaloniki in early March 2001 and was officially inaugurated by the Jewish community in Thessaloniki and the Greek au-

thorities in May 2001. A temporary Anne Frank exhibition was displayed in Thessaloniki in April 2001.

Conservative Orthodox clerics protested Pope John Paul II's May 4 to 5, 2001, visit to the country; however, the Government distanced itself from these extremists, as did Archbishop Christodoulos and most members of the Greek Orthodox Church.

The Government's decision in 2000 to remove religious affiliation from national identity cards led to a national debate. The issue led Archbishop Christodoulos to organize religious protest rallies in Thessaloniki and Athens in June 2000. Both demonstrations drew over 100,000 supporters. Archbishop Christodoulos vociferously criticized the Government and launched a campaign to collect signatures to petition the Government to allow religious affiliation as an option on national identity cards. The Orthodox Church alleges that it has collected 3 million signatures. In March 2001, Archbishop Christodoulos blamed "the Jews" for the government's decision to remove notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards. The Government distanced itself from Christodoulos' statement.

In April 2001, vandals desecrated the Jewish Cemetery of Trikala.

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 officers meet regularly with working-level officials responsible for religious affairs in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education and Religious Affairs. The Ambassador and Political Counselor discussed religious freedom with senior government officials and religious leaders. The U.S. Embassy also regularly discusses religious freedom issues in contacts with other government officials, including mayors, regional leaders, and Members of Parliament. Officers from the Embassy and the Consulate General in Thessaloniki meet regularly with representatives of various religious groups, including the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic communities. In March 2001, in the first visit by a U.S. Ambassador to Thrace in 34 years, the Ambassador met with leaders of the Muslim and Christian communities. The U.S. Embassy investigates every complaint of religious discrimination brought to its attention.

Employees of the U.S. Embassy's consular section have helped Bible Baptist clergy get permission to visit all prisoners, not only those of the Baptist faith. The consular section also has actively followed issues relating to religious workers' visas and property taxes.

The U.S. Embassy and Consulate promote and support initiatives related to religious freedom. For example, Embassy staff has gathered leaders of the religious minority groups in Athens together for representational dinners. Participants noted the uniqueness and the value of such gatherings in Greece.

The Ambassador has been an open supporter of the Jewish Museum and the Jewish community in general. During an official visit to Rhodes, he visited the Jewish and Muslim communities. In April 2001, the Consul General and the Deputy Chief of Mission attended the opening of the Anne Frank exhibition displayed in Thessaloniki.

The Ambassador and embassy officials regularly visit religious sites throughout the country, invite representatives of all faiths to social events, and meet with individuals of all faiths.

HUNGARY

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. There is no state religion; however, the four "historic churches" and certain other denominations enjoy some privileges not available to other faiths.

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 35,910 square miles, and the population is an estimated 10.1 million.

According to traditional estimates, 68 percent of believers are Catholic, 21 percent are members of the Reformed Church, 4 percent are members of the Lutheran Church, and less than 1 percent are followers of Judaism. These four are considered the country's historic churches. The remaining 7 percent are divided between all other denominations. Largest among these is the Congregation of Faith, a Hungarian evangelical Christian movement. Other denominations include a broad range of Christian groups, including five Orthodox denominations. In addition, there are seven Buddhist denominations, and two Islamic communities.

A 1996 law permits citizens to donate 1 percent of their income tax to the church of their choice and an additional 1 percent to the nonprofit agency of their choice. Statistics from the collection of tax revenue voluntarily directed for church use confirm the ranking of traditional estimates. The top ten churches for the year 2000 and the number of individuals who chose to donate 1 percent of their tax to that church are as follows: Catholic Church—333,383; Calvinist Church—107,387; Lutheran Church—30,534; Congregation of Faith—8,209; Jewish Community—5,791; Krishna Consciousness—5,505; Jehovah's Witnesses—5,459; Baptist Church—3,373; Tibetan Buddhist Community—2,080; and Unitarian Church—1,558.

Strict enforcement of data protection regulations impedes the collection of official statistics on popular participation in religious life. However, independent surveys in 1996 and 1997 indicated that the population is not particularly devout. Only 15 percent of those surveyed considered themselves to be religiously active and closely followed the tenets of their church. The majority, 55 percent, said they practiced religion in their own way or were nominally religious but not regularly active in their church. Approximately 30 percent said they were nonreligious.

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 1990 Law on the Freedom of Conscience regulates the activities and benefits enjoyed by religious communities and establishes the criteria by which they attain that legal designation. Currently religious groups must provide the signatures of 100 members and a brief statement of principles to a local court to become registered as a church. While any group is free to practice their faith, formal registration makes available to a religious group certain protections and privileges, and grants access to several forms of state funding. The courts have registered over 100 churches.

In April 2001, Parliament voted down a government amendment that sought to tighten the law governing religious groups. Along with several noncontroversial technical changes, the government's amendment included three contentious points that the opposition and a number of small churches found objectionable. The bill offered a definition of religion and a listing of religious activities that would be used to determine what groups could benefit from church status. It empowered the Prosecutor General's office to seek and gain access to records on the activities of churches. Finally, the amendment sought to codify the Parliament's ability to legally differentiate among churches based on their social and functional differences. The stated aim of these proposals was to attempt to prevent abuse of registration procedures by organizations seeking tax breaks and other benefits while masquerading as religious groups. Churches lacking an extended historical presence in the country worried that the proposal, although perhaps well intentioned, would provide opportunities for persecution or open a debate in Parliament that could lead to a more restrictive environment.

The Government budget for 1999 included subsidies for 59 denominations, and the 2000 budget provides subsidies for 76. The State grants financial support for religious practice, educational work, and the maintenance of public art collections of cultural value. The Government provides the same financial support for church education as for state institutions on a per child basis.

To promote the revitalization of religious institutions and settle property issues, the Government signed separate agreements with the country's four "historic churches" (the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Churches and the Jewish community), and with two smaller churches (Hungarian Baptist and Budai Serb Or-

thodox) between 1997 and 1999. In defense of the agreements Prime Minister Viktor Orban stated that "under the given circumstances, we succeeded in removing all financial, administrative, political, and legal hurdles from the path of our historic churches." The churches and the State agreed on a number of properties to be returned, and an amount of monetary compensation to be paid for properties that could not be returned. These agreements are subsumed under the 1991 Compensation Law, which require the government to compensate churches for properties confiscated by the Government after January 1, 1946. In 1999 the Government paid churches $21 million (5 billion Huf) as compensation for the assets confiscated during the Communist regime. By 2011 the State is expected to pay an estimated total of $179 million (42 billion Huf) to the churches for buildings not returned. While these agreements dealt primarily with property issues and restitution, they also have provisions dealing with the public service activities of the churches, religious education, and the preservation of monuments.

There are more than 1,600 pending cases of real property that once belonged to churches that, between 1999 and 2011, the State must decide whether or not to return. Real estate cases have involved 12 religious groups: Catholic; Calvinist; Lutheran; Unitarian; Baptist; Hungarian Romanian Orthodox; Hungarian Orthodox; Budai Serb Orthodox; Hungarian Methodist; Seventh-Day Adventist; the Salvation Army, and the Confederation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ). Overall, 7,220 claims were made by churches for property restitution under the 1991 Compensation Law: 1,600 cases were rejected as inapplicable under the law; the Government decided to return the property in 1,129 cases, and gave cash payments in another 1,770 cases; approximately 1,000 cases were resolved directly between former and present owners without government intervention; and the remainder (approximately 1,660 cases) must be decided by 2011. Religious orders and schools have regained some property confiscated by the Communist regime.

In 1992 Parliament passed a compensation law that provides for restitution to families of persons who were sentenced in court under the Communist and Nazi regimes. The Constitutional Court in 1996 decreed that the law was drawn too narrowly. In 1997 Parliament passed modifications to this law and extended compensation for the period 1939 to 1989 to "victims of political autocracy." This category includes victims of political, religious, and racist persecution during World War II, forced laborers in Soviet camps, and victims of the 1956 revolution. At that time, the Government decided upon $12 million (3 billion Huf) as the total compensation figure to be distributed among all Holocaust victims. Based on this figure, the Orban Government in 1998 decided it could allow compensation of $128 (30,000 Huf) to the heirs of the Holocaust victims. MAZSIHISZ and international Jewish organizations criticized the package as unfair, comparing it to previous awards of $4,255 (1 million Huf) given to the heirs of victims executed by the Communist regime. In November 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that the proposed package was inadequate. The Government is working on a new proposal. In 1998 the Ministry for Cultural Heritage initiated an inventory of museum holdings to identify works of art eligible for restitution or compensation for Holocaust victims.

The traditional practice of going to church and participating in a religious service before taking the oath of office is not compulsory, but it is practiced by some political figures, including Prime Minister Orban in 1998.

Easter Monday, Whit Monday, All Saints Day, and Christmas Day are all celebrated as national holidays. These holidays do not negatively impact any religious groups.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

However, the Government has demonstrated a willingness to treat the larger or longer established religions more favorably than the minority religious communities. An amendment to the tax code adopted in December 2000 makes donations to the country's large or long-established churches tax deductible. For donors to qualify for the deduction, a church must be able to document one of the following: that it has been present in the country for 100 years or more; that it has been legally registered for at least 30 years (as no new churches were registered under the Communist regime, this essentially means churches registered before 1925); or that the present church following equals 1 percent of all tax contributors (approximately 43,000 persons). These criteria limit the tax benefit to only 14 of the some 90 registered churches in the country. Several of the smaller churches whose members cannot participate in this tax deduction took the case to the Constitutional Court, which chose not to review it.

In 2000 investigations into the activities of the Congregation of Faith by the Hungarian Taxation Authority (APEH) resulted in no charges. The Congregation also was the subject of a parliamentary inquiry in 1999 when the ties between the Church and one of the former ruling parties, the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), came under scrutiny. The congregation, which has been in existence for 20 years, is the fastest growing religious group in the country. It is a charismatic evangelical Christian church and its religious discipline, zeal, and appeal to youth have engendered distrust among the country's older, more traditional population.

The APEH has also initiated investigations of the Church of Scientology in 2000 based on questions regarding the registration of clergy. The investigations took place at the Church's office where APEH investigators requested files and conducted interviews. The investigations have not affected the usual management of the Church and have not required the expenditure of large amounts of Church funds. The APEH has stated that it will complete the investigation by September 2001.

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 amicable and there is little friction between churches. Several Christian churches and the Jewish community have institutionalized a Christian-Jewish dialog, bringing together religious academics for regular discussions. Across a wide range of other areas, churches have also shown a great willingness to work together to achieve common social or political goals.

Overall, society welcomed the boom in religious activity that followed the transition from communism. More recently, however, there is some concern over the ease with which regulations on religion may be exploited, as well as concerns about the perceived undue influence that some "new churches" have over their followers. Government leaders say these sentiments support their efforts to modify the Law on Freedom of Conscience.

The 1997 changes to the Penal Code made it easier to enforce and stiffen penalties for hate crimes committed on the basis of the victim's ethnicity, race, or nationality. Ehrem Kemal, a skinhead group leader, was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment for inflammatory anti-Semitic speeches made in 1997. The sentence was suspended and replaced in 2000 with 4 years probation.

There continue to be occasional reports of vandalism and/or destruction of Christian and Jewish property. National Police figures for the first 4 months of 2001 indicate a declining trend. While in 2000 33 religious buildings and 343 cemeteries were vandalized, in the first 4 months of 2001 only 7 religious buildings and 76 cemeteries were attacked. Most police and religious authorities consider these acts of youth vandalism and not indications of religious intolerance.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy actively monitors religious activities, maintaining regular contact with government officials, members of parliament, leaders of large and small churches, and representatives of local and international nongovernmental organizations that deal with issues of religious freedom. Through these contacts, embassy officers have tracked closely recent government efforts to modify the country's laws and the impact this might have on smaller, less well-established churches.

The Embassy has also remained active on issues of compensation and property restitution for Holocaust victims. Embassy officers have worked with MAZSIHISZ, the Hungarian Jewish Public Foundation, other local and international Jewish organizations and with members of the Parliament, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage to maintain a dialog on restitution issues, promote fair compensation, and secure access to Holocaust-era archives.

ICELAND

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the State financially supports and promotes an official religion, Lutheranism.

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 Lutheran Church, which is the state religion, enjoys some advantages not available to other faiths in the country.

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

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

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Iceland has a land area of 40,000 square miles and a population of 282,845. This gives Iceland an average of just 7 inhabitants per square mile. However, because the interior of the country is largely uninhabitable, most people live on or near the coasts. The area surrounding the capital, Reykjavik, alone has more than 160,000 residents, or about 60 percent of the country's total population.

Of the total population, 248,411 are members of the state Lutheran Church (88 percent), according to the National Statistical Bureau. Some 1,115 individuals resigned from the Church during the past year, far exceeding the 184 new registrants. Many of those who resigned from the state Church joined one of the three Lutheran Free Churches, which now have a total membership of 11,098 (4 percent). The breakdown in membership is as follows: Reykjavik Free Church 5,345; Hafnarfjordur Free Church 3,485; and Reykjavik Independent Church 2,268. Some 10,661 individuals (4 percent) are members of 20 other recognized and registered religious organizations: Roman Catholic Church 4,307; Pentecostal Church 1,494; The Way, Free Church 733; Seventh Day Adventists 723; Jehovah's Witnesses 644; Asa Faith Society 512; The Cross 461; Buddhist Association of Iceland 432; Baha'i Community 386; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 191; The Icelandic Christchurch 176; Muslim Association 164; Betania 114; The Rock, Christian Community 72; The Church of Evangelism 65; Kefas, Christian Community 63; Sjonarhaed Congregation 51; Zen in Iceland, Night Pasture 34; The Believers' Fellowship 33; and First Baptist Church 6. Betania was the only new religious organization officially recognized and registered during the past year. Finally, there were 6,325 individuals (2 percent) who belonged to unregistered or unspecified religious organizations and 6,350 (2 percent) who were not part of any religious organization. There are also religions, such as Judaism, which have been practiced in the country for years, but have never requested official recognition. In official statistics these religions are listed as "other and non-specified."

A large proportion of citizens who belong to the state Lutheran Church do not practice their faith actively. However, the majority of citizens use traditional Lutheran rituals to mark events such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals. Of Christians who practice their faith actively, the majority are members of Christian churches or organizations other than the state Lutheran Church. Finally, growing numbers of Icelanders are choosing to mark important anniversaries and events with nonreligious ceremonies rather than traditional Lutheran rituals. For example, in the spring of 2001, 73 teenagers chose to be "confirmed" in a ceremony carried out by the secular organization "Ethical Education."

According to statistics provided by the immigration authorities, the number of foreigners receiving a residence permit has increased significantly during the past several years. In direct relation to the increased number of foreigners (itinerant workers, immigrants, and refugees), the number of religious organizations has increased, since such foreigners often practice faiths different than those of citizens born in the country.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups 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. The official state religion is Lutheranism.

The salaries of the 146 ministers in the state church are paid directly by the State, and these ministers are considered to be public servants under the Ministry of Judicial and Ecclesiastical Affairs. The State operates a network of Lutheran parish churches throughout the country. In new housing areas, land is automatically set aside for the construction of a parish church to serve the area. Except for those who specifically opt out, all citizens 16 years of age and above must pay a church

tax of approximately $6 (Icelandic kronur 554.24) per month, which goes to support the operation of the state church. Individuals who choose to opt out of the state church may direct their monthly payments to another religious denomination or organization, provided that denomination or organization has been recognized and registered as such by the State. In cases where the individual has not indicated a religious affiliation, or belongs to an organization that is not recognized officially and registered by the State, the church fee is directed to a secular institution—the University of Iceland.

A law passed by Parliament in December 1999 (Law Number 108) sets specific conditions and procedures that religious organizations must follow in order to be recognized officially and registered by the State. Such recognition is necessary in order for religious organizations other than the state church to receive a per capita share of church tax funds. The 1999 law is narrower in scope than the 1975 law it replaced and applies only to religious organizations that are seeking to be, or are already, officially recognized and registered. No restrictions or requirements are placed on unregistered religious organizations, which have the same rights as other groups in society. The law was considered necessary to deal with frequent attempts by individuals to obtain recognition of religious organizations simply to receive the tax income benefits. The Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs handles applications for recognition and registration of religious organizations. The 1999 law provides for a three-member panel consisting of a theologian, a lawyer, and a social scientist from the University of Iceland to determine the bona fides of the applications. In order to be recognized officially and registered, a religious organization must, among other things, be well established within the country and have a core group of members who regularly practice the religion in compliance with its teachings. All registered religious organizations are required to submit an annual report to the Ministry of Judicial and Ecclesiastical Affairs describing the organization's operations over the past year. The new law also specifies that the leader of a religious organization must be at least 25 years of age and pay taxes in Iceland. However, the previous requirement that the leader had to be Icelandic was eliminated.

Law Number 108 confirms that parents control the religious affiliation of their children until the children reach the age of 16. However, parents are required by the law, in accordance with the Children's Act, to "consult" their children about any changes in the children's affiliation after the age of 12. In the absence of specific instructions to the contrary, children at birth are assumed to have the same religious affiliation as their mother and are registered as such.

The Government is passive rather than proactive in promoting interfaith understanding. The Government does not sponsor programs or official church-government councils to coordinate interfaith dialog. However, one of the ministers in the state Church, who is of Japanese origin, has been designated to serve the immigrant community and help recent arrivals integrate into Icelandic society.

Under Law Number 66, which regulates public elementary schools ("grunnskolar"), the Government requires instruction in religion and ethics based on Christianity during the entire period of compulsory education; that is, ages 6 through 16. In a debate over whether the instruction should be "Christian" or "religious," the traditionalist view prevailed. Virtually all schools are public schools, with a few exceptions such as the only Roman Catholic parochial school, which is located in Reykjavik where the vast majority of the country's small Roman Catholic community resides. All schools are subject to Law Number 66 with respect to the compulsory curriculum. However, the precise content of this instruction can vary; religious instruction at the Catholic school follows Catholic rather than Lutheran teachings.

Students can be exempted from Christianity classes. According to Law Number 66, the Minister of Education has the formal authority to exempt pupils from instruction in compulsory subjects such as Christianity. In practice, individual school authorities issue exemptions informally. There is no obligation for school authorities to offer other religious or secular instruction in place of Christianity classes.

Educational material on different religions is part of the compulsory syllabus. In addition, since religion is a component of culture, pupils learn about religions other than Christianity in history and social science classes as well. The curriculum is not rigid and teachers often are given wide latitude in the classroom. Some place greater emphasis on ethical and philosophical issues rather than on religious instruction per se.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by the report.

There are no religious detainees or prisoners.

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 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. If members of religious minorities face discrimination, it is more indirect in nature, taking the form of prejudice and lack of interfaith or intercultural understanding. Iceland has a small, close-knit, homogenous society that closely guards its culture and is not accustomed to accommodating outsiders. Even though most citizens are not active members of the state church, it is still an important part of the country's cultural identity.

During the last decade there has been increased awareness of other religious groups. Informal interfaith meetings have occurred. Two local human rights organizations were established recently. Diversity Enriches was established on December 10, 1998. Its board members include government officials, journalists and academics; it aims at assisting "new residents" of the country. The Human Rights Association of Immigrants and their Families was founded on June 12, 1999. These organizations are a reflection of the increased attention being given to the status of new immigrants and their religious beliefs.

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. The Embassy also maintains a regular dialog on religious freedom issues with the leaders of various religious groups and nongovernmental organizations.

IRELAND

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 27,136 square miles and its population was approximately 3.6 million in 1996.

The country is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. According to official government statistics collected during the 1991 census (the most recent figures available), the religious affiliation of the population is 91.6 percent Roman Catholic, 2.5 percent Church of Ireland (Anglican), 0.4 percent Presbyterian, 0.1 percent Methodist, and less than 0.1 percent Jewish. Approximately 3 percent of the population are members of other religions or have no specific religious belief. (The 2001 census, which was due to have taken place in April 2001, was rescheduled for April 2002, due to the foot and mouth disease crisis.) Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities are growing, especially in Dublin, as a result of immigration.

Immigrants and noncitizens encounter few difficulties in practicing their faiths. There are some difficulties for non-Catholics associated with the availability of facilities and personnel outside of Dublin.

Although almost 92 percent of the population are classified as Roman Catholic, this is a "nominal" figure. According to the Catholic Information Office, just over half of Irish Catholics are estimated to be active church members. There are also numerous and varied small religious groups.

SECTION II. STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

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 Constitution prohibits promotion of one religion over another and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, and the Government does not restrict the teaching or practice of any faith. There is no state religion, and there is no discrimination against nontraditional religious groups. There is no legal requirement that religious groups or organizations register with the Government, nor is there any formal mechanism for government recognition of a religion or religious group.

While Roman Catholicism is the clearly dominant religion, it is not favored officially or in practice. However, adherence to Roman Catholicism may be politically advantageous because of the country's history and tradition as a predominantly Catholic country and society. Members of the major political parties (Fianna Fail and Fine Gael) tend to be practicing Catholics.

The following religious holidays are considered national holidays: St. Patrick's Day (the country's national day), Good Friday, Easter Monday, Christmas Day, and St. Stephen's Day. These holidays do not negatively impact any religious groups.

The Government does not require but does permit religious instruction in public schools. Most primary and secondary schools are denominational, and their boards of management are controlled partially by the Catholic Church. Under the terms of the Constitution, the Department of Education must and does provide equal funding to schools of different religious denominations (such as an Islamic school in Dublin). Although religious instruction is an integral part of the curriculum, parents may exempt their children from such instruction.

The Employment Equality Act prohibits discrimination in relation to employment on the basis of nine discriminatory grounds, including religion. An Equality Authority assures continued progress toward the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality in employment. In April 2000, the President signed into law the Equal Status 2000 Act, which prohibits discrimination outside of the employment context (such as in education or provision of goods) based on the same grounds used in the Employment Equality Act. The Equal Status 2000 Act was implemented in December 2000.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 various religious communities are amicable and friction is rare. Various religions, nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), and academic institutions have established activities or projects designed to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different religions.

Society largely is homogenous; as a result, religious differences are not tied to ethnic or political differences. However, some citizens have political attitudes toward the conflict in Northern Ireland that are driven by their religious identities and loyalties. For example, some Catholics support Nationalist and Republican parties or ideals in the north on the basis of their religious loyalty.

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. The U.S. Embassy maintains regular contact with all communities, including religious groups and NGO's that deal with issues of religious freedom on a regular basis.

ITALY

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. Problems relating to religion that arise stem from formal state recognition (to facilitate access by ministers of religion to public hospitals and prisons, or to link religious ceremonies to civil registration of marriages), state financial support for religion, and state involvement with the teaching of religion in the public schools. The Catholic Church's historic and continuing predominant role in society leads to controversy when Church teaching is perceived as instruction to Catholic legislators on matters of public 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.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 116,347 square miles and its population is approximately 57.8 million. An estimated 85 percent of native-born citizens are nominally Roman Catholics. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses form the second largest denomination among such citizens, numbering some 400,000 adherents. However, immigration—both legal and illegal—continues to add large groups of non-Christian residents, mainly Muslims from North Africa, South Asia, Albania, and the Middle East, who now number an estimated 1 million. Buddhists include approximately 40,000 Europeans and 20,000 Asians. Scientologists claim approximately 100,000 members, Waldensians approximately 30,000 members, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) approximately 20,000 members. A shrinking Jewish community of approximately 30,000 persons maintains synagogues in 21 cities. Other significant religious communities include Orthodox churches and small Protestant groups, Japanese Buddhists, and South Asian Hindus.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The 1947 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.

Prior to the Constitution's adoption, the country's relations with the Catholic Church were governed by a 1929 Concordat, which established Catholicism as the country's state religion. A 1984 revision of the Concordat formalized the principle of a secular state but maintained the principle of state support for religion—support that also could be extended, if requested, to non-Catholic confessions. In such cases, state support is to be governed by legislation implementing the provisions of an accord ("intesa") entered into by the Government and the religious confession. If a religious community so requests, an intesa can provide for state routing, via voluntary check-off on taxpayer returns, of funds to that community—a privilege that some communities initially declined but later requested. An intesa grants ministers of religion automatic access to state hospitals, prisons, and military barracks, allows for civil registry of religious marriages, facilitates special religious practices regarding funerals, and exempts students from school attendance on religious holidays.

In 1984 the first such accord granted specific benefits to the Waldensian Church. Similar accords (which require lengthy procedures to obtain) extended similar benefits to the Adventists and Assembly of God (1988), to Jews (1989), and to Baptists and Lutherans (1995). In March 2000, the Government signed accords with the Buddhist Union and Jehovah's Witnesses. However, the parliamentary committee to which these accords were referred failed to approve implementing legislation, and questions raised in committee suggested hostility on the part of some of its members toward Jehovah's Witnesses.

Other groups that have filed for an intesa include the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Apostolic Church, Orthodox Church (of the Constantinople Patriarchate), Hindus, and (Japanese Buddhist) Sogagakai. At least two organizations in the country's growing Muslim community also have announced their intention to seek an intesa.

The revised Concordat of 1984 accorded the Catholic Church certain privileges. For example, the Church is allowed to select Catholic teachers to provide instruction in "hour of religion" courses taught in the public schools. The teachers are paid by the State. This class is optional, and students not interested in it are free to study other subjects or, in certain cases, to leave school early. While in the past this instruction involved Catholic priests teaching Catechism, Church-selected instructors now may be either lay or religious, and their instruction is intended to include material relevant to non-Catholic faiths. Problems may arise in small communities where information about other faiths and numbers of non-Catholic communicants is limited.

While Roman Catholicism is no longer the state religion, its role as the dominant one occasionally gives rise to problems—some overt, others subtly societal. Declining enrollment in Catholic schools led Church officials to seek government aid, despite the Constitution's prohibition against state support for private schools. A 1999 legislative formula that provided means-tested support for students from poorer families (enrolled either at private or state schools) nonetheless drew papal criticism for being "inadequate." Following a March 2000 European Parliament vote in favor of granting homosexual couples the same legal rights as married ones, the Vatican Pontifical Council for the Family called on legislators "and particularly Catholic members of Parliament" to oppose such legislation. The continuing presence of Catholic symbols, such as crucifixes, which may be found hanging on courtroom or government office walls, has drawn criticism and has been the object of lawsuits. In April 2000, the Court of Cassation ruled in favor of a schoolteacher who asserted that crucifixes should not be present at voting sites maintained by a secular state. Subsequent to a series of Church consultations with political leaders prior to May 2001 elections, President Carlo Ciampi underlined the secular nature of the State and the Constitution's explicit separation of church and state.

Missionaries or religious workers do not encounter problems but must apply for appropriate visas prior to arriving in the country.

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. Religious and government officials encourage mutual respect for religious differences.

In view of the negative aspects of the nation's Fascist past, government leaders routinely acknowledge and pay tribute to Jews victimized by the country's 1938 racial laws. For example, in January 1999, then-President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, ministers, and top parliamentary officials attended a presentation in the Chamber of Deputies of a book on the background to, and consequences of, those racial laws.

Increasing immigration, much of it from China, South Asia, North and West Africa, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Turkey, and the Middle East, is altering demographic and cultural patterns in communities across the country and has led to some anti-immigrant sentiment. As many migrants are Muslim, religion becomes an additional factor differentiating them from native-born citizens. Some Catholic prelates have contributed to popular reaction by emphasizing the perceived threat posed by the immigrants to the country's "national identity" and what they view as the country's need to favor immigration by Catholics "or at least Christians." On occasion Church spokesmen have emphasized the difficulties in Catholic-Muslim mixed marriages.

For example, on June 7, 2000, the press reported that Italian Episcopal Conference Secretary, Monsignor Ennio Antonelli, commented on the Conference's decision earlier that year to tighten dispensation for Catholics to marry Muslims. He said that "the problem of mixed marriages is also tied-in with the matter of a possible accord between the Italian State and Muslims. The Italian State should assure, in a rigorous manner, that Italian constitutional values are protected, especially in regard to the family." The report further noted that the Conference's current position represented a reversal of previous Church policy, as 3 years earlier

Church officials had responded to the growing trend of Catholic-Muslim marriages by organizing classes on Muslim world culture and tradition.

In September 2000, Bologna Cardinal Giacomo Biffi issued a pastoral letter, in which he called for an immigration policy favoring Catholics over those who are Muslim "in order to safeguard our nation's identity." Biffi's letter provoked protests but also drew support. One prominent priest, Gianni Bagget Bozzo, who often writes for press publication, affirmed "the need to erect a Christian dike against the Muslim invasion of Italy."

In October 2000, Interior Minister Enzo Bianco revealed a letter he had received from Cardinal Biffi, in which the prelate repeated his warning that Europe must either return to Christianity or risk becoming Muslim. The Cardinal maintained that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with historically Christian countries.

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.

KAZAKHSTAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the various religious communities worship largely without government interference; however, the Government's concerns about regional security threats from alleged religious extremists led it to encourage local officials to limit the practice of religion by some nontraditional groups.

Respect for religious freedom deteriorated during the period covered by this report. While Kazakhstan's tradition of religious tolerance and interfaith harmony remained strong, President Nursultan Nazarbayev called on local officials to increase monitoring of religious organizations, closing some if necessary. Two courts in Kyzl-Orda Oblast ordered a group of Jehovah's Witnesses to suspend religious activities until the group is registered, and local prosecutors in Atyrau Oblast issued a similar order against a Baptist group. Neither group had the 10 adult sponsors required for registration. Local government officials increasingly harass Islamic and Christian groups whose members are regarded as "nontraditional" or extremist. In April 2001, a court in Aktau fined three foreigners for allegedly carrying out "missionary" activities in violation of their visa status, and expelled them from the country. There were credible reports from around the country that local law enforcement officials regularly visited religious organizations for inspections.

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. The Ambassador and other U.S. officials lobbied intensively against provisions in draft amendments that the Government proposed to the religion law that would have fallen short of international standards for religious freedom. Embassy officials interceded with national and local authorities in the case of the foreigners expelled from Aktau. The Embassy sponsored the visit of a U.S. scholar of Islam who conducted programs on the role of Islam in a secular society.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 1,052,540 square miles, and its population, as of the September 2000 census, was 14,859,8000.

The society is ethnically diverse, and many religions are represented. However, due to the country's nomadic and Soviet past many residents reject religious labels or describe themselves as nonbelievers. Ethnic Kazakhs, who constitute approximately one half of the national population, historically are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi School. In a 1998 government survey, 80 percent of them described themselves as Muslims, although government and independent experts believe that a large number of these are nonobservant. Other traditionally Sunni Muslim groups, constituting approximately 5 to 10 percent of the population, include Tatars, Uyghurs, Uzbeks, Turks, and Chechens. Slavs, principally Russians and Ukrainians, are by tradition Eastern Orthodox and constitute about one-third of the population. The 1998 government survey found that 60 percent of ethnic Slavs identify themselves as Orthodox Christians. An independent expert estimates that two-thirds of Slavic citizens would say that they belong to no religion or are indifferent

to religion. Ethnic Germans, largely Lutheran and Catholic, constituted approximately 5 percent of the population when the country became independent in 1991, but the majority of these are thought to have emigrated to Germany. A small Jewish community is estimated at well below 1 percent of the population. Seven new synagogues were open or under construction as of the end of the period covered by this report.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the various religious communities worship largely without government interference; however, the Government's concerns about regional security threats from alleged religious extremists led it to encourage local officials to limit the practice of religion by some nontraditional groups. The Constitution defines the country as a secular state.

The National Religion Law, in contrast to laws governing other public associations, does not require religious organizations to register. It states that all persons are free to practice their religion "alone or together with others." As this clause makes no reference to registration, legal experts interpret it to ensure the right of members of unregistered groups to practice their religion. However, it does specify that those religious organizations that wish to receive legal status must register. Religious organizations must have legal status in order to buy or rent real property, hire employees, obtain visas for foreign missionaries, or engage in any other legal transactions. However, the more liberal provisions of the National Religion Law appear to have been undermined by a new Administrative Code, which entered into force in February 2001 and that allows the national and local authorities to suspend the activities or fine the leaders of unregistered religious organizations.

In practice many local officials insist that religious organizations register. Under the law, registration requires an application submitted by at least 10 persons. It is usually a quick and simple process; however, Korean groups continued to face problems obtaining registration. At the end of the period covered by this report, four protestant churches in different cities were experiencing delays of up to 8 months in obtaining approval of their registration applications.

Religious organizations receive no tax privileges other than exemptions from taxes on church collections and income from certain religious activities. The Government has donated buildings and provided other assistance for the construction of new mosques and Eastern Orthodox churches.

No religious holidays are state holidays.

Joint appearances by the Islamic Mufti and the Orthodox Archbishop, often in the presence of the President, were intended to promote religious and ethnic harmony. In the past, some members of other faiths, including Muslims not affiliated with the national Muslim organization headed by the Mufti, have criticized the Government's inclusion of the Mufti and the Archbishop in state events as official favoritism and a violation of the Constitutional separation of church and state.

In April 2001, as part of its campaign to prevent the development of religious extremism, the Government sent to Parliament a draft series of amendments to the National Religion Law that would have placed significant restrictions on religious freedom. It included provisions that would have banned "extremist religious associations;" increased from 10 to 50 the number of members required to file for registration of a religious organization; limited the right of registration for Muslim groups to those "recommended" by the Mufti's organization; forbidden missionary activities, including charity activities conducted by citizens if these activities are not formally declared to local authorities in advance; prohibited giving children a religious education or bringing them into religious groups against their will; and authorized local officials to suspend the activities of religious groups that conducted a religious activity outside of the place where they are registered. On June 27, 2001, the Government withdrew the draft amendments in order to thoroughly review the recommendations and comments of non-governmental and international organizations.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In two cases local courts used a provision in the new Administrative Code that requires religious organizations to register, to suspend the activities of at least two religious organizations in two different cities. There had been no previous reports of such actions. The previous Administrative Code prescribed fines for unregistered religious organizations but not suspension of their activities. It rarely, if ever, was employed against unregistered groups.

On March 14, 2001, a city court in Kyzl-Orda suspended the activities of a local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses because the group was not registered. A Kyzl-

Orda Oblast court upheld the suspension on April 9, 2001. The group had not registered because it did not have the required 10 adult members to file for registration. However, the national organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as many of its local associations, are registered.

On May 2, 2001, a local prosecutor in Kulsary (Atyrau Oblast) ordered the Iman (Love) Kazakhstani Baptist Church to stop meeting until it was registered. The church appealed; however, on May 6, 2001, an Atyrau regional prosecutor upheld the order. Church representatives claimed that they did not have the minimum of 10 adult members willing and eligible to sponsor the registration application. According to a press report the unregistered New Life Pentecostal Church in Kulsary, led by Pastor Taraz Somalyak, was also forbidden during the first half of 2001 from having further meetings until it registered.

On May 29, 2001, a city court in Taraz rejected an appeal by the city prosecutor to revoke the registration and suspend the activities of one of the Taraz Jehovah's Witnesses congregations. The prosecutor's appeal asserted that Jehovah's Witnesses had violated the Constitution by such actions as calling on members to refuse to perform military service or honor national symbols.

Religious rights advocates alleged that the Government had issued informal instructions to local authorities in September 2000, before the entry into effect of the new provisions of the Administrative Code in February 2001, not to register religious associations until a revised National Religion Law was in place. The Association of Religious Organizations of Kazakhstan reported that at least three Protestant groups that applied for registration in October 2000 had received no response to their applications by June 2001. However, at least one foreign religious group received national registration after September 2000.

Representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses cited continuing instances of harassment by a number of local governments. They claimed that city officials in Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kostanay, Karaganda, and Aktubinsk sometimes blocked their adherents from renting stadiums or other large public or private sites for religious meetings.

According to reports from the Keston News Service, a Krishna community living on a farm in Karasai region was harassed on several occasions by police. Keston alleges that this was a consequence of a September 2000 memorandum to local officials by the akim of Almaty region requesting more information about religious groups and reminding officials their responsibility to take measures against those violating procedures relating to religious activities. However, one Krishna leader reported that in most oblasts, officials leave their followers alone.

The Government frequently identifies the prevention of religious extremism as a top priority. Government officials point especially to the risk of political Islam spreading north from Afghanistan and other states. Their longstanding concerns intensified following a series of bombings in the capital of neighboring Uzbekistan in February 1999 and incursions by armed militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan from Tajikistan into neighboring Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000. The National Security Council, chaired by the President, created a commission in 1999 to develop policies to combat religious extremism. No information had been released, as of the end of the period covered by this report, describing its activities.

President Nazarbayev expressed the government's mood of greater wariness of religion in remarks he made on January 30, 2001, to an assembly of regional and local executive authorities known as akims. "What else are akims for? Is it really difficult for you to use your powers to monitor the legality of the activities of (religious groups)—closing them, if necessary? . . . It has become fashionable to build mosques, churches and prayer houses willy-nilly on land set aside by akims, but nobody is asking whether the mosques and churches are needed."

In April 2001, as part of its campaign to prevent the development of religious extremism, the Government sent to Parliament a draft series of amendments to the National Religion Law that would have placed restrictions on religious freedom. In meetings with foreign representatives about the draft amendments, government officials placed special emphasis on a provision giving the Kazakhstan Muslim Spiritual Administration (DUMKA) authority over the registration of Muslim groups. Although officials maintained that they expected the DUMKA, which is headed by the Mufti, to use this authority judiciously, the Mufti stated in a February 26, 2001, speech that only the "traditional religions," which existed in the republic from "time immemorial," should be left and the others should be banned. He claimed that the fear of Western reactions constrained such an approach. The Government withdrew the draft amendments on June 27, 2001.

Foreign missionary activity is authorized under law, but only when missionaries are accredited by the State. In practice many missionaries operate without accreditation. The Constitution requires foreign religious associations to carry out their ac-

tivities, including the appointment of the heads of religious associations, "in coordination with appropriate state institutions." Foreign missionaries legally are entitled to register religious organizations; however, they generally find that they must list a majority of local citizens among the 10 founders of the religious organization. Other foreign missionaries, unwelcome to some Muslim and Orthodox citizens, have complained of occasional harassment by low-level government officials. In particular, evangelical Protestants working in schools, hospitals, and other social service institutions have alleged government hostility toward their efforts to proselytize. (These individuals often do not register as missionaries, as required by Kazakhstani law.)

A 1999 law on education prohibits educational institutions that have not been registered by the Ministry of Education. The law on education has no provision for licensing of religious schools. Religious rights activists reported that local law enforcement officials inspected religious schools and asked for licenses, but took no further actions against unregistered religious schools in most cases. In December 2000, the Almaty protestant seminary was closed by the district prosecutor's office for operating without a license. The seminary presented a letter from the Ministry of Education stating that there was no requirement for the licensing of religious schools; however, this information did not change the decision of the district prosecutor's office. First Deputy Minister of Education Yerlan Aryn sent a letter to all regional education departments on December 19, 2000, rescinding an earlier ban on visits to schools by religious figures, humanitarian and other aid from religious organizations, and the rental of facilities to religious groups.

In accordance with a Ministry of Justice request, the Jehovah's Witnesses Church of Kazakhstan amended its charter to eliminate education as a religious activity.

In September 2000, an Ministry official announced that the Foreign Ministry would "recall" all Kazakhstani students studying in religious institutions outside the country, a step considered by some observers aimed primarily at preventing young Muslims from being radicalized by militant Islamic education abroad. The official said that the measure was intended to protect the country against religious extremism. It was unclear how the Government would implement the policy; however, in Fall 2000, the Government announced that several students studying in Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey would return voluntarily.

There were credible allegations that the Government played a significant role in the appointment in June 2OOO of the new Mufti, the head of the national Muslim organization. The Mufti denied these allegations. In general the Government does not interfere with the appointment of religious leaders or the activities of foreign religious associations, some of which have succeeded in gaining thousands of adherents since independence.

Many media outlets, including some of the most widely distributed, have presented as objective news allegations that nontraditional religious groups present a threat to national security and social cohesion. Articles on Jehovah's Witnesses and Baha'i faiths were particularly confrontational in the last months of the period covered by this report.

Law enforcement authorities conducted inspections of religious groups throughout the country in order, they asserted, to prevent the development of religious extremism and to ensure that religious groups pay taxes. These inspections also provided the authorities with information about the registration status of the religious groups being inspected, which in some cases led to suspensions pending the registration of the groups concerned.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In keeping with the provision in the new Administrative Code that forbids activities by unregistered religious organizations, on March 14, 2001, the city court in Kyzl-Orda fined two leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses in Kyzl-Orda, Gulzhakhan Zharikova and Bakhyt Altayev, about $53 (7,750 tenge) each. The Court suspended the religious activities of local members of Jehovah's Witnesses until the group registered at the local level. A Kyzl-Orda Oblast court upheld the suspension and fines on April 9, 2001. Zharikova and Altayev were not present at the appellate hearing; they claimed that they did not receive notification that the original date for the hearing had been changed. The leader of an unregistered Baptist church in Kyzl-Orda was fined $53 (7,750 tenge) on April 10, 2001, and ordered to suspend operations until his church was registered.

According to Jehovah's Witnesses, law enforcement action against their Kyzl-Orda community began on October 1, 2000, when a group of officials from the Committee for National Security (KNB, the national intelligence agency), the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Oblast prosecutor's office raided a Bible study meeting in Zharikova's apartment. The officials reportedly had no warrant. A television crew

filmed the raid, which subsequently was shown in a report critical of Jehovah's Witnesses. The officials reportedly confiscated more than 200 religious publications and videotapes and brought several church members to a police station for questioning. The Oblast prosecutor had issued an order on October 31, 2000, requiring the group to register.

According to an unconfirmed press report, Kulsary prosecutor Hagibula Kasymov threatened to jail leaders of the Iman Kazakhstani Baptist Church, Kurmangazy Abdumuratov, and Askhat Alimkhanov, if their church continued to meet without registering.

On April 9, 2001, three foreign teachers of English were charged under Administrative Code sections that regulate the hiring of foreign workers and proscribe violations by foreigners of their stated purpose in country. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs alleged that the teachers, "under the guise of educational activity," had been distributing religious materials, assisting religious groups, and "illegally participating in religious rites." The three tried to depart the country voluntarily on April l0, 2001, but were prevented from departing by airport border police because of the pending charges against them. They said that they were not notified of formal charges against them before they tried to depart. On April 16, 2001, a court in Aktau found them guilty of conducting "missionary" activities in violation of their visa status and fined them $230 (33,000 tenge) and ordered them expelled from the country. The teachers were expelled on April 24, 2001.

On August 11, 2000, local authorities in Kustenay broke up a stadium convention of Jehovah's Witnesses, according to the Church. On August 14, a court fined convention organizers for holding an unsanctioned event. Their request for a permit to hold the convention had been denied. The Church alleged that authorities halted a similar gathering in Aktobe on October 22, 2000, after which two church leaders were detained for several hours. Church representatives claimed that Aktobe authorities had declined for 2 years to give them permission for a large gathering.

On occasion the authorities took action against groups engaged in proselytizing. In July 2000, in Akshoki, near the Chinese border, members of a Baptist church reported that local KNB officers, police, and clergy incited a crowd to threaten a group preaching Christianity and to burn Christian literature. One member was severely beaten by a group of eight men who demanded that he convert to Islam. Government officials declined to comment on this incident. On December 15, 2000, two Krishna Consciousness devotees were detained in Aktobe for selling Krishna books on the street. Police confiscated 20 books, but later released the women without charges. However, one Krishna leader reported that officials in most oblasts leave their followers alone. Also in December 2000, two members of Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested and detained for 1 day for proselytizing in Talgar. The police confiscated their documents, which they returned to them after 3 days. No charges were filed.

During the period covered by this report, the authorities took no action against police who allegedly beat 70 members of an Islamic group from Taraz who were detained temporarily in 1999.

Other than the brief detentions of members of Jehovah's Witnesses and Krishna Consciousness adherents in Aktobe and of members of Jehovah's Witnesses in Talgar, 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 country is multiethnic, with a long tradition of tolerance and secularism. Relations among the various religious communities are generally amicable. Since independence the number of mosques and churches has increased greatly.

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. The Ambassador and other officers of the U.S. Embassy, as well as senior State Department officials, lobbied intensively against the draft amendments to the National Religion Law. In approximately 10 separate meetings beginning in November 2000, the Ambassador expressed U.S. Government reservations about the amendments to the Minister of Culture, Information, and Public Accord (who chaired the Government's Interagency Committee on Religion), the Foreign Minister, President Nazarbayev's

national security and legal advisers, and groups of Parliamentarians. The Embassy coordinated closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Center in Almaty in arranging for an expert evaluation of the amendments. The evaluation documented the ways in which the draft amendments fell short of the country's international obligations on religious freedom. The Embassy's Charge d'Affaires and human rights officer joined two OSCE delegations that presented the evaluation to officials. The human rights officer also met frequently with human rights activists and representatives of many churches concerned with the draft amendments. Embassy Officials also shared information with the United Kingdom-based Keston Institute, which publicized the debate over the draft amendments in its internationally distributed publications, and attended a meeting at which religious groups expressed their concerns about the draft amendments to Parliamentarians.

The Embassy actively assisted the American citizens in Aktau who were ultimately expelled from the country for allegedly illegal religious activities. Embassy officers raised concerns about the charges and airport border police actions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, repeatedly sought clarification of the charges from local authorities in Aktau, and witnessed the court proceedings against the Americans. The Ambassador subsequently discussed the case with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the President's National Security Adviser.

In May 2001, the Embassy sponsored the 10-day visit of a U.S. academic expert on Islam to conduct a series of programs on the role of Islam in a secular society. The scholar met with academic and religious leaders and lectured at universities in Almaty and southern Kazakhstan.

KYRGYZSTAN

The Constitution and the law provide for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however the Government restricts the activities of radical Islamic groups that it considers to be threats to national stability. The Constitution provides for a secular state and the separation of church and state, and the Government does not support any one religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government took steps to monitor and restrict Islamist groups, which it considers to be a threat to the country.

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 67,741 square miles and its population is an estimated 4.7 million persons. The population is 61.2 percent ethnic Kyrgyz, 14.9 percent Russian, 14.4 percent ethnic Uzbek, 1.1 percent Tatar, 0.3 percent German, and 8.1 other minorities.

Islam is the single most widely practiced faith. Official sources estimate that up to 80 percent of the inhabitants are Muslims. The majority of these are Sunni and only a few Shi'a (approximately 1,000) live in the country. There are approximately 120 mosques, each with its own madrassa for initial religious training. There also are two institutes for higher Islamic teaching. Approximately 17 percent of the population are Russian Orthodox. There are 40 Russian Orthodox churches and more than 200 churches and houses of prayer for other Christian denominations. For example, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church operates six churches in Bishkek, as well as several elsewhere in the country. Jews, Buddhists, and Catholics account for approximately 3 percent of the population, and their adherents practice their religions openly in churches, temples, and synagogues. A Roman Catholic Church in Bishkek functions freely. A small Jewish congregation meets in Bishkek. The group organizes informal cultural studies and humanitarian services, chiefly food assistance for its elderly. In 2000 a new rabbi arrived from Israel. There also are examples of syncretistic religious practices. Most notably, there is a Baptist church in the Naryn region whose followers are predominantly ethnic Kyrgyz. While they worship as Christians, they have incorporated Muslim modes of prayer into their Christian rituals. There is no official estimate of the number of atheists in the population.

Islam is practiced widely throughout the country, in both the urban and rural areas. Russian Orthodoxy typically is concentrated in the cities where a larger eth-

nic Russian population exists. The other faiths also are practiced more commonly in the cities where their smaller communities tend to be concentrated. There is a correlation between ethnicity and religion; ethnic Kyrgyz primarily are Muslims, while ethnic Russians favor either the Russian Orthodox Church or one of the Western-origin denominations. Exact statistics are not available, but while the majority of the population claims to follow Islam, a significant number of these adherents appear to be only nominal believers and identify with the faith out of historical or ethnic allegiance. A significant number of the followers of the Russian Orthodox Church also appear be only nominal believers.

A number of missionary groups operate in the country, including groups from the United States, Germany, and Korea, as well as missionaries from Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. They represent a variety of religious organizations including Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Unified Church of Christ of Evangelists, and Korean Presbyterians.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution and the law provide for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government restricts the activities of radical Islamic groups that it considers threats to national stability. The Constitution provides for a secular state and the separation of church and state, and the Government does not support any one religion.

The State Commission on Religious Affairs (SCRA) promotes religious tolerance, protects freedom of conscience, and oversees laws on religion. According to a 1997 presidential decree, all religious organizations must be registered by the SCRA, which must recognize the registrant as a religious organization; each congregation must register separately. A religious organization also must register with the Ministry of Justice in order to obtain status as a legal entity—necessary to own property, open bank accounts, and otherwise engage in contractual activities. If a religious organization engages in commercial activity, it is required to pay taxes in accordance with the tax code. In practice the Ministry has never registered a religious organization without prior registration by the SCRA. The Ministry's registration process sometimes is cumbersome, taking a month on average, but no religious organization has been denied registration after properly completing all formalities. There are more than 300 registered religious groups, of which 210 are Christian. Several religious organizations, including the Roman Catholic Church, have reported difficulty registering with the state committee on religious affairs. The majority of these are small Christian congregations. According to a foreign attorney assisting the Government with legal reform, as many as 55 small Christian churches have not registered with the SCRA.

The country's Roman Catholic Church, whose members are comprised of approximately 80 percent Kyrgyz citizens, remains an unregistered foreign religious organization in the country despite the efforts of the Roman Catholic mission in the country to register with the SCRA. Bishkek's Roman Catholic Church first attained legal status under Soviet law in 1969. However, the SCRA notified the church that it would have to re-register as a foreign religion in the country after the issuance of Presidential Decree 319 in 1996. The Holy See established the Catholic Mission in Kyrgyzstan "sui juris" in 1997, and a representative from the Vatican visited the country in June 2001 to meet with SCRA members on behalf of registration. The Unification Church, which is registered as a social, rather than a religious organization, has "semi-official" status.

Various missionary groups operate freely, although they are required to register with the Government.

The Government expressly forbids the teaching of religion (or atheism) in public schools.

The Government recognizes three Muslim holidays (Noorus, Kurban Ait, and Orozo Ait) and one Russian Orthodox holiday (Christmas, which is observed on January 7 in accordance with the Russian Orthodox calendar) as national holidays. The President and the Government send greetings to the followers of these faiths on their major religious holidays, and these messages are printed in the mass media.

The Government works through the SCRA to promote interfaith dialog and encourage religious tolerance. The SCRA hosts meetings of religious groups to bring the faiths together in open forums. The SCRA assists various faiths to work together on programs for the protection of the poor and the elderly.

In March 2001, the Government met with representatives of various religions and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) to discuss a draft law on religion. The initial draft included compulsory registration of religious bodies, prohibition of unregis-

tered religious activity, lack of an alternative to military service, and tight control over religious activity deemed "destructive." In mid-2001 the Parliament was working with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to revise the draft law in an effort to ensure that the law respects the country's OSCE obligations and would allow free practice of religion by all faiths. However, representatives of the religious communities remain cautious and there is concern that Muslim believers could be mistaken for extremists under this law.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government is concerned about the threat of political Islam, whose followers (Islamists) it labels "Wahhabis." The Government perceives Islamists to be a threat to national stability, particularly in the southern part of the country. The Government fears that Islamists seek to overthrow the secular government and establish an Islamic theocracy. Armed incursions of Islamic militants into the country in August to October 1999 and in August 2000 increased the Government's concern regarding political Islam and the actions of its followers. Presidential Decree Number 319 states that a religious organization may be denied registration or its registration may be suspended if the organization's activities do not comply with Kyrgyz law or is dangerous to state security, social stability, interethnic and inter-confessional relations, or the health and morals of the people. Such suspensions or refusals of a religious organization's registration are subject to judicial appeal. On May 1, 2001, the Procurator General proposed amending the Criminal Code to include tougher sentences for those convicted of "religious extremism." During the period covered by this report, the Government continued to express public concern about groups that it viewed as extremist with either radical religious or political agendas.

The Islamist organization "Hizb-Ut-Tahrir," mainly active in the southern part of the country, is not registered with the Government and is considered to be an illegal organization.

In early April 2001, the local press quoted Prime Minister Bakiyev's call for increased monitoring of mosques and schools in order to prevent these places from engaging in Islamic extremist activity.

Government authorities indicated that they would monitor the activities of the Unification Church, which is led by Reverend Moon. The Unification Church currently is not active in the country, but it has a presence through the charity organization of Reverend Moon's wife. There were no reports of interference in its activities during the period covered by this report.

Religious leaders note with concern that the SCRA frequently uses the term "national security" in its statements. For example, the Commission has expressed some concern about the destabilizing presence of the Unification Church. The Ministry of Internal Affairs often plays a leading role on various religious questions.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

A press report quoting the State Committee of Religious Affairs, stated that over 200 persons were detained in Osh and Jalal Abad oblasts for distributing Hizb-Ut-Tahrir literature during 2000. According to the newspaper "Res Publica," eight persons were arrested in August 2000 for distributing literature produced by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

The Government is concerned about the threat of political extremism in the guise of conservative Islam. The Government considers Islamic militants, whose followers it labels "Wahhabis," a threat to the country's stability. The Government fears that Wahhabis seek to overthrow the secular government and establish an Islamic theocracy. Muslim leaders, on the other hand, complain that the SCRA makes decisions about religious events without consulting them.

The sentencing in May 2000 of three Uighur Islamic militants, who were charged with the 1998 bombings in Osh, added to the Government's concern about the "Wahhabist" elements operating in the country. An armed incursion of Islamic guerillas into the southern part of the country in August to October 1999 also increased the Government's apprehension about militant Islamic groups. A press report quoting the State Committee of Religious Affairs stated that over 200 persons were detained in Osh and Jalal Abad oblasts for distributing Hizb-Ut-Tahrir literature during 2000. According to the newspaper Res Publica, the authorities arrested eight persons in August 2000 for distributing literature produced by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

According to an Amnesty International report of June 21, 2000, Jelil Turdai, an ethnic Uighur Chinese national, was arrested in Bishkek for not having the necessary residence permit. After a police search of his apartment turned up religious material that was deemed fundamentalist, he was taken into custody for possessing

"Wahhabist" materials, and after being interrogated by Chinese and Kyrgyz security agents he was deported to China where his fate is unknown.

There were no other reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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. Members of the two major religions, Islam and the Russian Orthodox Church, respect each other's major holidays and exchange holiday greetings.

There is no evidence of widespread societal discrimination or violence against members of different religious groups. However, there is anecdotal evidence of periodic tension in rural areas between conservative Muslims and foreign missionaries and individuals from traditionally Muslim ethnic groups who convert to other faiths. In January 2001, there was a standoff in the village of Kurkol between local villagers and ethnic Uzbek Jehovah's Witnesses. The standoff occurred when the villagers demanded that the four Uzbeks either reconvert to Islam or leave the village. The incident was resolved peacefully by the Ministry of Interior and the Security Service. There were no reports of these tensions escalating to serious levels; the parties involved appear to have resolved their problems peacefully over time.

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.

During the period covered by this report, the Embassy discussed the draft law on religion with several government officials. The Embassy maintains contacts with all religious organizations.

LATVIA

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

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, bureaucratic problems persist for some minority religions.

The generally amicable relations among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, lingering suspicions remain towards newer nontraditional faiths.

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 25,000 square miles and its population is estimated at 2.4 million. The three largest faiths are Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Orthodox Christianity. No precise denomination membership statistics are available. Sizeable religious minorities include Baptists, Pentecostals, and various evangelical Protestant groups. The once large Jewish community was virtually destroyed in the Holocaust during the 1941–44 German occupation and now totals only 6,000 persons.

As of February 2000, the Justice Ministry had registered over 1,000 congregations. This total includes: Lutheran (302), Roman Catholic (243), Orthodox (112), Baptist (85), Old Believer Orthodox (65), Seventh-Day Adventist (44), Jehovah's Witnesses (11), Methodists (10), Jewish (7), Buddhist (3), Muslim (6), Hare Krishnas (8), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) (1), and over 100 others.

Interest in religion has increased markedly since independence. However, a large percentage of these adherents do not practice their faith regularly. Churches have provided the following estimates of church membership to the Justice Ministry: Lutherans (350,000), Roman Catholic (500,000), Orthodox (250,000), Baptist (6,000), Old Believer Orthodox (70,000), Seventh-Day Adventist (4,000), Jehovah's Witnesses (2,000), Methodists (500), Jewish (6,000), Buddhist (100), Muslim (300), Hare

Krishnas (500), and Mormons (2,000). There are significant numbers of atheists, perhaps a majority of the population. Orthodox Christians, many of them Russian-speaking, noncitizen, permanent residents, are concentrated in the major cities, while many Catholics live in the east.

The Latvian Lutheran Church established its own clergy education center, the Luther Academy in Riga, in 1998. The Roman Catholic Church also has its own seminary. The University of Latvia's theological faculty is nondenominational.

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, bureaucratic problems persist for some minority religions. There is no state religion; however, the Government distinguishes between "traditional" (Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believers, Baptists, and Jewish) and "new" religions.

Although the Government does not require the registration of religious groups, the 1995 Law on Religious Organizations accords religious organizations certain rights and privileges when they register, such as status as a separate legal entity for owning property or other financial transactions, as well as tax benefits for donors. Registration also eases the rules for public gatherings.

According to the Law on Religious Organizations, any 10 citizens or permanent residents over the age of 18 may apply to register a church. Asylum seekers, foreign embassy staff, and those in the country temporarily in a special status cannot register a religious organization. Congregations functioning in the country for the first time that do not belong to a church association already registered must reregister each year for 10 years. Ten or more congregations of the same denomination and with permanent registration status may form a religious association. Only churches with religious association status may establish theological schools or monasteries. A decision to register a church is made by the Minister of Justice. According to Ministry of Justice officials, most registration applications are approved eventually once proper documents are submitted; however, the law does not permit the simultaneous registration of more than one religious union (church) in a single confession, and the Government occasionally denies applications on this basis. The Board for Religious Affairs registered a Christian Science Congregation in the period covered by this report. Previously this registration had been prevented as a result of opposition from the Doctors' Association.

Property restitution has been completed substantially. The status of the remaining properties is unclear and is the subject of complicated legal and bureaucratic processes.

Citizens' passports indicate the ethnicity of the bearer. Jews are considered an ethnic group and are listed as such rather than as Latvian, Russian, etc.

December 25 is celebrated as Christmas and is a recognized national holiday. Good Friday and Easter Monday are also national holidays.

There is a New Religions Consultative Council whose membership consists of doctors, academics, and the independent human rights ombudsman. The Council, which meets on an "ad hoc" basis, can research and write opinions on specific issues, but has no decision-making authority. There also is a Traditional Religion Council, which meets monthly. This body reportedly aims at facilitating greater ecumenical communication, discussing matters of common concern and improving dialog between the traditional faiths and the State.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Problems arise and registration is denied because the Law on Religious Organizations does not permit simultaneous registration of more than one religious union (church) in a single confession, and the Government occasionally denies groups registration. Because of this provision, the Government does not register any splinter groups, including an independent Jewish congregation, the Latvian Free Orthodox Church, and a separate Old Believers group.

Visa regulations effective since July 1999 require religious workers to present either an ordination certificate or evidence of religious education that corresponds to a Latvian bachelor's degree in theology. The visa application process still is cumbersome. Nonetheless, the Government cooperated to resolve several difficult visa cases in favor of missionary workers. Difficulties in this area diminished and Citizenship and Migration Department officials have worked to ease the situation.

Foreign evangelists and missionaries, including from the United States, are permitted to hold meetings and to proselytize, but the law stipulates that only domestic

religious organizations may invite them to conduct such activities. Foreign religious denominations have criticized this provision.

The Law on Religious Organizations stipulates that religion may be taught to students in public schools on a voluntary basis only by representatives of Evangelical Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believer, Baptist, and Jewish religions. The State provides funds for this education. Students at state supported national minority schools also may receive education on the religion "characteristic of the national minority" on a voluntary basis. Other denominations may provide religious education in private schools only.

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 the various religious communities are generally amicable. Ecumenism still is a new concept in the country, and traditional religions have adopted a distinctly reserved attitude towards the concept. Although government officials are encouraging a broader understanding of and acceptance of newer religions, suspicions remain towards newer nontraditional faiths.

In April 1999, a bomb exploded at a Jewish Holocaust memorial just outside the city. Police have not identified those responsible for this incident.

The Latvian Historical Commission, under the sponsorship of President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, has continued to promote Holocaust awareness throughout all elements of society. This included an international academic conference on the Holocaust in Latvia. Other efforts include the funding of research into Jewish life, curriculum development seminars for educators, teaching materials for high schools, and the translation into Latvian of the highly regarded book for young adults, "Tell Ye Your Children." In addition, President Vike-Freiberga has continued to speak openly of the need to discuss frankly the country's history in relation to the Holocaust. This includes a firm government commitment to bring to justice those citizens accused of complicity in crimes against humanity. This commitment was demonstrated in the case of Konrads Kalejs, whose extradition from Australia is being sought in connection with his indictment for war crimes dating from his membership in the pro-Nazi Arajs Commando during World War II.

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.

During the period covered by this report, the U.S. Embassy worked to support the principle of religious freedom by engaging in regular exchanges with appropriate government bodies, non governmental organizations, and representatives of various religious confessions, including missionaries. The Embassy has been involved closely in the process of Jewish property restitution.

The Embassy actively supports the Latvian Historical Commission. It has funded the travel of Latvian scholars to the United States for education in ethnic and religious tolerance and of U.S. experts to Latvia for Historical Commission activities. The Embassy also sponsored a series of academic exchanges and lectures on Holocaust issues, including one by the Historian of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Embassy officials meet regularly with visiting missionary groups from the U.S. Embassy officials discussed problems that members of certain minority religions experienced at the Citizenship and Migration Department when seeking visas and residency permits.

LIECHTENSTEIN

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 land area of 61.8 square miles and a total population of 32,015 (as of December 31, 1998, according to the Office of the National Economy). There are 24,993 Roman Catholics; 2,276 Protestants; 1,139 Muslims; 225 Eastern Orthodox; 2 Buddhists; 3 members of the Jehovah's Witnesses; 17 Anglicans; 15 Jews; 12 Baha'is; 11 New Apostolics; 7 members of other religions; 3,029 persons undecided.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government 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.

Religious liberty is protected by article 37 of the Constitution, granting freedom of creed and conscience, and by Article 283 in the Criminal Code, prohibiting any form of discrimination or debasement of any religion or any of its adherents.

Normally, church funding comes from the general budget, as decided by Parliament, and is not a direct "tithe" paid by the citizen. The Constitution establishes the Roman Catholic Church as the official state church of the country and its finances are integrated directly into the budgets of the national and local governments; approximately $196,000 (CHF 300,000) was budgeted for 2000, plus additional sums from the 11 communes. However, the relationship between the State and the Roman Catholic Church currently is being redefined. As an interim solution, the State's financial contributions for 1999, 2000, and 2001 are paid into a special account. When a new agreement is reached (no later than 2002), the agreed amount will be released to the Catholic Church. The Government gives money not only to the Catholic Church but also to other denominations. The budget is allocated proportionately according to membership numbers. All religious groups enjoy tax-exempt status.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups in the country. In order to receive a religious worker visa, an applicant must demonstrate that the host organization is important for the entire country. An applicant must have completed theological studies and be accredited to an acknowledged order. Visa requests normally are not denied and are processed in the same manner as requests from other individuals or workers.

Roman Catholic or Protestant religious education is compulsory in all schools, but the authorities routinely grant exemptions for children whose parents so request. Both religions typically are taught separately but simultaneously in primary and secondary schools, normally 2 hours per week.

The Government collaborates with religious institutions by supporting interfaith dialogs and providing adult education courses in religion as well as other subjects.

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

There are amicable relations between the religious communities. Catholics, Protestants, and members of other faiths work well together on an ecumenical basis. Differences among religious faiths are not a significant source of tension in society.

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.

LITHUANIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion except in cases where religious activities contradict the Constitution and the law, 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. There is no state religion; however, some religious groups enjoy government benefits not available to others. Nontraditional religious groups face some restrictions.

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities, although members of religious minorities occasionally are subject to acts of intolerance. A certain level of anti-Semitic sentiment persists in the country.

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 an area of 25,174 square miles and its population is approximately 3.5 million.

There are no official data on the number of adherents of various faiths. Unofficial estimates indicate that approximately 70 percent of the inhabitants consider themselves to be Roman Catholic (some 673 communities in 2000). The second largest religious group is the Orthodox Church (180,000 members and 43 communities), concentrated in the east, along the border with Belarus. The "Old Believers" number 50,000 and have 27 communities. Some 30,000 Lutherans (54 communities) are concentrated to the southwest. The Evangelical Reformed community has some 11,000 members in 12 communities. The 5 Sunni Muslim and 6 Jewish communities number about 5,000 members each, while the Greek Catholic community has about 900 members. Around 18 percent of the inhabitants do not identify with any religious denomination.

The Chabad Lubavich, an Orthodox Jewish group, operates a school (kindergarten through twelfth grade), a social center, and a kosher kitchen in the capital of Vilnius.

Karaites, while not unique to the country, exist in few other locations in the world. They are considered by some to be a branch of Judaism; their religion is based exclusively on the Old Testament. Two houses of worship in Vilnius and Trakai serve the Karaite religious community of approximately 250 members. The Karaites have been in the country since 1397. Considered as well to constitute a distinct ethnic group—Karaites speak a Turkic-based language and use the Hebrew alphabet—their community president is also their only religious leader.

According to the Ministry of Justice, a total of 923 traditional and 176 nontraditional religious associations and communities are registered.

According to data provided by religious groups, some 0.5 percent of the population belong to what the Government refers to as "nontraditional" religious communities. The most numerous are the Full Gospel Movement, Pentecostals/Charismatics, New Apostolic Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, and Seventh-Day Adventists.

Foreign missionary groups, including Baptists, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses, operate 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 Constitution provides that that a person's freedom to profess and propagate his or her religion or faith "may be subject only to those limitations prescribed by law and only when such restrictions are necessary to protect the safety of society, public order, a person's health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others." The religious teachings of churches and other religious organizations, their religious activities, and their houses of prayer may not be used for purposes that contradict the Constitution and the law. The freedom of expression of religious conviction also may be restricted temporarily during a period of martial law or a state of emergency. None of the limitations specified in the Constitution has been invoked.

There is no state religion. However, some religious groups enjoy government benefits not available to others.

The 1995 Law on Religious Communities and Associations grants property rights for prayer houses, homes, and other buildings to religious communities, associations,

and centers, and permits construction that is necessary for their activities. The law specifies nine religious communities that have been declared "traditional" and therefore are eligible for governmental assistance. They are Latin Rite Catholics, Greek Rite Catholics, Evangelical Lutherans, members of the Evangelical Reformed Church, Orthodox Christians (Moscow Patriarchate), Old Believers, Jews, Sunni Muslims, and Karaites. These traditional associations and communities receive annual financial support from the State. Other religious communities are not eligible for financial assistance from the Government, but there are no restrictions on their activities or property rights.

In 1999 the Seimas (Parliament) amended the Law on Religious Communities and Associations to provide funding from the national budget for the educational institutions of religious organizations designated as traditional. The governmental Department of European Law has warned publicly that this amendment discriminates in favor of these communities; the law is expected to take effect in September 2001.

There is no separate government agency dealing with religious groups, only a small department in the Ministry of Justice that handles requests of religious groups for registration.

Traditional religious associations and communities are not required to register their bylaws with the Ministry of Justice in order to receive legal status. However, nontraditional religious communities must present an application, a founding statement signed by no less than 15 members, and a description of their religious teachings and their aims. The Ministry must review the documents within 6 months.

The Constitution divides religious communities into state recognized traditional groups and others. However, in practice a four-tier system exists: Traditional, state recognized, registered, and unregistered communities. The Law on Religious Communities and Associations stipulates that nontraditional religious communities may be granted state recognition if they are "backed by society" and have been registered in the country for at least 25 years. Both traditional and state recognized communities can receive state subsidies; they do not have to pay social and health insurance for clergy and other employees; their clergy and theological students are exempt from military service; and they are not subject to VAT tax on such services as electricity, telephone, and heat. However, only traditional communities have the right to teach religion in state schools and buy land to build churches (other communities can rent it). Religious communities registered by the Ministry of Justice constitute the third status group; they do not receive subsidies, tax exemptions, social benefits, or military exemptions enjoyed by traditional and state recognized communities but can act as legal entities and thus rent land for religious buildings. There are also unregistered communities. They have no juridical status or state privileges, but there are no reports that any such groups were prevented from worshiping or seeking members.

Relations between the Government and the officially registered Jewish community are good. In May 1999, the Minister of Justice recognized the Hasidic Chabad Lubavich community as a traditional religious organization. The Ministry of Justice previously had argued that the community was not a part of the country's historical, spiritual, or social heritage and therefore could not be registered as traditional.

In July 2000, the Government and the Holy See agreed to establish a military Ordinariat to provide religious support to Catholic members of the military service in the form of military chaplains. The Ministry of Defense provides material support for the Ordinariat and its places of worship. Other traditional churches and religious groups can also provide religious support to the military services. Alternative military service is available, but there is no option for alternative nonmilitary service, as demanded by members of Jehovah's Witnesses.

In August 2000, three agreements between the Government and the Holy See took effect: "On Cooperation in the Sphere of Education and Culture," "On Spiritual Guidance of Catholics Serving in the Military," and "On Legal Aspects of Relations Between the Catholic Church and the State." The last of these agreements established Assumption Day (August 15) as a national holiday, in addition to the previously established holidays of St. Mary's celebration (January 1), Easter Monday, All Saint's Day (November 1), Christmas, and Boxing Day (December 26). The list of holidays can be changed by agreement of both sides. There is no direct evidence that these agreements adversely affect religious freedom for the adherents of other religions.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Nontraditional religious communities must submit an application and supporting documents to the Ministry of Justice in order to receive legal status. Since 1995 the Ministry of Justice has turned down two applications, those of the Osho Ojas Meditation Center and the Lithuanian Pagans Community. Both were rejected because

the authorities concluded that these groups were nonreligious. They were advised to register as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) instead.

While the operations of foreign missionary groups within the country are not restricted, nontraditional foreign religious workers must obtain work permits, and they face difficult bureaucratic requirements in obtaining residence permits from officials who regard them as representatives of "cults" and "sects." Several foreign missionary groups complained in mid-1999 over a change in temporary residency requirements. These groups encountered problems with the Government's new procedures (enacted by law in 1999) requiring residency permits for religious workers. Most of these problems had been resolved by mid-2001.

According to the Constitution, state and local teaching and education establishments are secular. The Law on Religious Communities and Associations provides that only religious instruction of traditional and other state-recognized religious communities may be taught in state educational institutions. At the request of parents from these communities, schools can offer classes in religious instruction. In practice, parents can choose classes in religious instruction or classes in ethics for nonreligious education. However, nontraditional religious communities have the right to establish schools of their own.

The 1995 Law on Procedures for the Restoration of the Rights of Religious Communities to Existing Real Property granted all religious communities equal opportunity in regaining control over former property used for conducting religious services. However, the Catholic community has been more successful in regaining its property than many other religious communities. Some religious property, including 26 synagogues, was returned to the Jewish community, mostly from 1993 to 1996.

The deadline for filing claims has passed. A number of claims have been successfully resolved, and others still are pending. Lack of funds for compensation and protracted bureaucratic obstacles are the primary problems preventing the return of private property. The Government has taken no action on the problem of restoring property of religious institutions that no longer exist and has no plans to do so.

On April 18, 2001, the Vilnius First District Court ruled that the Vilnius City Council had violated the previous owners' and tenants' rights when returning 4 buildings to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1992 and 1993. The Court abrogated the decision of the Vilnius Council on Property Restitution. The Church appealed, asserting that it had owned the properties before they were nationalized in 1945 and that restitution had been carried out according to the law.

In April 2000, the Government established a commission to coordinate the activities of governmental institutions in order to investigate whether the activities of religious, esoteric, or spiritual groups comply with the law. It includes representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Education, Health, Foreign Affairs, the General Prosecutor's office, and the State Security Department. The Minister of Justice appoints the chairman of the commission. The commission was established following some parliamentarians' calls for increased control of "sects," following negative coverage of some religious groups in the media. The commission takes as its guidance domestic laws and the recommendations (No. 1412 and No. 1178) of the Council of Europe, which seek to ensure that activities of religious groups are in line with the principles of a democratic society, human rights and fundamental freedoms. As of mid-2001, the commission had taken no action and made no statements affecting specific religious groups.

Local media reported that the security services monitored the activities of the NGO "Collegiate Association for the Research of the Principle," Jehovah's Witnesses, and a visiting member of the Russian Vissarion Church. In June 2000, the Ministry of Justice warned the "Collegiate Association for the Research of the Principle" to discontinue its religious activities (they were proselytizing on behalf of the Unification Church, an activity that was not described in their own statutes, and thus violated the Law on Public Organizations.)

The nontraditional Word of Faith Church (a charismatic Protestant Church) has expressed concern that Vilnius county and district authorities refuse to register a private school established by the Church. The problem emerged when the school, which operates under a license issued by the Education and Science Ministry, relocated in 1999 from Vilnuis city to Vilnius county. The Vilnius county authorities claimed that they were asked to "freeze" the registration of the school by the special services, which investigated activities of the Word of Faith Church. The problem remained unresolved as of mid-2001.

There was one unconfirmed complaint about a civil servant being denied promotion to a higher position on the grounds of religious affiliation.

There were no reports of religious prisoners of 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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

On June 13, 2000, after reviewing an appeal by several members of Parliament, the Constitutional Court confirmed the principle of separation between church and state in the sphere of education. The Court ruled that in state educational institutions, classes or groups may not be coestablished with state-recognized traditional religious associations. The Court also ruled that if educational establishments are sponsored jointly by a state institution and a religious group, the group cannot set any religious test for employment of staff not connected with religious instruction. Finally, the Court ruled that the heads of state educational establishments could not be appointed and dismissed by government institutions on the recommendation of a religious association. The Catholic Church criticized the Court's ruling.

In March 2001, the Government abolished the position of advisor for religious affairs, established in 1993. The former advisor admitted in a public interview that the Catholic Lithuanian Bishops' Conference had proposed his candidacy. This decision contributed to a more evenhanded approach to religious matters.

In the period from January 2000 to April 2001, the Ministry of Justice registered 13 nontraditional religious groups and granted 41 traditional religious communities legal person status. The Parliament's Human Rights Committee recommended that the Parliament extend state recognition to the Baptist community. Legally, the status of "state recognized" religious community is higher than that of a "registered" community but lower than that of the "traditional" community.

In December 2000, the Ministry of Justice and the Government's inter-agency commission organized an International Conference on Law and Religion in Lithuania, sponsored by a foreign NGO and foreign academic institutions. The conference was seen by the participants as a contribution to interfaith dialog.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities, although members of religious minorities occasionally are subjected to acts of intolerance, such as insults.

An estimated 10 percent of the population before World War II were Jewish. Over 200,000 Jews (about 95 percent of that population) were killed in the Holocaust. The country still is reconciling itself with its past and working to understand it better. President Valdas Adamkus established a historical commission in August 1998 to investigate both the crimes of the Holocaust and the subsequent Soviet occupation. The commission has held three annual conferences and several seminars and has filed three reports; many more reports were pending as of June 30, 2001. A government-sponsored international forum on Holocaust-era looted cultural assets took place in October 2000. Alleged war criminal Aleksandras Lileikis, the former head of the security police of the Vilnius district under Nazi control, died on September 27, 2000, at age 93, without facing trial. On February 14, 2001, the Vilnius District Court's College for Criminal Cases found Kazys Gimzauskas, Lileikis' deputy, guilty of genocide committed in Lithuania during the Nazi occupation. The court closed the case, but did not sentence Gimzauskas, who was judged to be mentally ill.

Beginning in 1999 the country's Jewish communities expressed increased concern by over anti-Semitic remarks made by some politicians. Such anti-Semitic comments continued during the period covered by this report; however, the political leadership and the national press condemned the anti-Semitic statements of fringe political groups. In October 2000, a politician known for making anti-Semitic and derogatory comments towards Jews and foreigners was elected to the Parliament. He had won election in 1999 as mayor of the country's second largest city, Kaunas.

In April 2000, the country's Catholic Church issued an apology for indifference and crimes committed by Lithuanians during the Holocaust. The statement included the first recognition by the Church that some Lithuanians participated in the killing and mass murder of Jews during the Holocaust.

A number of ecumenical organizations operate in the country. An NGO, Research and Information Center for New Religions was established in Vilnius in May 2001 to provide objective information about new religions.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains a close and regular dialog on religious issues with senior officials in the Government, Members of Parliament, and presidential advi-

sors, as well as continual contact with religious leaders. Religious groups use the Embassy as a vehicle to voice their complaints and the Embassy encourages religious leaders to keep the Embassy informed of their views on the status of religious freedom and any complaints.

The Embassy maintains regular contact with U.S. missionary groups.

During the period covered by this report, the Embassy's democracy commission funded a number of projects with the goal of promoting greater religious tolerance, particularly those related to building broader understanding of the Holocaust.

LUXEMBOURG

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 land area of 998.5 square miles and its population is approximately 437,000. The country is historically Roman Catholic, and Catholicism remains the predominant faith. According to a 1979 law, the Government may not collect or maintain statistics on religious affiliation; however, over 90 percent of the population is estimated to be baptized Catholic. The Lutheran and Calvinist churches are the largest Protestant denominations. Muslims are estimated to number about 6,000 persons, including 1,500 refugees from Montenegro; Greek Orthodox adherents are estimated to number about 1,500 persons; and there are approximately 1,000 Jews. The Baha'i faith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Universal Church, and members of Jehovah's Witnesses are represented in smaller numbers. The number of professed atheists reportedly is growing.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups. Many religious groups described as "sects" have representations in the country. They are expected to obey the law, but their activities have not become significant political or social issues.

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. The State does not register religions or religious groups. However, based on the Concordat of 1801, when the country was under Napoleonic rule, some churches receive financial support from the State. The Constitution specifically provides for state payment of the salaries of clergy. Currently, after negotiated agreements with the Government, the following religious groups receive such support: Roman Catholic, Greek and Russian Orthodox, Jewish, and some Protestant denominations. Applications for financial support from the Anglican Church and the Muslim community have been under consideration for over 4 years without resolution.

There is a long tradition of religious education in public schools. A 1997 convention between the Minister of National Education and the Roman Catholic Archbishop governs religious instruction. In accordance with this convention, religious instruction is a local matter, coordinated at the communal level between representatives of the Catholic Church and communal authorities. Government-paid lay teachers provide instruction (totaling 2 school hours) at the primary school level. Parents and pupils may choose between instruction in Roman Catholicism or an ethics course; requests for exemption from religious instruction are addressed on an individual basis. Although approximately 85 percent of primary school students choose religious instruction, the number drops to 65 percent for high school students. The Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist Churches have an agreement for the provision of instruction in the Protestant religions within the overall framework of reli-

gious instruction in the school system. There are oral agreements between Catholics and Protestants at the local level to provide religious instruction to Protestant students, as required, during school hours. Protestant instruction is available on demand, and provision of instruction in other faiths may develop in response to demand.

The State subsidizes private religious schools. All private, religious, and nonsectarian schools are eligible for and receive government subsidies. The State also subsidizes a Catholic seminary.

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. The Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths work well together on an interfaith basis. Differences among religious faiths are not a significant source of tension in society.

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.

MACEDONIA, FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF

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

There was no overall change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report; however, beginning in early spring of 2001, an armed conflict began between the Government and armed ethnic Albanian extremists. While religion has not been a focus of the conflict, both sides have occasionally targeted religious buildings due to the linkage between religion and ethnicity in the country. The law places some limits on religious practice by restricting the establishments of places of worship and restricting where contributions may be made.

In 2000 both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the various religious communities contributed to the free practice of religion. However, the religious communities often reflect an ethnic identity as well, and during 2001 societal tensions increased.

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 9,781 square miles and its population is approximately 2 million. The country has three major religions. Nominally, about 66 percent of the population are Macedonian Orthodox, about 30 percent are Muslim, about 1 percent are Roman Catholic, and about 3 percent are of other faiths (largely various Protestant denominations). There is also a small Jewish community in Skopje. Numerous foreign missionaries are active and represent a very wide range of faiths. Many of these missionaries enter the country in connection with other work, often charitable or medical. Several Protestant missionary groups and Jehovah's Witnesses are active. Religious participation tends to focus on major holidays or life cycle events.

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 places some limits on religious

practices including the establishment of places of worship and the collection of contributions. Despite the specific mention of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in the Constitution, that Church does not have official status.

The constitutional provision for religious freedom is refined further in the 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups. This law designates the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic community, and the Roman Catholic Church as religious communities, and all other religions as religious groups. However, there is no legal differentiation between religious communities and groups. In early 1999, the Constitutional Court struck down several provisions of the 1997 law, and in practice the remaining provisions of the law are not enforced consistently. A committee has been formed to draft a new law.

The Government requires that religious groups be registered. The 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups contained a number of specific requirements for the registration of religious groups that were struck down by the Constitutional Court in early 1999. Consequently, there was considerable confusion over which procedures still applied, and several foreign religious bodies experienced delays in their efforts to register. During the period covered by this report, the process remained slow and cumbersome. In practice, religious groups need to register to obtain permits to build churches, and to request visas for foreigners and other permits from the Government. During 2000 several international Protestant churches were granted legal registration, and several others were at some stage in the process as of the end of the period covered by this report. One Islamic group withdrew its 1998 application for registration but continues to operate openly without taking further steps toward legal registration. The Government has not taken any enforcement actions against the group. The Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups also requires that foreign nationals carrying out religious work and religious rites be registered with the Government's Commission on Relations with the Religious Communities. The Government does not actively monitor new groups or advise the public on them.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups places some restrictions on the establishment of places of worship. It provides that religious rites and religious activities "shall take place at churches, mosques, and other temples, and in gardens that are parts of those facilities, at cemeteries, and at other facilities of the religious group." Provision is made for holding services in other places, provided that a permit is obtained at least 15 days in advance. No permit or permission is required to perform religious rites in a private home. The law also states that religious activities "shall not violate the public peace and order, and shall not disrespect the religious feelings and other freedoms and rights" of persons who are not members of that particular religion. The Government does not actively enforce most of these provisions of the law but acts upon complaints when they are received.

Several registered Protestant groups have been unable to obtain building permits for new church facilities due to normal bureaucratic complications that affect all new construction. Churches and mosques often are built without the appropriate building permits. The Government has not taken any actions against religious buildings that lack proper construction permits.

The Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups also places some limitations on the collection of contributions by restricting them only to places where religious rites and activities are conducted.

Children below the age of 10 years may not receive religious instruction without the permission of their parents or guardians.

The 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups specifically allows for foreign citizens to carry out religious activities, but only at the request of a registered religious body. Because many evangelical Christian missionaries wish to conduct religious activities that are aimed at the creation of new groups of believers, rather than at operating through existing churches, some foreign missionaries have chosen to disregard this portion of the law. This approach has on occasion led to difficulties for those missionaries, as the authorities have questioned their actual reasons for entering the country, usually on tourist visas. During the period covered by this report, several missionaries with improper immigration status were able to obtain religious worker visas. Several applications still were pending in June 2001.

The issue of restitution of previously state-owned religious properties has not been resolved fully. Many churches and mosques had extensive grounds or other properties that were expropriated by the Communist regime. Virtually all churches and mosques have been returned to the ownership of the appropriate religious community, but that is not the case for many of the other properties. Often the claims are complicated by the fact that the seized properties have changed hands many times

or have been developed. In view of the country's very limited financial resources, it is unlikely that religious communities can expect to regain much from the expropriated properties.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the anti-Albanian riots in June 2001 in Bitola, during which rioters vandalized the village mosque (see Section III), local police reportedly did not take any actions to stop the attacks. According to nongovernmental observers, some witnesses claimed that a few police officers allegedly participated in the riots. The riots broke out after several Bitola police officers were killed by ethnic Albanian extremists. [P1]

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 2000 both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among the various religious communities contributed to the free practice of religion. However, the religious communities often reflect an ethnic identity as well, and during 2001 societal tensions increased.

During the period covered by this report, there has been an ongoing armed conflict between the Government and armed ethnic Albanian extremists. While religion has not been a focus of the conflict, both sides have occasionally targeted religious buildings due to the linkage between religion and ethnicity in the country.

The religious communities in the country often reflect an ethnic identity as well. Specifically, most Muslims are ethnic Albanians, while virtually all Macedonian Orthodox believers are ethnic Macedonians. Societal discrimination is more likely to be based upon ethnic bias than upon religious prejudice.

During the period covered by this report, there were two significant anti-Albanian riots in Bitola, in April and June, which displayed anti-Muslim attitudes. In June 2001, rioters vandalized the Bitola mosque, breaking windows, setting fire to the mosque interior, and breaking open several graves. Rioters also sprayed swastikas and anti-Albanian graffiti on the mosque.

In the fall of 2000, local skinheads desecrated the Jewish cemetery in Bitola. The city government, in a gesture of tolerance, agreed to pay to repair the damage.

The leaders of the long-established Orthodox, Muslim, and Roman Catholic communities have better connections within the Government than do the leaders of new churches, and there were some indications of an effort by the established religions to use that influence to shut out newcomers.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

During the period covered by this report, the U.S. Embassy initiated an extensive dialog with the Government's Commission on Relations with the Religious Communities, the office charged with the implementation of the Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups. This contact was sought after several American missionaries advised the Embassy that they were having difficulties in their efforts to register their organizations or workers.

The Embassy also intervened successfully to help seven U.S. missionaries to regularize their status in the country. The missionaries had encountered bureaucratic obstruction in their attempts to obtain religious worker visas.

The leaders of the various religious communities in the country, as well as the head of the Commission on Religious Communities and Religious Groups, met with the Ambassador on several occasions during the period covered by this report.

MALTA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion.

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, which consists of three islands in the Mediterranean Sea, has a total land area of 122 square miles and its population is 391,670. The overwhelming majority of citizens (approximately 95 percent) are Roman Catholic, and approximately 65 percent attend services regularly. While some political leaders diverge from Catholicism, most of the country's political leaders also are Roman Catholic.

Most congregants at the local Protestant churches are not Maltese; many British retirees live in the country, and vacationers from many other nations compose the remainder of such congregations. An indigenous Christian fundamentalist movement has begun to develop; it remains small and consists of a group of about 400 citizens, but it is growing rapidly. Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) also have an active missionary presence. There is one Muslim mosque and one Jewish congregation. Zen Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith also have centers. Of the 2,500 Muslims, 2,000 are foreigners, 400 are naturalized citizens, and 100 are native-born Maltese.

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 Constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the state religion, and declares that the authorities of the Catholic Church have "the authority to teach which principles are right and which are wrong." The Government and the Catholic Church participate in a foundation that finances Catholic schools. The Church transferred nonpastoral land to this foundation as part of the 1991 Ecclesiastical Entitles Act. There is one Muslim private school. Some governmental policies, such as a ban on divorce, reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Since 1991 churches of all kinds (not just the Roman Catholic Church) have had similar legal rights: religious organizations can own property such as buildings, and their ministers can perform marriages and other functions.

While religious instruction in Catholicism is compulsory in all state schools, the Constitution establishes the right not to receive this instruction if the student (or guardian, in the case of a minor) objects.

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 Roman Catholic Church makes its presence and its influence felt in everyday life. However, converts from Catholicism do not face legal or societal discrimination, and relations between the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations generally are characterized by respect and cooperation.

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. Whenever possible, the Embassy advocates continues observance of basic human rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion. Both the Embassy's private discussions with government officials and its informational programs for the public consistently emphasize these points.

MOLDOVA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the law includes restrictions that at times inhibited the activities of some religious groups.

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. However, the Government continued to uphold its earlier decisions to deny two groups registration during the period covered by this report, and in the separatist region of Transnistria, a number of minority religious groups have been denied registration.

In general there are amicable relations among the various religious communities; however, some incidents of harassment occurred.

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 13,000 square miles and its population is approximately 4½ million. The Moldovan Orthodox Church is the predominant religion. Over 90 percent of the population nominally belong to the Orthodox Church (with the Moldovan Church claiming over 1,000 parishes and the Bessarabian Church claiming close to 100). The religious traditions of the Orthodox Church are entwined with the culture and patrimony of the country. Many self-professed atheists routinely celebrate religious holidays, cross themselves, and even light candles and kiss icons if the occasion demands. Followers of the Old Russian Orthodox Church (Old Believers) make up approximately 3.6 percent of the population. Other registered groups include: Roman Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is, Jews, followers of Reverend Moon, Molocans (a Russian sect), Messianic Jews (Jews who believe that Jesus was the Messiah), Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Hare Krishnas. Some other charismatic Christian groups and evangelical Christian groups also are registered. Although it has faced bureaucratic obstacles to registration, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) has 3 congregations with some 140 members. The Jewish community has approximately 31,200 members, with about 20,000 living in Chisinau, 3,000 in Balti, 2,200 in Tiraspol, 2,000 in Benderi, and 4,000 in small towns. Since the 1970's, Jews have been emigrating out of Moldova. At first they emigrated almost exclusively to Israel, but as restrictions eased, they also emigrated to the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Since the fall of the former Soviet Union, Moldovan Jews have emigrated to other European countries, notably Germany. There are 9 synagogues in Chisinau, Balti, Tiraspol, Rybnitsa, and Bender; about 5,000 persons celebrate Rosh Hashanah.

Foreign missionaries represent many faiths and denominations.

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, a 1992 law on religion that codifies religious freedoms contains restrictions that has inhibited the activities of some religious groups. The law provides for freedom of religious practice, including each person's right to profess his religion in any form. It also protects the confidentiality of the confessional, allows denominations to establish associations and foundations, and states that the Government may not interfere in the religious activities of denominations. However, the law prohibits "abusive proselytizing" and requires that religious groups register with the Government. There is no state religion; however, the Moldovan Orthodox Church receives some special treatment from the Government. The Metropolitan of Chisinau and All Moldova has a diplomatic passport. Other high-ranking Orthodox Church officials also reportedly have diplomatic passports issued by the Government.

The procedures for registering a religious organization are the same for all groups. Under the Law on Religions, an organization wishing to register must submit a request to the Cabinet. The Department of Religions examines the required statutes and organization chart of the religious body, determines if Moldovan citizens are the officers of the central authority of the Moldovan branch of the religion (as required by law), and examines if its beliefs go against the Constitution or any other laws of the country. The final recognition or rejection is by Government decree, signed by the Prime Minister and printed in the Official Gazette. The Govern-

ment has recognized 20 religious organizations. Three religious organizations either began or continued the registration process in 2000. The Government registered the Evangelist Lutheran Church in July 1999; however, the Government upheld its previous decisions to deny registration to the Church of the True Orthodox-Moldova (a branch of the Russian Overseas Orthodox Church) and the Mitropolia Basarabiei (Bessarabian Orthodox Church). Two additional religious organizations have faced obstacles to the acceptance of their pending applications for registration: the Mormons and the Spiritual Organization of Muslims in Moldova (Islam).

Foreign missionaries are allowed to enter the country; however, they experience the same difficulties in getting residence permits and customs clearances as other foreign workers.

In February 2000, Parliament passed a decree making "moral and spiritual" instruction mandatory for primary school students and optional for secondary and university students. The Ministry of Education had planned for the instruction to begin in September 2000. However, difficulties arose in establishing the nature of this religious instruction. These difficulties, combined with the chronic financial problems of the country's schools, delayed indefinitely the implementation of the decree. There are two public schools and a kindergarten open only to Jewish students. These schools receive the same funding as the state schools, and are supplemented by financial support from the community. Jewish students are not restricted to these schools. There are no comparable schools for Moldovan Orthodox believers and no reports of such schools for other religious faiths. Agudath Israel has operated a private boys' yeshiva, licensed by the Ministry of Education, since 1991, and opened a girls' yeshiva in November 1999. There are a number of theological institutes, seminaries, and other places of religious education throughout the country.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government cited Article 15 of the Law on Cults to justify its decision not to recognize component parts or schismatic movements of a religion. However, this law seems to be applied only to the country's main religion, as both the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and the Reform Movement Seventh Day Adventist Church are recognized as separate religions. The Government continued to uphold its denial of registration to the Church of the True Orthodox-Moldova (a branch of the Russian Overseas Orthodox Church) and the Mitropolia Basarabiei (Bessarabian Orthodox Church). The groups were denied on the grounds that they are schismatic movements within the Orthodox Church. Both are appealing the decisions through the legal structures. In early 2001, the True Orthodox-Moldova tried again to register, starting the process anew with updated documents and new hearings scheduled in the Court of Appeals. However, in May 2001, the Court of Appeals postponed its hearing of the case. It again reiterated that the Government cannot legally register a component or a schismatic part of an already registered religion. The True Orthodox-Moldova Church representatives now face counter-charges and petitions against them (see Section III).

The Government has denied recognition to the Bessarabian Orthodox Church in 1992, twice in 1996, and in 1997. During the period covered by this report, the Government continued to uphold its denial ruling. The Bessarabian Orthodox Church was formed in 1992 when a number of priests broke away from the Moldovan Orthodox Church, which is subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate. The Bessarabian Orthodox Church, which sees itself as the legal and canonical successor to the pre-World War II Romanian Orthodox Church in Bessarabia (the part of Moldova between the Nistru and Prut Rivers), subordinated itself to the Bucharest Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Since 1992 the Government consistently has refused to register the Bessarabian Church, citing unresolved property claims and stating that the Bessarabian Church is a "schismatic movement." The issue has political as well as religious overtones, as it raises the question as to whether the Orthodox Church should be united and oriented toward Moscow, or divided with a branch oriented toward Bucharest. (Leaders of the Moldovan Orthodox Church appear more interested in independence than in links to Moscow.) In 1997 the Supreme Court overturned an appellate court decision affirming the right of the Bessarabian Church to register with the Government. However, the Supreme Court's decision was based on a procedural issue rather than on the merits of the case. The Bessarabian Church appealed the case to the European Court of Human Rights in June 1998. The Government submitted its response in February 2000, which argued that registering the Bessarabian Church would interfere with an internal matter of the Moldovan Orthodox Church. In May 2001, the European Court of Human Rights agreed to hear the case. In its decision, the Court stated that the Moldovan Government has already recognized other seemingly schismatic or component movements as religions. The Court cited as examples the recognition of the Seventh-Day Ad-

ventist Church, the Federation of Jewish Communities and the Union of Messianic Jewish Communities, and the Orthodox Church of Moldova and the Russian Old Rite Orthodox Church.

Unregistered religions cannot buy land or obtain construction permits for churches or seminaries. Members of unregistered religions hold services in homes, nongovernmental organization (NGO) offices, and other locations.

The Mormons faced bureaucratic obstacles to their registration at the end of the reporting period and continue to try to work within the Government's State Service for Religions.

In November 2000, the Spiritual Organization of Muslims in Moldova (Muslims) were refused registration by the Government. They took their case to the Supreme Court of Appeals in February 2001; in May 2001, the Supreme Court sent the Spiritual Organization of Muslims in Moldova's registration case back to the Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court advised both the Muslims' representatives and the Government's representatives to follow the strict procedures of the law, since not all of these had been followed during the registration process.

The law on religion as amended to legalize proselytizing—in principle bringing the legislation in line with the European Convention on Human Rights—went into effect in June 1999. However, the law explicitly forbids "abusive proselytizing," which is defined as "an attempt to influence someone's religious faith through violence or abuse of authority." Thus far authorities have not taken legal action against individuals for proselytizing.

The law provides for restitution to politically repressed or exiled persons whose property was confiscated during the successive Nazi and Soviet regimes. This regulation has been extended in effect to religious communities; however, the Moldovan Orthodox Church has been favored over other religious groups in this area. The Church had little difficulty in recovering nearly all of its property and, in cases where property was destroyed, the Government offered alternative compensation. The Church has recovered churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and administrative properties. Property disputes between the Moldovan and Bessarabian Churches have not been resolved. The Jewish community has had mixed results in recovering its property. The Baptist Church has only one remaining property restitution claim. In May 2001, the Molocans appealed to the Parliament to hear their property restitution case, but the Parliament denied their request, voting that the case was not within their jurisdiction. There has been no other movement on this case during the period covered by this report.

The law in Transnistria (a separatist region not under the control of the Government) prohibits renting houses, premises of enterprises, or "cultural houses" for prayer meetings. Evangelical religious groups meeting in private homes have been told that they do not have the correct permits to use their residences as churches.

In January 1998, the authorities in Transnistria canceled the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses. Repeated attempts by members of Jehovah's Witnesses to reregister have been denied or delayed. Transnistrian officials regularly confiscate religious tracts from members of Jehovah's Witnesses, most recently in January 2000, because the group is not registered properly, but no new incidents were reported during the period covered by this report. According to local leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses, two preachers were arrested and detained for several days in April 1999. The Methodist Church was denied registration in late 2000. The Church of the Living God has been denied registration in five towns in Transnistria. The Baptist community is growing and has reported no problems in Transnistria during the period covered by this report. The Baptist community in Bendery has approximately 250 members and has a church, the Church of Evangelist Christian Baptists. The Baptist community in Tiraspol has approximately 180 members. Both communities failed to reregister under new legislation, but have not reported any problems with the local authorities over their lack of local registration. In the past, non-Orthodox groups complained that they generally were not allowed to rent property and often were harassed during religious services.

In April 2001, Russian Patriarch Alexei II named Tiraspol Bishop Justinian to the post of Rector of the Theological Seminary at the Noul Neamt Monastery in Chitcani. The monastery is on the western bank of the Nistru River and traditionally has come under the religious authority of Chisinau Bishop Vladimir, although the area is under the de facto control of the separatist regime in Transnistria. The monks resisted the appointment, and Bishop Justinian used the Transnistrian military to force his entry into the monastery. Further confrontation took place when Bishop Justinian stopped the Mass due to the refusal of the monks to accept him. The monastery Abbot appealed to Moldovan Bishop Vladimir who, they believe, has jurisdiction in the case, but he refused to support them. Moldovan President Voronin tried to visit the monastery, claiming that he wanted to go there "as a sim-

ple Christian," but was not allowed to cross the border into the separatist region. This seemingly jurisdictional conflict is reviving ethnic and church tensions within the country.

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 various religious communities. The dispute between the Moldovan and Bessarabian Orthodox Churches is ongoing (see Section II), but the members generally worship freely. However, in several towns where there is a True Orthodox congregation, opponents have taken signed petitions to local governments and courts, stating that citizens oppose the existence of a True Orthodox-Moldova Church in their town and claim it would violate their human rights. When legal representatives for the Church examined these petitions, they reportedly found many names of incarcerated persons and the deceased among the supposed signatories. The priest of the first True Orthodox-Moldova Church reportedly has been harassed and threatened. Local church member volunteers reportedly sleep in his house to protect him.

Disputes surrounding the Bessarabian Church and the Noul Neamt Monastery reflect a fundamental social issue in the country: whether it should be Westward-looking, Romanian-speaking, and aligned with Romania; or Eastward-looking, Russian-speaking, and aligned with Russia. This issue complicates some conflicts that otherwise would appear to be internal religious problems. For example, the Noul Neamt Monastery was founded by monks from Romania and has remained an outpost of the Romanian language and Romanian customs. Upon the appointment of Transnistrian Bishop Justinian as Rector, monks claimed that the "Russification" of the Moldovan Church had begun.

Some desecration of Jewish cemeteries in Transnistria has occurred. Transnistrian authorities sent workers to remove the graffiti.

In May 1999, a group of about 500 Orthodox Christians and between 4 and 6 priests attacked a small group of Baptists in the village of Mingir, injured 3 persons, and partially destroyed a Baptist church that was under construction. The Ministry of Internal Affairs investigated the case, but no charges ever were filed. The village mayor who was implicated in the incident lost his bid for reelection. The Baptist Church was allowed to register locally, and the church building now is completed. The church holds regularly scheduled services and activities. There have been no further reports of problems for the Baptists in this community.

In 2000 the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Moldova hosted several roundtable discussions on freedom of religion. The Helsinki Committee remains active in the field of religious rights, and provided legal assistance for the Muslims' case in the Supreme Court of Justice and legal advice for the True Orthodox-Moldova Church's case in the Court of Appeals.

The independent press occasionally writes very negative articles about religions other than the Orthodox Church. One example was the April 10, 2001 article in the National Journal entitled, "Sects in Moldova Recruit Followers by Promising Them Everything, After Which they Separate Them from God Forever." Several representatives of religious groups complained that this article was biased, especially in the way that it focused on the less mainstream groups. They also complained that the article linked their religions with other, more extreme groups. A June 8, 2001 article in Dialog, a weekly newspaper, was entitled "Snares of the Sects." It alleged that foreign religions disguise themselves by registering as humanitarian or cultural organizations in order to hide their church activities. This article specifically cited the Muslims and the followers of Reverend Moon.

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 officers have met with Baptist leaders and government officials to discuss the restitution of Baptist property in Chisinau. Embassy officers have met with Mormon, Muslim, Jewish, True Orthodox, and Bessarabian Orthodox leaders, and their legal representatives, to discuss registration, restitution, and any other problems their religious organizations have had with the Moldovan authorities. An Embassy officer attended the Supreme Court hearing on the Muslim organization's case.

The U.S. Ambassador met with leaders of the major religious organizations at various times during the period covered by this report. Embassy employees maintain official or social contact with most of the resident American missionaries. The Embassy has supported religious (and secular) groups that provide humanitarian assistance to the country.

The Embassy's human rights officer maintains regular contact with religious leaders throughout the country, including in the separatist Transnistria region.

MONACO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government denies permission to operate to religious organizations regarded as "sects."

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 principality has a total land area of .8 square miles and its population is 31,693. Roman Catholicism is the state religion, and most of the approximately 5,000 Monegasque citizens living in the principality adhere to that religion, at least nominally. There are five Catholic churches in the principality and a cathedral presided over by an archbishop. Protestantism is the next most practiced religion, with two churches. The Constitution guarantees the nearly 25,000 noncitizens resident in the principality the same religious freedom as citizens. Most noncitizens also adhere to either Catholicism or Protestantism, although there are some residents who adhere to Judaism, Islam, or other world religions. There are no mosques or synagogues in the principality. No missionaries operate in the principality.

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, there are some restrictions. Roman Catholicism is the state religion. Most citizens adhere to Roman Catholicism. The Catholic ritual generally plays an important role in state festivities, such as the annual national day celebration. The Constitution provides the nearly 25,000 noncitizens who live in the principality with the same religious freedom as the approximately 6,000 citizens.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

No missionaries operate in the principality and proselytizing is strongly discouraged. However, there is no law against proselytizing by religious organizations that are formally registered by the Ministry of State. Organizations regarded as religious "sects" routinely have been denied such registration in the past. There were no reports of religious organizations being denied registration during 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

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. There are no known ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different religions. There were no reports of societal religious violence in the principality.

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.

THE NETHERLANDS

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 16,485 square miles and its population is approximately 16 million. Approximately 30 percent of the population consider themselves to be Roman Catholic, 15 percent Dutch Reformed, 7 percent Calvinist Reformist, 8 percent non-Christian (Islamic, Hindu, Jewish, or Buddhist), and 40 percent atheist or agnostic.

Dutch society has become increasingly secular. According to the Government's Social Cultural Planning Bureau, church membership has declined steadily from 76 percent in 1958 to 41 percent in 1995 and still is decreasing, although at a slower pace. The breakdown within this 41 percent is 20 percent Roman Catholic, 9 percent Dutch Reformed, 6 percent Calvinist Reformist, 2 percent Muslim, and 4 percent other. Membership is decreasing among all denominations, except Islam, which is expected to become the second largest religion in the country by 2010.

About 26 percent of church members are active within their religious communities. In 1999, 14 percent of Roman Catholics, 30 percent of Dutch Reformed, and 51 percent of Calvinist Reformed attended church at least once every 2 weeks.

Those who leave a church rarely return. Nonetheless, significant numbers of those who have left their churches still consider themselves to be members of a religious group. Approximately 60 percent of citizens claim adherence to a religion. However, the beliefs and practices of many of these adherents have developed into what some describe as a selective approach to religion: Accepting the positive but not the negative aspects of a particular religion. About 20 percent of citizens, primarily among those who have left the "traditional" churches, describe themselves as "seekers of spiritual or philosophical truths." These persons tend to gravitate toward (although not necessarily join) newer or non-orthodox religious movements, such as Pentecostal groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, Hare Krishna, Transcendental Meditation, Scientology, Theosophy, or Anthroposophy.

In the wake of secularization since the 1960's, many Roman Catholics left the Church. Among those remaining, many express alienation from their religious hierarchy and doctrine. For example, most Dutch Catholics express no objections to female or married priests and differ with church thinking on a number of sensitive doctrinal issues.

Dutch Protestantism is quite heterogeneous. Among the Protestant churches, the Dutch Reformed Church remains the largest, although it is also the one that has suffered the greatest losses to secularization. Church membership in this denomination has declined by two-thirds in the past 50 years. The second largest Protestant group, the Calvinist Reformist Church, has been less affected by membership losses and even has succeeded in attracting former members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Other Protestant denominations include Baptists, Lutherans, and Remonstrants.

The country has a long tradition of providing shelter to non-Christian religions. Jews have been in the Netherlands since the late sixteenth century. By the beginning of World War II, the Netherlands counted 125,000 Jews, half of whom lived in Amsterdam. About 110,000 were killed by the Nazi regime. Following the war, more than 10,000 citizens emigrated to Israel. The current Jewish community includes fewer than 20,000 members but is thriving and operates its own schools.

Only 49 Muslims lived in the country in 1879. After 1960 the number of Muslims began to rise due to the arrival of migrant workers, primarily from Morocco and

Turkey. Family unification increased their numbers to 234,000 Moroccans and 279,000 Turks by 1998. Additional Muslims came from the former Dutch colony of Suriname. In the past decade, Muslim numbers further increased due to the large numbers of asylum seekers from countries such as Iran, Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia. By 1998 about 700,000 persons, or 4.4 percent of the population, were Muslim—the majority Sunni.

A network of mosques and cultural centers serves the Islamic community. They are organized to conform to the country's system of subsidies, which underwrites cultural activities geared to social orientation and the promotion of equal opportunities. The number of mosques has grown to over 300. The increased influence of Islam also is reflected in the founding of over 30 Islamic schools, which is facilitated by legislation that recognizes and provides equal funding to schools representing different religious or philosophical backgrounds.

There were no reports of foreign missionary groups operating in the country.

SECTION II. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

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 Constitution permits the Government to place restrictions on the exercise of religion only on limited grounds, such as health hazards, traffic safety, and risk of public disorder.

The Calvinist Reformist Church enjoyed a privileged status until 1795. It received government subsidies and only church members could hold public office. Church and State have been separate since 1798. However, the Government provides state subsidies to religious organizations that maintain educational facilities. The Government provides funding to public as well as to religious schools, other religious educational institutions, and religious health care facilities, irrespective of their religious affiliation. In order to qualify for funding, institutions must meet strict non-religious-based criteria for curriculum standards, minimum size, and health care.

The law provides for minority views to be heard on radio and television. Thus, broadcasting time has been allotted to the Islamic Broadcasting Foundation, an alliance of all Muslim groups in the country.

The Government of Turkey exercises influence within the Dutch-Turkish Islamic community through its religious affairs directorate, the Diyanet, which is permitted to appoint imams for the 140 Turkish mosques in the Netherlands. There is no such arrangement with the Moroccan Government that allows it to appoint religious officials to Moroccan mosques. The Moroccan Government tries to exercise influence over the approximately 100 Moroccan mosques through a federation of Moroccan friendship societies. Dutch authorities have not been pleased with Turkish and Moroccan interference with religious and political affairs because it appears to run counter to government efforts to encourage integration of Muslims into Dutch society. For example, government authorities insist on strict observance of mandatory school attendance up to the age of 16. They disapprove of appeals by foreign imams to keep sexually mature girls under the age of 16 at home. To counter such influence the authorities have proposed training imams in the Netherlands itself, a measure that is opposed within the Islamic communities.

A sizable community of approximately 90,000 Hindus has arrived from the former Dutch colony of Suriname. The Netherlands also hosts smaller groups of Hindus who came from India and Uganda, as well as similar movements based on Hindu teachings as Ramakrishna, Hare Krishna, Sai Baba, and Osho. The Buddhist community is quite small, with about 17,000 members.

Disputes have arisen when the exercise of the rights to freedom of religion and speech clashed with the strictly enforced ban on discrimination. Such disputes are addressed either in the courts or by antidiscrimination boards. Complaints have repeatedly been filed against religious or political spokesmen who publicly condemned homosexuality. However, it is longstanding jurisprudence that such statements made on religious grounds do not constitute a criminal offense if the intention to offend or discriminate against homosexuals was deemed absent.

The headscarf issue has also been addressed repeatedly in the courts and by equal opportunities committees. The prevailing opinion is that the wearing of headscarves may only be banned on narrow grounds, such as security considerations or inconsistency with an official government uniform.

In other areas, employers have been rebuked publicly by anti-discrimination boards for failure to allow non-Christians to take leave from work on their religious holidays, for objecting to Sikhs wearing turbans or to Muslim women wearing

headscarves, or to observance of food requirements on religious grounds. The Equal Opportunities Committee in July 1999 ruled against a company that had denied employment to a Turkish applicant because he intended to attend Friday service at a mosque. This was considered a violation of freedom of religion. According to the Committee, Friday service for Muslims is equivalent to Sunday service for Christians. It ruled that employers are obliged to take account of reasonable religious demands from their employees, except in exceptional circumstances.

The Calvinist Reformist Social Union (RMU) charged that the 1996 law on working hours contributed to discrimination. This law permits work on Sunday under certain circumstances. Based on a survey of 2,000 companies, the RMU reported that job applicants increasingly are turned down if they refuse for religious reasons to work on Sunday. The larger labor federations reacted by calling for agreements between labor and management on the practice of religion during working hours. This matter usually does not lead to problems; however, if problems arise, the federations made clear their intention to call upon offending employers to observe this fundamental right. At the end of the reporting period, the legislature was still working on an amendment to the laws on working hours and business hours to permit employees to claim time off for the practice of religion.

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

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious communities live alongside each other in harmony. The main Christian denominations participate in the National Council of Churches and have adopted an ecumenical approach to interfaith relations. The Council regularly presents common positions of the churches on matters of faith, church, and society. Protestant denominations in particular are significant promoters of Israel and the Jewish cause. Protestant churches also reach out to the Islamic community. Incidents of anti-Semitism are rare; however, there were a number of complaints about anti-Semitism on Internet sites set up by Dutch citizens. In 1999 the Discrimination on the Internet Registration Center recorded 181 complaints about discriminatory statements, racial discrimination, or anti-Semitism on the Internet. Most statements were removed voluntarily by the authors at the Center's request. Two complaints were forwarded to the Public Prosecutor when the authors refused to remove the controversial texts from the Internet. One case led to a conviction for incitement to hatred and discrimination.

Non-Europeans, such as Turks, Moroccans, or refugees from Iran and Iraq are occasional victims of discrimination, but primarily on racial or ethnic grounds and not because they are Muslims.

Examples of religious discrimination incidents are primarily of an anti-Semitic nature and involve use of swastikas, distributing neo-Nazi propaganda, and making the Hitler salute. The Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) saw proof of a trend of growing anti-Semitism in the country. In its annual report for the year 2000, CIDI reported that Jewish cemeteries, monuments, synagogues, and buildings were on 50 occasions the target of vandals. That is four times as often as in 1999. The number of incidents of physical or verbal intimidation of Jews also sharply increased, as did the painting of anti-Semitic slogans on walls. CIDI deputy director Hirschfeld warned against "a process of inurement" in the country, in which no one is shocked by more anti-Semitic slogans. "I am not saying that the Netherlands is anti-Semitic, but a climate could come about in which anti-Semitism may thrive." Not only right-wing extremists but also resident Muslims appear to be linked to the increase in anti-Semitic incidents. The renewed intensity of the intifada is also believed to be at least indirectly tied to this uptrend in anti-Semitism. Ethnic Moroccans were involved in 13 major incidents of anti-Semitism in 2000.

The labor federations have been working to include in collective bargaining agreements stipulations that permit non-Christian employees to take leave on non-Christian religious holidays. Such stipulations have now been included in most agreements.

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. Promoting religious freedom around the world is a high priority goal of Dutch foreign policy. The U.S. Embassy works very closely with the Government to promote religious freedom.

NORWAY

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 Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is the state church, enjoys some benefits not available to other faiths. In addition, Muslims encountered some difficulties in obtaining local permission to build mosques.

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 150,000 square miles and its population is approximately 4.5 million. Citizens are considered to be members of the state church unless they explicitly associate themselves with another denomination; 93 percent of the population nominally belong to the state church. However, actual church attendance is considered to be rather low. Other denominations operate freely.

In 2000, 254,854 persons were registered in religious communities outside the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway. An additional 31,757 persons belong to unregistered communities.

The major registered religions and religious groups are: Islam (49,633 members); Pentecostal congregations (45,006 members); Roman Catholic Church (42,598 members); Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway (21,163 members); Jehovah's Witnesses (15,055 members); Methodist Church of Norway (13,130 members); Norwegian Baptist Union (10,352 members); Church of Norway Mission Covenants (8,309 members); and the Buddhist Federation (7,031 members). Other groups include Orthodox Jews, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church, and Hindus. In addition, there is one main organization for the nonreligious or atheists, which is the Norwegian Humanist Association. The Association has 67,950 registered adult members and 10,000 to 12,000 children as associate members. Persons cannot register as full members until they reach early adulthood.

Members of registered religious communities outside the state church are concentrated in the Oslo region and the west coast region of the country. The Hordaland, Rogaland, and Vest Agder districts have the highest number of members of religious communities outside the state church. The majority of European and American immigrants are either Christians or nonreligious, the exception being Muslim refugees from Bosnia and Kosovo. Most non-European immigrants practice Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism.

Foreign missionaries and other religious workers operate freely 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.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway is the state Church. It is supported financially by the State, and there is a constitutional requirement that the King and one-half of the Cabinet belong to this church. The relationship between the Church and the State regularly generates discussion. Church officials have spoken in favor of a greater separation in the state-church relationship. However, there were no significant developments in this debate during the period covered by this report.

A religious community is required to register with the Government only if it desires state support, which is provided to all registered denominations on a proportional basis in accordance with membership.

The Government promotes interfaith understanding by providing funding to the Cooperation Council for Faith and Secular Society (see Section III). In the past, the Government has provided funds for the operation of the office of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Intolerance. As of 2000, these specially earmarked funds no longer have been granted; however, the Government continues to support the office through its overall funding to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR).

Foreign religious workers from countries whose citizens Norway requires visas need to obtain such visas before entering the country. In addition, all foreign religious workers from countries outside the European Union or European Economic Area must apply for work permits. There is no government registration of foreign religious workers beyond the regularly established database of issued work permits.

In October 1995, the Storting (Parliament) passed a law introducing the subject "Religious Knowledge and Education in Ethics" in the school system. The legality of imposing compulsory teaching of Christianity and Christian ethics in public schools has been contested in court by both the Norwegian Humanist Association and the Moslem Council. These cases have been appealed to the Supreme Court after lower level courts ruled in favor of the State. The Supreme Court is expected to issue its ruling in August 2001. Currently, the law has been implemented in all public schools. On special grounds students may be exempted from participating in or performing specific religious acts such as church services or prayer, but may not forgo instruction in the subject as a whole. Students and workers who belong to minority denominations are allowed leave for the celebration of their religious holidays.

In July 1998, the Government suspended two priests in the Church of Norway and asked the courts for approval to terminate legally their priesthood due to insubordination and disloyalty. The conservative priests, serving in a rural community, openly had refused to accept religious and spiritual guidance from their liberal bishop based in the provincial capital. The parties were in disagreement on a number of social issues (such as gay rights). In January 2000, the Alta county court ruled that the two local priests could not be fired due to insubordination and disloyalty. The Minister of Church Affairs appealed the decision to the Haalogaland district court. The Haalogaland District Court ruled against the two priests. One of the priests accepted the ruling, and has now left his position. The other priest appealed his case to the Supreme Court. The appeals selection committee of the Supreme Court has not yet decided whether the Supreme Court will hear the case.

Norwegian Muslims encountered some difficulties in obtaining local permission to build mosques in areas where they are concentrated. Since 1975 the town council in Drammen has regularly turned down applications to build a mosque.

The Workers' Protection and Working Environment Act permits prospective employers to ask job applicants for positions in private or religious schools, or in day care centers, whether they agree to teach and behave in accordance with the institutions or religion's beliefs and principles.

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

A Cooperation Council for Faith and Secular Society was established in 1996 and consists of the state church and other religious communities, including the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and secular humanist communities. At a 1998 conference, the Oslo Coalition for Freedom of Religious Beliefs was formed in order to facilitate closer coordination and international cooperation.

The Ecumenical Council of Christian Communities has been active in promoting cooperation within the Christian community. There also has been cooperation between the various religious communities on human rights issues in recent years. Bilateral dialog between the state Church and the Muslim and Jewish communities has generated statements in support of minority rights and human rights.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government, particularly during the annual meeting of the UNCHR, in the overall context of the

promotion of human rights. Requests to the Embassy from official and nonofficial Norwegians for materials on religious freedom issues increased during the period covered by this report, which is a sign of growing interest in such issues as religious persecution, the church-state relationship, and the balance between freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

POLAND

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; however, sporadic incidents of harassment and violence against Jews and occasional desecration of Jewish and, more frequently, Catholic cemeteries continued, mostly by skinheads and other marginal elements of society.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy and Consulate General Krakow officers actively monitor threats to religious freedom and seek to further resolution of unsettled legacies of the Holocaust and the Communist era.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 120,725 square miles, and its population is an estimated 39 million. More than 96 percent of citizens are Roman Catholic, but Eastern Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and much smaller Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim congregations meet freely.

According to the Annual Statistical Gazette of Poland, the following figures represent the formal membership of the listed religious groups, but not the number of actual persons (e.g., the actual number of Jews in the country is estimated at between 10,000 and 30,000). There are an estimated 34,603,600 baptized Roman Catholics in the country; 561,400 Orthodox Church members; 123,052 Jehovah's Witnesses; 110,380 Uniates; 87,300 Lutherans (Augsburg); 25,549 Old Catholic Mariavits; 22,088 members of the Polish-Catholic Church; 19,410 Pentecostals; 9,303 Seventh-Day Adventists; 4,238 Baptists; 5,433 members of the New Apostolic Church; 5,123 members of the Muslim Religious Union; 5,043 Hare Krishna; 4,359 Methodists; 3,943 members of the Church of Christ; 3,610 Lutherans (Reformed); 2,738 Catholic Mariavits; 1,222 members of the Union of Jewish Communities; 951 members of the Eastern Old Ceremonial Church; and 150 members of the Karaims Religious Union. All of these religious groups have a relationship with the State governed by either legislation or treaty, with the exception of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Uniate Church, the New Apostolic Church, the Church of Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishna), and the Church of Christ.

According to a 2001 poll, some 58 percent of citizens actively participate in religious ceremonies at least once per week; a 1999 poll found that 8 percent declared that they have no contact with the Catholic Church. An estimated 32 percent declared they attend church irregularly or sporadically. An estimated 3 percent declared themselves to be nonbelievers. The survey found women to be more religious than men, with 64 percent of the former attending church regularly, compared with 51 percent of the latter. Farmers are the most religious occupational group, with 68 percent attending church regularly. No figures are available on the number of atheists in the country.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely in the country and are subject only to the standard rules applicable to foreigners temporarily in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

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.

There are 15 religious groups in the country whose relationship with the State is governed by specific legislation and 141 other religious communities. The legisla-

tion outlines the internal structure of the religious groups, their activities, and procedures for property restitution.

Religious communities may register with the Government, but they are not required to do so and may function freely without registration. According to regulations effective as of June 1998, registration requires that the group have submitted the names of at least 100 members as well as information regarding the group itself. This information on membership (i.e., signatures) must be confirmed by a notary public, although the registration itself often appears to be a formality. Two new religious communities registered during the period covered by this report, the Independent Hebrew Religious Community in Poznan and the Church of the Mercy of Jesus. All churches and recognized religious groups share the same privileges (duty-free importation of office equipment, reduced taxes, etc.).

Citizens enjoy the freedom to practice any faith that they choose. Religious groups may organize, select, and train personnel, solicit and receive contributions, publish, and meet without government interference. There are no government restrictions on establishing and maintaining places of worship.

The law places Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish communities on the same legal footing, and the Government attempts to address the problems that minority religious groups may face.

Although the Constitution gives parents the right to bring up their children in compliance with their own religious and philosophical beliefs, religious education classes continue to be taught in the public schools at public expense. While children are supposed to have the choice between religious instruction and ethics, the Ombudsman's office states that in most schools ethics courses are not offered due to financial constraints. Although Catholic Church representatives teach the vast majority of religious classes in the schools, parents can request religious classes in any of the religions legally registered, including Protestant, Orthodox, and Jewish religious instruction. Such non-Catholic religious instruction exists in practice, although it is not common, and the Ministry of Education pays the instructors. Priests and other instructors receive salaries from the State for teaching religion in public schools, and Catholic Church representatives are included on a commission that determines whether books qualify for school use.

In January 1998, the Parliament ratified the Concordat, a treaty regulating relations between the Government and the Vatican, which was signed in 1993. The vote came after years of bitter disputes between Concordat supporters and opponents over whether the treaty simply provides the Catholic Church's rights or blurs the line between church and state. Subsequently signed by the President, the Concordat took effect in April 1998.

The Government continues to work with both local and international religious groups to address property claims and other sensitive issues stemming from Nazi- and Communist-era confiscations and persecutions. The Government enjoys good relations with international Jewish groups. The Government cooperates effectively with a variety of international organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, for the preservation of historic sites including cemeteries and houses of worship.

Progress continues in implementing the laws that permit local religious communities to submit claims for property owned prior to World War II that subsequently was nationalized. A 1997 law permits the local Jewish community to submit claims for such property, which mirrored legislation benefiting other religious communities. The laws allow for the return of churches and synagogues, cemeteries, and community headquarters, as well as buildings that were used for other religious, educational, or charitable activities. The laws included time limits for filing claims; in several cases the deadlines have expired, and no additional claims may be filed. However, restitution commissions (composed of representatives of the Government and the religious community) are continuing adjudication of previously filed claims.

The time limit for applications by the Catholic Church expired in December 1991. As of the summer of 2001, 2,572 of the 3,041 claims filed by the Church had been concluded, with 1,219 claims settled by agreement between the Church and the party in possession of the property (usually the national or a local government), 866 properties were returned through decision of the Commission on Property Restitution, which rules on disputed claims, 471 claims were rejected, and 16 cases were likely to go to court. Claims by the local Jewish community (whose deadline for filing claims under the 1997 law expires in May 2002) are being filed slowly, in part because ongoing disputes between the local Jewish community and representatives of international Jewish organizations have prevented reaching an accord between the two groups that could provide needed resources to the local community. By the summer of 2001, 659 claims had been filed. Of the 659 claims, the Commission on Property Restitution considered and closed 162 cases; 84 of the 162 cases were

closed by an agreement between the parties. As of early 2001, Lutheran claims for 1,200 properties had resulted in 505 cases being closed with the return of the properties in question (the deadline for filing such claims was July 1996).

However, the laws on religious communal property do not address the private property of any group. In February 2001, the Parliament passed a reprivatization law that included controversial provisions requiring claimants to have held Polish citizenship as of December 1999. President Aleksander Kwasniewski vetoed the bill in March 2001, citing the likely cost of the proposed bill, as well as the need for any reprivatization law to be inclusive and eschew citizenship requirements. Claims continue to be filed and property returned throughout the country through an ad hoc process of local court rulings and private arrangements among contending parties.

The laws on communal property restitution also do not address the issue of communal properties to which third parties now have title, leaving several controversial and complicated cases unresolved. In a number of cases over several years, buildings and residences were built on land that included Jewish cemeteries that were destroyed during or after World War II. For example, a school for disabled children now stands on the site of a completely destroyed Jewish cemetery in Kalisz. The existence of the school complicated the issue of returning the cemetery to the Jewish community. Efforts continued during the period covered by this report to reach a resolution acceptable to all concerned.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. However, the Government established in March 2001 a department within the Ministry of Interior to monitor the activities of "new religious groups" and "cults." As of June 30, 2001 the new department had not become active.

Although the Constitution provides for the separation of church and state, crucifixes hangs in both the upper and lower houses of Parliament, as well as in many government offices. In June 1998, a provincial court decided that a crucifix hung in the meeting room of the Lodz city council in 1990 could remain, denying the complaint of a city resident. An atheist complained that the crucifix threatened religious freedom and discriminated against him.

State-run radio broadcasts Catholic Mass on Sundays, and the Catholic Church is authorized to relicense radio and television stations to operate on frequencies assigned to the Church, the only body outside the National Radio and Television Broadcasting Council allowed to do so.

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 contribute to religious freedom; however, sporadic incidents of harassment and violence against Jews and occasional desecration of Jewish and, more often, Catholic cemeteries continued, mostly generated by skinheads and other marginal elements of society.

During the period covered by this report, Polish-Jewish relations were complicated by a controversy that arose over revelations regarding the 1941 massacre of the Jewish population of the northeastern town of Jedwabne. The publication of a book that alleged that the killings were perpetrated by the town's ethnic Polish inhabitants, and not by the occupying Germans as stated in a monument at the site, led to considerable discussion of the Polish role during the Nazi occupation, of the extent of Jewish collaboration with the former Soviet Union, and of Polish-Jewish relations in general. The Government moved quickly to address the problem, removed the inaccurate monument, began an investigation of the Jedwabne events, and prepared to hold a ceremony of reconciliation on the 60th anniversary of the killings in July 2001.

Anti-Semitic feelings persist among certain sectors of the population, occasionally manifesting themselves in acts of vandalism and physical or verbal abuse. However, surveys in recent years show a continuing decline in anti-Semitic sentiment and avowedly anti-Semitic candidates won few elections.

Sporadic and isolated incidents of harassment and violence against Jews continue to occur in the country, often generated by skinheads and other marginal societal groups. Occasional cases of cemetery desecration, including both Jewish and, more frequently, Catholic shrines, also occurred during the period covered by this report.

Government authorities consistently criticized such actions and pledged to prevent similar acts in the future, for example, by increased police patrols around Jewish sites.

In September 2000, dignitaries from Poland, Israel, the United States, and other countries (including Prince Hassan of Jordan) gathered in Oswiecim (Auschwitz) to commemorate the opening of the refurbished Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot synagogue and the Auschwitz Jewish Center. The synagogue, the sole synagogue in Oswiecim to survive World War II and an adjacent Jewish cultural and educational center, provide visitors a place to pray and to learn about the active pre-World War II Jewish community that existed in Oswiecim. The synagogue was the first communal property in the country to be returned to the Jewish community under the 1997 law allowing for restitution of Jewish communal property.

In October 2000, extreme nationalist Kazimierz Switon, who during the period 1998 to 1999 was responsible for the controversial raising of several hundred protest crosses at a gravel pit outside the former Auschwitz death camp, was acquitted of distributing leaflets alleging that some politicians were of Jewish origins and appealing for their removal from public life. The court ruled that the 1995 distribution of such leaflets did not incite ethnic strife.

In November 2000, under the auspices of the No to Europe Association (an anti-European Union organization), some 400 nationalists marched through the streets of Katowice, chanting anti-Semitic slogans and burning Israeli flags. The protest organizer told police investigating the case that only some 30 percent of the rally's participants were members of his organization.

In February 2001, 16 tombstones were desecrated in the Jewish cemetery in Wroclaw and, in April 2001, several tombstones were damaged in a Catholic cemetery in the town of Bartoszyce. Also in April, three other Catholic cemeteries were desecrated: Several hundred crosses and crucifixes were stolen from a Catholic cemetery in the Silesian town of Olawa, apparently in an attempt to steal and sell metal crosses; 60 tombstones were damaged in Markowice (southeastern Poland); and 57 tombstones were damaged in the central town of Siepc. Also in April 2001, 49 graves were damaged in the Pomeranian town of Bytow, allegedly by unemployed persons seeking to sell decorative metal features for scrap. In May 2001, the Jewish cemetery in Oswiecim was desecrated when 39 tombstones were knocked over by unidentified perpetrators. Later that month, a group of international and Polish students, who participated in the March of Remembrance and Hope, organized a clean up of the cemetery and restored the tombstones to their proper locations.

In March 2001, several thousand students, journalists, and politicians removed vulgar and racist slogans from walls in the central city of Lodz; they also were removed in 2000.

In March and April of 2001, several functionaries in the presidential chancellery were identified as having participated as students in the government-sponsored anti-Semitic campaigns of 1968. One of those accused subsequently resigned.

In April 2001, controversial Gdansk priest Henryk Jankowski created in his church a replica of the barn in Jedwabne in which members of that town's Jewish community were burned to death in 1941. A sign near the display accused Jews of having killed Christ and of persecuting Poles. The local archbishop ordered the tableau removed, and religious and political leaders strongly criticized its construction in the church.

In April 2001, during the 13th March of the Living from Auschwitz to Birkenau to honor victims of the Holocaust, several hundred citizens joined 2,000 marchers from Israel and other countries. Government officials participating in the march included Members of Parliament, the province's governor, and Oswiecim's mayor and city council chairman. Schoolchildren, boy scouts, the Polish-Israeli Friendship Society, and the Jewish Students Association in Poland also participated in the march. In May 2001, several hundred students from around the world marched through the town in The March of Remembrance and Hope.

The Jewish community faced a continuing battle, which began in April 1999, between Gdansk's local Jewish community and the leadership of the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland (ZGZ), involving accusations of mismanagement of community funds.

There is some public concern about the growth of groups perceived to be "sects" and the influence of nonmainstream religious groups, especially in the wake of press reports of the deaths of a few young persons in circumstances suggesting cult activity. For example, besides the annual report by the interministerial group for new religious movements on the activities of groups it considers to be "sects," informational training on such groups has been given to officials at the county level. Articles have appeared in the press and on the Internet reporting the involvement of "sects" in disappearances, such as the group Antrovis that teaches that

extraterrestrials will evacuate its members from a meeting site on a southern Polish mountain in advance the impending destruction of the world. In Szczecin law enforcement authorities have linked Antrovis to the death of a man found floating in the Oder River.

Interfaith groups work to bring together the various religious groups in the country.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Representatives of the U.S. Embassy and Consulate General Krakow continue to monitor closely issues relating to religious freedom and interfaith relations; for example, one officer devotes the vast majority of his time to questions of Polish and Jewish relations. Embassy and consulate officers meet frequently with representatives of religious communities, the Government, and local authorities on such matters as property restitution, skinhead harassment, and interfaith cooperation.

Embassy and consulate officers actively monitor threats to religious freedom. On a regular basis, embassy and consulate officials discuss issues of religious freedom, including property restitution, with a wide range of government officials at all levels. The Embassy and Consulate General work as well to facilitate the protection and return of former Jewish cemeteries throughout the country. The Embassy and the Consulate General also play a continuing role in ongoing efforts to establish an international foundation to oversee restitution of Jewish communal property. A U.S. Government mediator worked with the two sides (the Polish Union of Jewish Religious Communities and the World Jewish Restitution Organization) to resolve outstanding differences that have delayed establishment of such a foundation. In June 2000, the sides reached agreement. The agreement subsequently collapsed, although efforts are continuing to come to an accommodation, and the local Jewish community is continuing to file claims for the return of communal property.

Embassy and consulate representatives, including the Ambassador, also meet regularly with representatives of major religious communities in the country. The Ambassador holds regular consultations with Primate Glemp and meets with religious leaders, including leaders of the Jewish community, both in the capital and during his travels throughout the country.

The public affairs sections of the Embassy and the Consulate in Krakow provided continuing support for activities designed to promote cultural and religious tolerance. Such activities included providing a Democracy Commission grant to the Union of Jewish Religious Communities for use in building a database of claimable Jewish communal property; sponsoring a speaking tour by a visiting U.S. professor to lecture on tolerance; and continuing press and public affairs support for the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation's education project in Oswiecim.

PORTUGAL

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

There was an improvement in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In April 2001, the Portuguese Parliament passed the Religious Freedom Act, which provides recognized religions with benefits previously reserved for the Catholic Church. The bill exempts the Catholic Church, which maintains a special status under a (revised) 1940 "Concordata" between the Government and the Vatican. The Concordata itself is coming up for amendment in order to be consistent with the new Religious Freedom Act, a process that is expected to be completed by 2003. However, the benefits of this Act will be extended only to religious groups that have been established in the country for 30 years or recognized internationally for at least 60 years.

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 35,672 square miles and the population is an estimated 10 million. More than 80 percent of the population above the age of 12 identify with the Roman Catholic Church, yet a large percentage state that they do not actively participate in church activities. About 4 percent identify with various

Protestant denominations (including about 250,000 Evangelists) and about 1 percent with non-Christian religions. Less than 3 percent state that they have no religion.

Non-Christian religions include about 35,000 Muslims (largely from Portuguese Africa, ethnically sub-Saharan African or South Asian), approximately 700 Jews, and very small number of Buddhists, Taoists, and Zoroastrians. There is also a Hindu community of about 7,000 persons, which largely traces its origins to South Asians who emigrated from Portuguese Africa and the former Portuguese colony of Goa in India. Many of these minority communities are not organized formally.

Brazilian syncretistic Catholic Churches, which combine Catholic ritual with pre-Christian Afro-Brazilian ritual, such as Candomble and Umbanda, also operate in small numbers, as do the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Orthodox Christians. The Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), a proselytizing church that originated in Brazil, also exists. The Church of Scientology has approximately 200 active members, primarily in the Lisbon area.

Foreign missionary groups (such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) operate freely.

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.

Portugal is a secular state. Other than the Constitution, the two most important documents relating to religious freedom are the 2001 Religious Freedom Act and the 1940 Concordata (as amended in 1971) between Portugal and the Holy See.

In 2001 the country took a step toward ensuring religious freedom to a population that has become more diverse in recent years. In April 2001, the Parliament passed the Religious Freedom Act. This law does not apply to the Catholic Church, which maintains a separate agreement with Portugal under the terms of the Concordata. In order to comply constitutionally with the Religious Freedom Act, the Government has begun negotiations with the Vatican to once again amend the Concordata. This process should be complete by 2003. In the interim, the current Concordata remains in force.

The Religious Freedom Act creates a legislative framework for religions established in the country for at least 30 years, or those recognized internationally for at least 60 years. The Act provides qualifying religions with benefits previously reserved for the Catholic Church: full tax-exempt status, legal recognition for marriage and other rites, chaplain visits to prisons and hospitals, and respect for traditional holidays. It allows for each religion to negotiate—but with no guarantee of acceptance—it's own Concordata-style agreement with the Government.

The Act also establishes an independent consultative commission within the Justice Ministry that will oversee the application of the Act. However, some religions resent the fact that the Catholic Church, although exempt from the Act, will have membership on the Commission. Chief chaplaincies for the military, prisons, and hospitals remain state-funded positions for Roman Catholics only.

The Government takes active steps to promote interfaith understanding. Most notably 5 days a week the state television channel (Radiotelevisao Portuguesa 2) broadcasts "A Fe dos Homens"—"The Faith of Man"—a half-hour program consisting of various segments written and produced by different religious communities. The Government pays for the segments and professional production companies are hired under contract to produce the segments. The concept behind "The Faith of Man" originated in 1984, when minority religious communities began to request broadcast time on Radiotelevisao Portuguesa (RTP) television. In 1997 arrangements for such broadcasts were regularized and formalized and the program was initiated. Religious communities send delegates to a special television commission, which determines the scheduling of segments. The television commission has operated on the general rule that religious communities eligible for the program are those that have been operating for at least 30 years in the country or at least 60 years in their country of origin.

The Catholic Church owns a radio station called Radio Renascenca (Radio Renaissance), which has one of the country's highest market shares, yet less than 10 percent of it programs have religious content. The Diocese of Leiria-Fatima is seeking funding to establish a cable television station.

Public secondary school curriculums include an optional course called "religion and morals." This course functions as a survey of world religions and is taught by

a lay person. It can be used to give instruction on the Catholic religion; however, the Catholic Church must approve all teachers for this course. Other religions may set up such a course if they have 10 or more children in the particular school. There are about 100 such non-Catholic programs in the country. Under the new Act, each religion may approve the course's respective instructor. The Catholic Church states that it would prefer this course to be obligatory.

Under the Concordata, major Catholic holidays also are official holidays. Seven of the country's 16 national holidays are Catholic holidays. These 7 holidays do not negatively impact other religious groups. The Papal Nuncio is always the dean of the diplomatic corps.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. However, the Church of Scientology, although recognized as a religious association since 1986, does not benefit from the Religious Freedom Act, as it has not been established in the country for 30 years or recognized internationally for 60 years, as required under the law. The Church's leaders claim that they suffer no discrimination or opposition in the country. However, they are concerned that exclusion from the benefits accorded under the Act will have a negative impact on their ability to practice their faith.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The passage of the Religious Freedom Act and a variety of activities in different parts of the country indicate that there is a growing recognition of the need to reach out to minority religions.

In September 2000, Lisbon City Hall sponsored a 3-day conference entitled "Oceans of Peace: Dialogs between Religions and Cultures," whose goal was to promote mutual understanding and communication among religions. In addition to carrying through with the plan to illuminate Lisbon's mosque and rename its street "Rua da Mesquita"—Mosque Street—Lisbon City Hall has provided matching funds for completion of the mosque. The municipality also is providing matching funds for the restoration of Lisbon's 19th century synagogue, considered a building of historic significance.

In February 2001, Belmonte, an isolated town in northeastern Portugal, dedicated its first Jewish cemetery in 500 years. The town's Jewish community practiced its faith in secret, from the time of the Inquisition until 1981. Although the 200-member Jewish community makes up only 5 percent of the city's population, Belmonte City Hall contributed to the cemetery's construction. The town plans to open a Jewish museum by 2002.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities. Many communities conduct "open houses" or sponsor interfaith education seminars.

The residents of the Azores archipelago, although overall traditionally very Catholic, are also quite tolerant of other faiths. Both Mormon and Baptist missionaries are active on the islands. They are well treated and participate in Azorean social life.

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.

U.S. Embassy representatives have discussed issues and problems of religious freedom with government officials, members of the National Assembly, broadcasting executives, and leading religious figures. These contacts are ongoing.

ROMANIA

The Constitution provides for religious freedom; while the Government generally respects this right in practice, there are some restrictions and several minority reli-

gious groups continued to claim credibly that low-level government officials and the Romanian Orthodox clergy impeded their efforts at proselytizing, as well as interfered with other religious activities.

There was no overall change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Government registration and recognition requirements still pose obstacles to minority religions. Following the accession to power of the left-center Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PDSR) in December 2000, reorganization and staffing of the new Government put on hold many religious initiatives. While the new Government eased distinctions between types of places of worship that could be constructed by recognized and unrecognized religions, new requirements for construction of these churches may make the process more difficult for minority religions. Progress on restitution of properties slowed under the PDSR Government. In February 2001, the PSDR Government sent to the 15 recognized religions for comment a highly controversial draft bill on religious denominations, which the previous Government had withdrawn in February 2000 after strong objections by non-Orthodox religious groups and human rights groups. Most minority religious groups reiterated their critical views of the bill. The Government made little progress on restitution of religious properties and has made more cumbersome the process of obtaining permission to erect new churches for non-Orthodox religious denominations.

There are generally amicable relations among the different religious groups; however, the Romanian Orthodox Church has shown some hostility towards non-Orthodox religious churches, and criticized the "aggressive proselytizing" of Protestant, neo-Protestant, and other religious groups, which the Church has repeatedly described as "sects." Opposition by the Romanian Orthodox Church to the restitution of religious property to other religious groups, especially Greek Catholic churches, remains a problem.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy has met with the Government and religious leaders to encourage respect for religious freedom, pressed strongly against the proposal of the draft religion bill, and urged the restitution of religious property seized under the Communists.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of roughly 91,799 square miles and its population is approximately 22.4 million.

The Romanian Orthodox Church is the predominant religion in the country. The Government officially recognizes 15 religions: the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic Church, the Old Rite Christian Church, the Reformed (Protestant) Church, the Christian Evangelical Church, the Evangelical Augustinian Church, the Lutheran Evangelical Church-Synod Presbyterian, the Unitarian Church, the Baptist Church, the Pentecostal Church, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Armenian Church, the Mosaic denomination, and the Muslim denomination. However, members of other faiths worship freely. According to the 1992 census, the latest year for which official figures are available, the Romanian Orthodox Church had 19,802,389 members (86.8 percent of the population) including about 26,000 Serbs and 53,000 Ukrainians. The Roman Catholic Church had 1,161,942 members. The Catholic Church of Byzantine Rite (Greek Catholics or Uniates) had 223,327 members. This figure is disputed by the Greek Catholic Church, which claims that the census was taken in an atmosphere of intimidation that discouraged Greek Catholics from declaring themselves as such. The Greek Catholic Church estimated in 1999 that its adherents number close to 750,000 members. (Greek Catholics were former members of the Romanian Orthodox Church who accepted the four principles that were required for union with the Roman Catholic Church in 1697, but continue to observe Orthodox festivals and many Orthodox traditions). The Old Rite Christian Church had 28,141 members (of whom 3,711 are ethnic Romanians and 24,016 are ethnic Lippovans/Russians). The Protestant Reformed Church had 802,454 members (of whom 765,370 are ethnic Hungarians). The Christian Evangelical Church had 49,963 members. The Evangelical Augustinian Church had 39,119 members (including 3,660 Romanians and 27,313 ethnic Germans). The Lutheran Evangelical Church Synod-Presbyterian had 21,221 members (including 12,842 ethnic Hungarians). The Unitarian Church of Romania had 76,708 members. The Baptist Church had 109,462 members. The Apostolic Church of God (Pentecostal Church) had 220,824 members (400,000, according to the Pentecostals). The Seventh-Day Christian Adventist Church had 77,546 members. The Armenian Church had 2,023 members. There were 9,670 Jews, according to the 1992 census (the Jewish Community Federation states that there are about 12,000

members). Muslims numbered 55,928. According to the same census, the number of atheists was 10,331. There were 24,314 people who do not have any religious affiliation and 8,137 people who did not declare any religious affiliation.

According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, most religions have followers dispersed throughout the country, but a few religious communities are concentrated in particular regions. Old Rite members (Lippovans) are located in Moldavia and Dobrogea. Most Muslims are located in the southeastern part of the country in Dobrogea (near Bulgaria and the coast). Most Greek Catholics are in Transylvania but there are also Greek Catholics in Moldavia. Protestant and Catholic believers tend to be in Transylvania, but many also are located around Bacau. Orthodox or Greek Catholic ethnic Ukrainians are mostly in the northwestern part of the country. Orthodox ethnic Serbs are in Banat. Armenians are in Moldavia and the south.

According to published sources, the Baha'i Faith, the Family (God's Children), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Unification Church; the Methodist Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Presbyterian Church, Transcendental Meditation, Hare Krishna, and Zen Buddhism are active denominations in the country.

According to a nationwide poll conducted in February 2001, 23 percent of those polled say that they go to church on a weekly basis; 24 percent claim to go several times per month; 29 percent attend services several times per year; 13 percent go only once a year or less; and 11 percent do not go to church at all. The same poll shows that 86 percent of citizens say that church is the institution they trust most.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, laws and decrees give the Government considerable potential control over religious life. Government registration and recognition requirements still pose obstacles to minority religions. Several minority religious groups continued to claim credibly that low-level government officials and the Romanian Orthodox clergy impeded their efforts at proselytizing, as well as interfered with other religious activities.

A Communist era decree, number 177 of 1948, remains the basic law governing religious denominations. It allows considerable state control over religious life. Technically, none of the articles of this law have been abrogated; however, according to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, a large number of its articles have been nullified in practice by the Constitution and a series of governmental decrees. Although several religious denominations and religious associations confirmed that articles stipulating the State's interference with or control over religious life and activities have not been enforced, such provisions still exist in the law.

The Government requires religious groups to register. To be recognized as a religion, religious groups must register with the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations and present their statutes, organizational, leadership, and management diagrams, and the body of dogma and doctrines formally stated by a religion. The Government has refused to register a number of religious groups, and no religious group has received status as a religion since 1990. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations stated that this was due to provisions of Decree 177 of 1948, which stipulates the recognition of religious denominations by a decree issued by the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly, a Communist era institution that no longer exists. Since no new legislation has been passed in this regard, the State Secretariat stated that the registration of any new religion is not possible.

Under the provisions of Decree 177 of 1948, the Government recognized 14 religions. In addition to this, a December 1989 decree reestablished the Greek Catholic Church as a recognized religion, which had been forced to merge with the Romanian Orthodox Church by another Communist decree in 1948. Only the clergy of these 15 recognized religions are eligible to receive state support. Recognized religions have the right to establish schools, teach religion in public schools, receive funds to build churches, pay clergy salaries with state funds and subsidize clergy's housing expenses, broadcast religious programming on radio and television, apply for broadcasting licenses for denominational frequencies, and enjoy tax-exempt status.

The Government registers religious groups that it does not recognize either as religious and charitable foundations or as cultural associations. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations reported that it licensed 622 religious and charitable foundations, as well as cultural organizations, under Law 21 of 1924 on Juridical Entities, thereby entitling them to juridical status as well as to exemptions from income and customs taxes. According to Decree 177 of 1948 on Religion, in order to

be recognized as juridical entities, religious and charitable foundations must request and receive approval from the Government through the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations. After receiving the approval, such organizations have to apply for registration in local court, which has the final authority under the law to register religious organizations, but the courts usually defer to the opinion of the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations.

A government decree (26 of 2000) on associations and foundations became effective on May 1, 2000, abrogating Law 21 of 1924. The new law eliminates, at least in theory, the bureaucratic obstacles in the registration process, which religious groups repeatedly criticized as arbitrary and time-consuming. It also removes the minimum requirement of members needed to establish religious associations and foundations. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations reported in May 2001 that 50 new religious associations received approval for registration in 2000 and 3 associations were approved as of May 2001.

The number of adherents that each religion had in the 1992 census determines the proportion of the budget each recognized religion receives. The Romanian Orthodox religion, in accordance with its size as recorded in the 1992 census, receives the largest share of governmental financial support. In addition, Orthodox religious leaders generally preside over state occasions. In 2000 the Government allocated funds amounting to almost $11 million (235 billion lei) to the Orthodox Church, approximately $650,000 (14 billion lei) to the Roman Catholic Church, close to $925,000 (over 20 billion lei) to the Greek Catholic Church, and about $280,000 (6 billion lei) to the Reformed Church, for the construction and repair of churches.

According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, about 1,000 missionaries per year who enter the country as tourists can renew their residence permits without special formalities. They require only a formal letter of request from the religious group for which they work. This process reportedly became smoother and faster by the end of 1999, and continued to be satisfactory during the period covered by this report. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations reported that approximately 1,200 missionaries received visa extensions in 2000 and about 500 renewed their visas in the first half of 2001. Most religious groups state that they have not been faced with any problems other than minor delays in getting residence permit extensions for their missionaries.

The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations used to differentiate between missionaries of recognized religions, who received 1-year visa extensions, and those of unrecognized religions, who were granted only 6-month visa extensions, apparently due to an agreement between the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations and the Interior Ministry. A new law on foreigners, 123 of April 2001, eliminates this distinction by providing only 6-month extensions for all categories. Religious groups expressed concern about this provision. According to the same law, there are penalties for any foreigner who stays without a visa, but such penalties do not appear to be linked to religious activities.

New regulations issued by the Government on May 22, 2001, for the organization and operation of the commission in charge of granting approvals for the construction of places of worship defines these as "buildings such as churches, houses of prayer, temples, mosques, synagogues, houses of assembly, etc., used by religious denominations, religious associations and foundations for their specific religious services." The new regulations therefore no longer differentiate between recognized religions and unrecognized religions in terms of what they are allowed to build as places of worship.

However, there are other provisions in these regulations that could make it more difficult for minority (non-Orthodox, whether recognized or unrecognized) religious groups to get such approvals. Approval is mandatory for obtaining a permit to build a church or other place of worship. The commission that approves such permits consists of 11 permanent members. Only the Orthodox Church has members on this commission. Two members are representatives of the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations; four represent the Ministry of Culture and Religious Denominations; and two represent the Orthodox Patriarchate and the Orthodox Theological Institute. The previous commission was composed of technical experts from the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations and the Ministry of Public Works and Territorial Management, and did not include members of the Orthodox Church. In addition to the technical aspects of building a church, the new commission is entitled to decide on the "opportuneness" of building the place of worship, and whether the construction is in line with the specific dogma, doctrines, and statutes of the religion in question.

In February 2001, the new Government circulated for comment to the 15 recognized religions the text of a possible new draft bill on religious denominations. This bill was actually the same bill that had been submitted by the previous Government

to Parliament in September 1999. At that time it generated much criticism. Viewing it as undemocratic and restrictive of religious freedom, most religious denominations, religious and human rights groups, and foreign observers called for the draft law's withdrawal. If enacted the law effectively would have restricted freedom of religion, by imposing tough conditions on the registration of religious denominations and religious groups. It also would have required applicants to have a membership totaling ½ of 1 percent of the country's population (over 100,000 persons), and strengthened the powers of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations. The draft law would have declared the Romanian Orthodox Church to be the national church.

Following strong concerns raised by human rights and religious freedom groups as well foreign observers, in February 2000 the previous Government decided to withdraw the bill it had proposed in 1999. The new Government declared that this bill would be used only as a starting point in drafting a new one based on the proposals made by recognized religions. Unrecognized religions were not consulted on this issue. According to the State Secretary for Religious Denominations, the Government plans to amend the original bill based on the 15 religious denominations' opinions and then discuss it in a meeting with all the recognized religions. Government officials expect the bill to be submitted to Parliament in early 2002. Most minority religious groups reiterated their criticism of the religion bill.

Minority religious groups assert that they have found central government and parliamentary officials more cooperative than local officials. They specifically reported that relations with the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, which started to improve at the end of 1999, continued to improve until the end of the previous Government's term in office. Most minority religions expect to redevelop positive relations with officials of the new Government and the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations.

Until the elections of November 2000, the State Secretary for Religious Denominations reported directly to the Prime Minister. The new Government moved the Secretariat into the Ministry of Culture, with the State Secretary now reporting to the Culture Minister. Religious groups are concerned about the Government's decision to reestablish the position of local Inspector for Culture and Religious Denominations in the counties, a position reminiscent of the Communist period, when such inspectors used to monitor the activity of religious groups.

Following a Supreme Court ruling in July 1999, the Ministry of Education no longer requires Adventist students to come to school or take exams on Saturdays.

Between October 31 and November 2, 2000, the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations sponsored a meeting of the heads of the departments for religious affairs from the Balkan countries to exchange information about the developments in the religious life in these countries.

Christmas and the Orthodox Easter are national holidays, but this does not appear to affect any of the other religious groups. Members of the other recognized religions that celebrate Easter are entitled by law to have an additional holiday.

Religious leaders occasionally play a role in politics. In particular, many Orthodox leaders make public appearances alongside prominent political figures on various occasions.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Although protected by law, several minority religious groups, which include both recognized and unrecognized religions, made credible complaints that low-level government officials and Romanian Orthodox clergy impeded their efforts to proselytize, interfered in religious activities, and otherwise discriminated against them during the period covered by this report. The Government denied these allegations. In some instances, local police and administrative authorities tacitly supported, at times violent, societal campaigns against proselytizing (see Section III). There appears to be no clear understanding by the authorities of what activities constitute proselytizing.

The Government requires religious groups to register; representatives of religious groups that sought recognition after 1990 allege that the registration process was arbitrary and unduly influenced by the Romanian Orthodox Church, and that they did not receive clear instructions concerning the requirements. The Organization of the Orthodox Believers of Old Rite, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Adventist Movement for Reform, the Baha'i Faith, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) are some of the religious groups that have tried unsuccessfully to register as religions. The Baha'i Faith stated that it has never received any answer to its repeated requests to be registered as a religious denomination. Jehovah's Witnesses also complained that the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations consistently had refused to grant it status as a religion, despite a March 2000 Supreme Court ruling that recognized the modified statutes of Jehovah's Witnesses as a

Christian religious denomination. The court ruling asked the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations to issue an administrative document recognizing Jehovah's Witnesses, but the State Secretariat refused to do so. In response, Jehovah's Witnesses asked for damages in court and, consequently, the Ministry of Culture and Religious Denominations will have to pay a symbolic $.02 (500 lei) per day fine to the State as of May 9, 2001.

The Government has not granted any religious group status as a religion since 1990. The State Secretariat for Religious Denominations stated that this was due to provisions of Decree 177 of 1948, which stipulates the recognition of religious denominations by a decree issued by the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly, a Communist era institution that no longer exists. Since no new legislation has been passed in this regard, the State Secretariat stated that the registration of any new religion is not possible.

Several unrecognized religions have complained in the past that, in most cases, the courts did not accept their registration without approval of the State Secretary of Religious Denominations. These organizations receive no financial support from the State, other than limited tax and import duty exemptions, and are not permitted to engage in profit-making activities. Moreover, until May 2001, religious groups registered as foundations or charitable organizations were allowed to rent or build office space only; they were not permitted to build churches or other buildings designated as houses of worship. According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, such religious groups received building permits only for halls of prayer because the legislation in force made reference only to religions and did not include any provisions for religious associations. The differentiation between religions and religious associations with regard to the construction of places of worship appeared to be an arbitrary decision by the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations.

Representatives of minority religious groups dispute the 1992 census results and claimed that census takers in some cases simply assigned an affiliation without inquiring about religious affiliation. Moreover, representatives of several minority religious groups complain that off-budget funds are allocated in many cases in a biased manner, mostly favoring the Romanian Orthodox Church. For example, minority religious groups complained that Orthodox churches were built in areas without Orthodox believers. According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, off-budget funds are distributed depending on the needs of the various religious denominations.

The Government's approach to building places of worship by organized churches varied, depending upon whether the religious group was a recognized religion or not. Prior to the new regulations issued in May 2001, unrecognized religious groups received approvals only for "halls of prayer" and not for "places of worship." Several unrecognized religious groups have made credible allegations that their efforts to acquire property, including getting building permits and other documents, were delayed or impeded for lengthy periods of time by local officials. They claim that local Orthodox clergy encouraged these delays. The last State Secretary for Religious Denominations, Nicolae Branzea, who was in office between September 1999 and November 2000 under the former center-right coalition government, canceled an internal note issued by his predecessor which had asked local authorities to deny building licenses to religious associations and foundations. As a result, it was much easier to get licenses during the Branzea period, although some religious groups still complained of delays. According to a book published by Branzea, from September 1999 to October 2000 the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations granted 133 building licenses to the Orthodox Church, 22 to the Greek Catholic Church, 7 to the Roman Catholic Church, and 13 to the Pentecostal Church.

Since the new Government came in power in December 2000, no approvals have been granted on the grounds that the Government is changing the composition and mission of the commission in charge of issuing such approvals. Some religious groups allege that this is a pretext used by the Government to deny them approval for the construction of places of worship. In May 2001, the new Government instituted new regulations for the commission. While these new regulations no longer differentiate between recognized religions and unrecognized religions in terms of the types of places of worship that can be built, they include provisions that could make approvals more difficult to obtain. For example, the commission is entitled to decide on the "opportuneness" of building the place of worship.

The law does not prohibit or punish assembly for peaceful religious activities. However, several different minority religious groups complained that on various occasions local authorities and Orthodox priests prevented religious activities from taking place, even when they had been issued permits. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church reported difficulties in getting approvals to use public halls for religious activities in the villages of Luna, Baiut, and Valenii de Maramures (Maramures Coun-

ty). Even when the Church could obtain permission, Orthodox priests incited the local population against activities sponsored by the Adventist Church. The religious activities of the Baptist Church and the Evangelical Alliance often have been obstructed by the local authorities under the influence of the local Orthodox clergy in Crucea, Valul lui Traian (Constanta County), Isaccea (Tulcea County), Fratilesti, Savesti (Ialomita County), Vinatori, Tulucesti (Galati County), Sutesti, Gemenele (Braila County). According to Jehovah's Witnesses, in January 2001 a school principal in Tirgu Neamt (Neamt County) was asked by the mayor to resign on the grounds of his religious affiliation, allegedly following pressure by the local Orthodox priest.

The Government permits, but does not require religious instruction in public schools. Only the 15 recognized religions are entitled to hold religion classes in public schools. While the law permits instruction according to the faith of students' parents, minority recognized religious groups complain that they have been unable to have classes offered in their faith in public schools. According to minority religious groups, this happens mostly because the local inspectors for religion classes are Orthodox priests who deny accreditation to teachers of other religions. Religious teachers are permitted to instruct only students of the same religious faith. However, minority religious groups credibly asserted that there were cases of children pressured to attend classes of Orthodox religion, despite the fact that religion classes were optional, according to the Education Law. The Jehovah's Witnesses Association reported one case in Agapia (Neamt County), where a child member was subject to the threat of not graduating unless she attended the Orthodox religion classes. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church reported similar situations in Crasna Viseului (Maramures County), Ciocanari and Mircea Voda (Braila County), Provita (Prahova County), Tirgoviste and Bucsani (Dimbovita County).

Only the 15 recognized religions are entitled to give religious assistance to prisoners. Minority recognized religious groups complained that Orthodox priests denied them access to some penitentiaries. Seventh-Day Adventists asserted that they were not allowed to give religious assistance in the penitentiaries of Gherla and Poarta Alba. Moreover, Orthodox priests in the penitentiaries of Margineni and Gaesti gave their approval only after reviewing religious material to be handed over to the prisoners. The Baptist Church also had difficulties in getting access to the penitentiaries of Oradea, Satu Mare, and Carei.

In May 2001, the Parliament overturned government Decree 106 of 2000. Accordingly, there is no legislation at present regarding military clergy. Decree 106 of August 2000 entitled the 15 recognized religions to have military clergy trained to render religious assistance to conscripts. According to minority religions, with the exception of two representatives of the Catholic and the Evangelical Alliance, the military clergy is comprised only of Orthodox priests. The Baptist Church has similar complaints concerning religious instruction and military clergy.

The Parliament has passed no law restituting religious or communal properties, large numbers of which were seized under the Communist regimes. Some religious or communal property has been returned to former owners as a result of government decrees, or with the agreement of local religious leaders. The center-right government in office between 1996 and 2000 issued four decrees and a government decision, restituting 100 buildings to religious and national minorities. A fifth decree, 94 of 2000, would have returned 10 buildings to each territorial unit of each religious denomination from which property was seized. An October 2000 government decree created a commission to consider a list of properties submitted by churches under Decree 94 of 2000. According to this decree, both the Hungarian churches and the Greek Catholic Church would have received buildings. However, following the election of the new Government, implementation of this decree was halted, and no properties actually have been restituted under the provisions of Decree 94 of 2000.

In many cases religious minorities have not succeeded in regaining actual possession of the properties despite restitution by these decrees. Many properties returned by decree house state offices, schools, hospitals, or cultural institutions that would require relocation, and lawsuits and protests by current possessors have delayed restitution of the property to the rightful owners.

Law 10 of 2001 on nationalized buildings, passed in January 2001, specifies that a different law is to address the restitution of communal property. This law excepts from restitution the properties now being used "in the public interest," such as hospitals, schools, cultural buildings, party headquarters, nongovernmental organization (NGO) offices, and day-care centers. In some cases, the former owners are to receive compensation, the value of which is unclear. A law on compensation is expected to be adopted at a later, unspecified date.

The Greek Catholic community has been less successful than any other group in regaining its properties. The Greek Catholic Church was the second largest denomi-

nation (about 1.5 million adherents out of a population of about 15 million) in 1948 when Communist authorities outlawed it and dictated its forced merger with the Romanian Orthodox Church. The latter received most of the former Greek Catholic properties, including over 2,600 churches and other facilities.

According to the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations, the Greek Catholic Church has received 200 of the churches transferred by the Communists to the Orthodox Church; the Greek Catholics claim they have received only 137 such properties. The Greek Catholic Church has very few places of worship. Many followers still are compelled to hold services in public places (approximately 105 such cases, according to Greek Catholic reports) or in parks (3 cases, in Baia Mare, Prunis, and Rosia Montana, according to the same reports.) In 1992 the Government adopted a decree that listed 80 properties owned by the Greek Catholic Church to be returned. Between 60 and 65 of them have been returned to date. In some cases, Orthodox priests whose families had been Greek Catholics converted back to Greek Catholicism and brought their parishes and churches back with them to the Greek Catholic Church. In several counties, in particular in Transylvania, local Orthodox leaders have given up smaller country churches voluntarily. For example, in the Diocese of Lugoj in the southwestern part of the country, local Orthodox Church representatives have reached agreement on the return of an estimated 160 churches; however, for the most part Orthodox leaders have refused to return to the Greek Catholics those churches that they acquired during the Communist era. Since July 2000, the Greek Catholic Church has recovered only 1 church and 500 of the 3,200 square meters of land it claimed in the village of Unirea (Cluj County). Orthodox Archbishop of Timisoara, Nicolae Corneanu, was responsible for returning some churches, including the cathedral in Lugoj, to the Greek Catholic Church. However, due to his actions, the Orthodox Holy Synod marginalized Archbishop Corneanu and his fellow clergymen criticized him.

A 1990 government decree called for the creation of a joint Orthodox and Greek Catholic committee to decide the fate of churches that had belonged to the Greek Catholic Church before 1948. However, the Government has not enforced this decree, and the Orthodox Church consistently has resisted efforts to resolve the issue in that forum. The committee did not meet until October 1998 and had three more meetings in 1999. The courts generally refuse to consider Greek Catholic lawsuits seeking restitution, citing the 1990 decree establishing the joint committee to resolve the issue. From the initial property list of 2,600 seized properties, the Greek Catholic Church has reduced the properties that it is asking to be returned to fewer than 300, all of them churches. No agreement on these returns has come from the joint committee meetings. Restitution of the existing churches is important to both sides because local residents are likely to attend the church whether it is Greek Catholic or Orthodox. Thus the number of members and share of the state budget allocation for religions is at stake. At the most recent meeting of the joint committee on September 28, 2000, the Orthodox Church proposed once again to help the Greek Catholics build new churches and agreed to hold alternate religious services with the Greek Catholics for a short period of time until new churches are built. A new meeting of the committee was scheduled for October 2001.

The historical Hungarian churches, including the Roman Catholic as well as the Protestant churches (Reformed, Evangelical, and Unitarian), have received a small number of their properties back from the Government. Churches from these denominations were closed but not seized by the Communist regimes. However, the Communist regimes confiscated many of these groups' secular properties, which still are used for public schools, museums, libraries, post offices, and student dormitories. Of the 1,791 buildings reclaimed by the Hungarian churches, 110 buildings were restituted by government decrees. Of these 110 buildings, 80 should have been restituted according to government Decree 94 of 2000. Of the remaining 30, the Hungarian churches could take full or at least partial possession of only 8 buildings. The restitution of another 9 buildings is in progress. Restitution of the remainder has been delayed due to lawsuits or opposition from current possessors. For example, restitution under Decree 13 of 1998 of the Roman-Catholic Bishop's Palace in Oradea and the Batthyanaeum Library (which had also belonged to the Roman Catholic Church) has been delayed by lawsuits. In addition, the new Minister of Culture and Religious Denominations has stated that he is opposed to their restitution, irrespective of the court rulings on these lawsuits.

The Jewish community has received, by government decree, 42 buildings. Of these, the community has completed the paperwork for the restitution of only 15, and lawsuits are in progress for 7 of these 15 properties. The Jewish community has been able to reclaim land only in Iasi, where it received 15 pieces of land (of former synagogues and schools) between 1999 and 2000.

Another problem with restitution is often a simple refusal by the possessor to return a property or pay rent for occupancy. The nominal owner still can be held liable for payment of property taxes in such cases. For example, the former Reformed College was restituted to the Reformed Church in Cluj by government decree in 1999. The building currently is used as a high school, which does not pay any rent, and the Reformed Church has had to pay property taxes but has not been able to occupy the property.

According to Law 1 of 2000, religious denominations are entitled to claim between 25 to 250 acres of farmland (depending on the type of religious unit—parish, eparchy, bishopric, etc.) and up to 75 acres of forest land from properties seized by the Communists. This is the first law that establishes a systematic procedure for churches to claim land. However, the implementation of this provision has been delayed and the Government has expressed an intention to modify the law.

The Hungarian churches repeatedly have expressed dissatisfaction with the Government's failure to allow by law the establishment of confessional schools subsidized by the State.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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 are generally amicable relations among the different religious groups. However, the Romanian Orthodox Church repeatedly has criticized strongly the "aggressive proselytizing" of Protestant, neo-Protestant, and other religious groups, which the Church has repeatedly described as "sects." There is no law against proselytizing, or clear understanding of what activities consist of proselytizing. Proselytizing that involves denigrating established churches is perceived as provocative. This has led to conflicts in some cases. For example, an Orthodox priest beat a Mormon missionary in the streets of Pitesti (Arges County) in May 2001. The police, although not very cooperative initially, eventually contributed to resolving this conflict. On June 20, 2001, members of the "New Right" (Noua Drapta) organization (a small, right-extreme group with nationalistic, xenophobic views) allegedly beat four Mormon missionaries while riding on a streetcar in Bucharest. Harassment of Jehovah's Witnesses in Mizil continued during the period covered by this report. In July 2000, during a trial initiated by persons with ties to the Orthodox Church, the court in Mizil ordered six members of Jehovah's Witnesses to pay penal fines on charges of insult and assault. A higher county court rejected Jehovah's Witnesses appeal in December 2000. Jehovah's Witnesses have decided to file a complaint with the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The centuries-long domination of the Orthodox Church, and its status as the majority religion, has resulted in the Orthodox Church's reluctance (in particular at the local level and with the support of low-level officials) to accept the existence of other religions. Consequently, actions by other religious groups to attract members are perceived by the Orthodox Church as attempts to diminish the number of its members. Due to its substantial influence, few politicians dare to sponsor bills and measures that would oppose the Orthodox Church. According to minority religious groups, the population is receptive to minority Christian confessions and local officials tend to be tolerant but often are pressured and intimidated by the Orthodox clergy. Minority religious groups allege that the Orthodox clergy have provoked isolated mob incidents.

Representatives of minority religions credibly complain that only Orthodox priests grant religious assistance in hospitals, children's homes, and shelters for the elderly. Charitable activities carried out by other churches in children's homes and shelters often have been interpreted as proselytizing. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church mentioned incidents mostly in rural areas, where Orthodox priests had not allowed Adventist ministers to conduct the burial rituals in localities where the number of Adventist members was small. Such cases occurred in Costesti and Armasu (Bacau County), Cuparu and Doicesti (Dambovita County), Busteni and Cojasca (Prahova County), Scinteia and Progresu (Ialomita County), Malu (Giurgiu County), as well as in some localities in Galati, Bacau, and Iasi Counties. However, in most cases, the problems were resolved with the intervention of the prefect, the representative of the central Government to the country's counties.

The Greek Catholic, Baptist, and Pentecostal Churches also have reported similar refusals by Orthodox clergy to allow the burial of the believers of these churches

in Orthodox cemeteries. Cases have occurred in Negresti Oas (Satu Mare County), according to Greek Catholic reports, and in Bihor County, according to Baptist reports.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church also reported a series of peaceful assemblies that were disrupted by noisy groups, allegedly incited by Orthodox clergy, including incidents in Ciudanovita and Glimoca (Caras Severin County). According to Adventists, Orthodox priests beat school children for having participated in Adventist meetings and Orthodox priests insulted Adventist members, for example in Perieni (Ias County).

In some areas, Orthodox clergy threatened Baptists ministers in order to make them leave the localities.

According to the Baha'i Faith, a show and an exhibit sponsored by their association in Herestrau Park in Bucharest in July 2000 were disrupted by a group of youths, who called them a "sect," used the Nazi greeting, shouted "long live the Orthodox Church," and destroyed all the exhibit materials. The police cooperated with the Baha'is in investigating the incident.

In addition, the dialog between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic churches has not eliminated disputes at the local level and has led to little real progress in solving the problem of the restitution of the Greek Catholic assets (see Section II).

The disputes between Greek Catholics and Orthodox believers over church possession have decreased in number during the period covered by this report. This was due mostly to the Greek Catholics' decision in many cases to build new churches, following lack of progress made in obtaining their properties back either by dialog with the Orthodox Church or in court. Tensions continue to exist in Prunis (Cluj County) where most of the residents belong to the Greek Catholic Church and are forced to hold religious services in the open because the Orthodox priest does not allow them to use the church. In Decea (Alba County) tensions increased when the Orthodox priest locked the church so that the Greek Catholics could not use it. In Bicsad (Satu Mare County), where the Greek Catholics obtained a government decision restituting a former Greek Catholic monastery, the Greek Catholic Church still could not take possession of the monastery because of the opposition of the local Orthodox clergy. Local authorities have not supported the enforcement of the Government's decision.

In Dumbraveni the Orthodox Church's opposition to a court-ordered resolution to share the local church has forced the Greek Catholics to hold their religious services in a high school. The Orthodox Church eventually decided to build a new church and to restitute the old one to the Greek Catholics after it is completed. Until then, the Greek Catholics continue holding the religious service in the school building.

Most mainstream politicians have criticized anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia publicly. In March 2001, President Ion Iliescu strongly condemned racism, xenophobia, and intolerance in his address to an international symposium on this issue. However, the fringe press continued to publish anti-Semitic articles. Legionnaire (an extreme nationalist, anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi group) books from the interwar period continued to be published. There have been repeated attempts to deny the Holocaust in the country (through symposia and press articles) and to rehabilitate World War II dictator Marshal Ion Antonescu. Three textbooks on sects and ecumenism, authored by an Orthodox deacon for use in schools, disseminate anti-Semitic, pro-Fascist, and antiecumenical ideas.

In May 2001, the Israeli ambassador expressed concern about the publication of two jokes about the extermination of Jews by the Nazis in a book published by a member of the right-extreme Greater Romania Party (PRM). The Minister of Justice called for an investigation, the publishing house sent a letter of apology to the Israeli Ambassador, and the PRM leader apologized to the Jewish community.

Over the period covered by the report, Jewish cemeteries were desecrated in six localities. The perpetrator was identified in only one case. The perpetrators in the other five cases could not be identified, but are believed to have been local youths, rather than members of an organized anti-Semitic movement. Four synagogues were desecrated during the same period. In December 2000, the Museum of Jewish History in Bucharest was ransacked. President Iliescu and other prominent figures expressed concern about this act of vandalism. The perpetrators remained unidentified.

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. The Embassy met with the PSDR Government early in 2001 when it seemed about to resubmit the old religious bill, and reiterated the U.S. Government's objections to it, as had

been done had with the previous Government. The Embassy also maintains close contact with a broad range of religious groups in the country. Embassy staff, including the human rights officer, political counselor, and the Ambassador, met with religious leaders and government officials who work on religious affairs in Bucharest and in other cities.

In addition, Embassy staff members are in frequent contact with numerous NGO's that monitor developments in the country's religious life. U.S. officials have lobbied consistently in government circles for fair treatment on property restitution issues, including religious and communal properties. The Embassy has a core group of officials who focus on fostering good ethnic relations, including relations between religious groups.

The U.S. Embassy has developed an International Visitors program on religious freedom, within which a group of clergy belonging to different religious denominations traveled to the U.S. for 3 weeks in June 2001.

RUSSIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Although the Constitution also provides for the equality of all religions before the law and for the separation of church and state, in practice the Government does not always respect the provision for equality of religions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Local authorities continued to restrict the rights of some religious minorities in some regions. Despite court decisions which liberalized its interpretation, the complex 1997 "Law on Religion," which replaced a more generous 1990 law, seriously disadvantages religious groups that are new to the country by making it difficult for them to register as religious organizations, and thus obtain the status of juridical person, which includes the right to establish bank accounts, own property, issue invitations to foreign guests, publish literature, and conduct worship services in prisons and state-owned hospitals. However, individuals affiliated with unregistered faiths are entitled to rent facilities where religious services can be held.

The Ministry of Justice reported that as of January 31, 2001, more than 20,215 organizations had sought registration or reregistration, and 2095 of these faced the possibility of "liquidation," i.e. deprivation of juridical status. These included large numbers of Muslim congregations, as well as local congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Salvation Army, the Church of Scientology, Seventh-Day Adventists, Pentecostals, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), most of which had officially registered national organizations. There were reports that by May 2001 around 100 organizations had been liquidated. The Ministry of Justice stated that most of these were defunct, but religious minority denominations and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) noted that a number were active and had attempted to reregister. Some of these cases involving active groups were being contested in court as of the end of the period covered by this report.

Contradictions between federal and local law in some regions, and varying interpretations of the law, provide regional officials with pretexts to restrict the activities of religious minorities. Discriminatory practices at the local level are also attributable to the relatively greater susceptibility of local governments to lobbying by majority religions, as well as to discriminatory attitudes that are held widely in society. President Vladimir Putin's articulated desire for greater centralization of power and strengthened rule of law led to some improvements in the area of religious freedom in the regions.

Over the last 2 years there have been indications of a growing convergence between the Russian Orthodox Church and the State. The Church has entered into a number of agreements, some formal, others informal, with government ministries on such matters as guidelines for public education, religious training for government employees and military personnel, and, in certain cases, law enforcement and customs decisions, that appear to give it a preferred position. There is evidence that the Procurator General has encouraged local prosecutors to challenge the registration and reregistration of some non-traditional religious groups. In a number of such cases, local courts have upheld the right of non-traditional groups to register or reregister.

The authorities forcibly hospitalized a Unification Church member in a psychiatric ward for 9 days while they attempted to gather evidence against the group. There were isolated instances in which local officials detained individuals engaged in public discussion of their religious views.

While religious matters are not a source of societal hostility for most citizens, relations between different religious organizations are frequently tense, particularly at the leadership level, and there continue to be instances of religiously motivated violence. Popular attitudes toward Muslims are negative in many regions, and there are manifestations of anti-Semitism as well as societal hostility toward newer, non-Orthodox, religions.

The U.S. Government has continued to engage the Government, a number of religious denominations and groups, NGO's, and others in a steady dialog on religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of about 6.5 million square miles and its population is approximately 147.5 million.

There are no reliable statistics that break down the country's population by denomination. Available information suggests that slightly more than half of all inhabitants consider themselves Russian Orthodox Christians, although the vast majority are not regular churchgoers. In an opinion poll conducted in February 2000 and published in the newspaper Argumenty i Fakty on April 26, 2000, 54 percent of the respondents (of an unknown total number) stated that they were Russian Orthodox, 3 percent Muslims, 0.4 percent Catholic, 0.3 percent Jewish, 1 percent "other religions," and 39 percent atheist or agnostic. However, these statistics do not reflect the considerable growth in the numbers of Protestant believers, many of whose congregations are unregistered. By some estimates, Protestants constitute the third largest group of believers after Orthodox Christians and Muslims. An estimated 600,000 to one million Jews remain in Russia (0.5 percent of the total population) following large-scale emigration over the last two decades. The vast majority of Jews, about 80 percent, live in Moscow or St. Petersburg.

The Ministry of Justice reports that as of the end of January 2001, approximately 18,130 organizations were registered or reregistered, compared with approximately 16,000 in 1987. The number of groups reregistered at that time of the Ministry of Justice report was as follows: Russian Orthodox Church 7,910 groups, Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church 37, Russian Orthodox Church Abroad 20, Ukrainian Orthodox Church 8, Old Believer 171, Roman Catholic 205, Armenian Apostolic 29, Muslim 2,610, Buddhist 110, Jewish 100, Baptist 672, Pentecostal 518, Seventh-Day Adventist 305, Lutheran 167, Apostolic 61, Methodist 53, Presbyterian 107, Anglican 1, Jehovah's Witnesses 203, Salvation Army 4, Mormons 14, Krishna 71, Baha'i 16, Unification Church 2. In addition, 4,739 organizations, which may include both new affiliates of the denominations listed above or new organizations, registered for the first time.

The number of registered religious organizations does not reflect the entire demography of religious believers. For example, as a result of a number of problems related to both intraconfessional disputes and poor administrative procedures on the part of local authorities, an estimated 500 to several thousand Muslim organizations remain unregistered. The registration figures probably also underestimate the number of Pentecostal believers. New Pentecostal organizations are being formed rapidly, and unofficial estimates suggest that there are between 1,500 and 2,000 Pentecostal congregations nationwide, many of which are unregistered. In addition to those listed, the Unification Church has at least 28 other organizations that it is unable to register.

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, although the Constitution also provides for the equality of all religions before the law and the separation of church and state, in practice the Government does not always respect the provision for equality of religions.

In 1990, the Soviet Government adopted a law on religious freedom designed to make all religions equal before the law. (After the breakup of the Soviet Union, this law became part of the Russian Federation's legal code.) The 1990 law forbade government interference in religion and established simple registration procedures for religious groups. Registration of religious groups was not required, but groups could obtain a number of advantages by registering, such as the ability to establish official places of worship or benefit from tax exemptions. The 1990 Religion Law helped facilitate a revival of religious activity.

In October 1997, the Duma enacted and then-President Boris Yeltsin signed, a new, restrictive, and potentially discriminatory law on religion. The 1997 Religion Law ostensibly targeted so-called "totalitarian sects" or dangerous religious "cults." However, the intent of some of the law's sponsors appears to have been to discriminate against members of foreign and less well-established religions by making it difficult for them to manifest their beliefs through organized religious institutions.

The 1997 Law on Religion is very complex, with many ambiguous and contradictory provisions. It creates various categories of religious communities with differing levels of legal status and privileges. The law distinguishes between religious "groups" and "organizations," and creates two categories of organizations: "regional" and "centralized." A religious "group" is a congregation of worshipers that is not registered and consequently does not have the legal status of a juridical person—it may not open a bank account, own property, issue invitations to foreign guests, publish literature, or conduct worship services in prisons and state-owned hospitals. A "group" does not enjoy tax benefits and other rights extended to religious organizations, such as the right of its members to proselytize. The law does not purport to abridge the rights of individual members of groups in other respects. For example, a member of a religious group can buy property for the group's use, invite personal guests to engage in religious instruction, and import religious material. Groups are permitted to rent public spaces and hold services. Nonetheless, in practice, groups that are not registered encounter formidable difficulty in achieving these rights.

The 1997 law provided that local congregations that had existed for 15 years were eligible for registration as local "organizations." A "centralized religious organization" can be founded by a confession that has 3 functioning local "organizations" (each of which must have at least 10 members who are citizens) in different regions. A centralized organization has the right to establish affiliated local organizations without adhering to the 15-year rule. In implementing this provision, the Government has extended this definition to include a "registered centralized managing center." Among the law's most controversial provisions are those that limit the rights, activities, and status of religious "groups" existing in the country for less than 15 years and require that religious groups exist for 15 years before they can qualify for "organization" status.

Implementation of the 1997 law has been a source of concern for many religious minorities, especially those based outside the country. Groups that did not manage to register under the old law or groups that are new to the country are severely hindered in their ability to practice their faith. However, for those that were registered before the passage of the 1997 law, the situation is somewhat better. The Constitutional Court's November 1999 ruling effectively "grandfathered in" a number of religious organizations that were registered at the time the 1997 law was passed but could not prove 15 years of operation in Russia.

In practice the registration process, which involves simultaneous registration at both the federal and local levels, has proven to be onerous for a number of confessions, because it requires considerable time, effort, and legal expense. International and well-funded domestic religious organizations, in particular, began the reregistration process soon after publication of the regulations governing reregistration. However, other religious groups faced significant problems in registration and reregistration, and local officials refused to register some groups.

Officials of the Presidential Administration, the regions, and localities have established consultative mechanisms to facilitate government interaction with religious communities and to monitor application of the Law on Religion. Groups interact with a special governmental interministerial commission on religion, which includes representatives from law enforcement bodies, on matters involving implementation of the laws and similar questions. On broader policy questions, religious groups interact with a special department within the Presidential Administration's Directorate for Domestic Policy. Nevertheless, as a result of the lack of specific guidance on how to apply the 1997 law correctly and the shortage of knowledgeable local officials, registering before the December 31, 2000, deadline was a significant obstacle for a number of religious bodies, which are either subject to liquidation or have been liquidated.

According to Ministry of Justice figures published in May 2001, approximately 18,130 organizations were reregistered or registered anew, while 2,095 (10 percent of 20,215) organizations are subject to liquidation (elimination of legal status as a juridical person). This represents an increase of over 1200 organizations officially registered since the 1997 religion law went into effect. Ministry of Justice officials estimate that as of May 2001, nearly 100 organizations have been liquidated through court proceedings. The majority of such organizations may exist on paper only. However, some of them appear to have been liquidated after repeated attempts to register with the local branch of the Ministry of Justice failed.

Religious groups also can work through a Presidential Council on Cooperation with Religious Organizations, composed of members of the Presidential Administration, secular academics who are specialists on religious affairs, and representatives of religious denominations making up the majority of believers in the country. In March 2000, the Government announced that the Council had been reorganized, reduced in size, and its membership changed. All government officials who previously held positions on the Council, other than those representing the Presidential Administration, lost their seats. Religious denominations also lost several seats, and in some cases groups that had previously had several representatives were reduced to only one. This reorganization was criticized by some groups. For example, longtime Council member Rabbi Adolf Shayevich of the Moscow Choral Synagogue lost his seat to his rival Rabbi Berel Lazar of the Moscow Lubavitch community, who has tended not to criticize the Russian Government under Putin; this led to allegations of government favoritism and politically motivated interference in the affairs of the Jewish community. Other groups such as Pentecostals, which have several large umbrella organizations, were allowed only one representative as well. Some NGO's have alleged that the prominent role of members of the Presidential Administration in the Council's activities gives the Council a greater influence with the Ministry of Justice on registering some religious groups than those implied in its mandated advisory role.

Religious groups also can interact with the authorities through the offices of the new Plenipotentiary Presidential District Representatives (PolPreds) of the seven newly formed districts of the Russian Federation. In the administrative structures of at least some of the Polpreds, offices have been designated to deal with social and religious issues. There is also a department of religious affairs in each regional administration and in many municipal administrations. However, it is at the regional and municipal level that religious minorities often encounter the greatest problems.

The office of Russian Federation Human Rights Ombudsman Oleg Mironov set up a department dedicated to religious freedom issues. This department receives numerous complaints from individuals and groups about infringement of religious freedom. Mironov has criticized the 1997 Religion Law publicly on many occasions and recommended changes to bring it into accordance with international standards and with the Constitution. He also lobbied President Putin unsuccessfully to extend the deadline for reregistration. Nevertheless, some argue that these efforts come too late for organizations facing liquidation, since the deadline for reregistration expired December 31, 2000.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Among the Law on Religion's most controversial provisions are those that limit the rights, activities, and status of religious "groups" existing in the country for less than 15 years and require that religious groups exist for 15 years before they can qualify for "organization" status. These articles may violate the Constitution's provision of equality before the law of all religious confessions.

The cases of a Khakasiya Pentecostal church and the Yaroslavl Jehovah's Witnesses formed the basis of a constitutional challenge to the Law on Religion filed with the Constitutional Court in May 1998 by the Institute for Religion and Law, an NGO. The petitioners claimed that the provision of the law requiring religious organizations to prove 15 years of existence in the country in order to register is unconstitutional. In a November 1999 hearing, the Constitutional Court upheld the 15-year provision, but also ruled that religious organizations registered before the passage of the 1997 law need not meet the 15-year requirement in order to registered.

However, this ruling does not enable independent churches with less than 15 years in the country to register as religious organizations unless they were registered before the passage of the law or affiliate themselves with existing centralized organizations. The Institute for Religion and Law and other NGO's note that this is a significant restriction for small independent religious communities and foreign-based "new religions," such as the Church of Scientology. Also, some domestic human rights activists are concerned by language in the ruling that cites 1993 and 1996 decisions in the European Court of Human Rights regarding religious sects, and upholds the right of the Government to place certain limits on the activity of religious groups in the interests of national security. The Security Council adopted a National Security Concept in the spring of 2000 that includes a specific warning on the allegedly negative impact of foreign missionary activity.

Despite the Federal Government's efforts to implement the 1997 Religion Law liberally and to provide assurances that religious freedom would be observed, restrictions continue at the local level. The vagueness of the law and regulations, the contradictions between federal and local law, and varying interpretations provide re-

gional officials with a pretext for restricting the activities of religious minorities. Discriminatory practices at the local level are partly attributable to the decentralization of power that occurred during the Yeltsin era. They are also due to the relatively greater susceptibility of local governments to lobbying by majority religions and discriminatory attitudes that are held widely in society. However, under the Putin Administration, the Government has attempted to rectify this situation to some degree by introducing measures to strengthen the center in its relations with the regions. As part of this effort, President Putin divided the country into seven districts overseen by the Polpreds and introduced a federal register to ensure that local legislation conforms to the Federation's Constitution and federal laws.

Since 1994, 33 of the country's 89 regional governments have passed laws and decrees intended to restrict the activities of religious groups. In May 2001, the Ministry of Justice reported that these 33 regions passed 50 regional laws and other legislative bills relating to freedom of religion. The Ministry determined that 35 of these were unconstitutional or not in conformity with federal legislation. The Federal Government was not able to challenge effectively the unconstitutionality of these restrictions before the advent of the Putin administration, although under President Yeltsin it sent warnings to 30 regions regarding the unconstitutionality of local laws concerning religion. In 2000 and the first half of 2001, regional administrations have been required to register local laws, a procedure that ensures that they are in accordance with federal legislation. This process of centralization and coordination of authority was continuing as of the end of the period covered by this report. As of the end of May 2001, 6 of the 35 laws were rescinded, and 8 were brought into conformance with federal law. The Federal Government is able to work through the Procurator, Minister of Justice, Presidential Administration, and the courts to force regions to comply with federal law. The Government also has become more active in preventing or reversing discriminatory actions taken at the local level by more actively disseminating information to the regions and, when necessary, reprimanding the officials at fault. For example, the Presidential Academy of State Service has actively worked with religious freedom advocates such as the Slavic Center for Law and Justice to train regional and municipal officials in properly implementing the law.

Implementation of the 1997 law has been a source of concern by many religious minorities, especially those based outside the country. Groups that did not manage to register under the old law or groups that are new to the country are severely hindered in their ability to practice their faith. However, for those that were registered before passage of the 1997 law, the situation is somewhat better. The Constitutional Court's November 1999 ruling effectively "grandfathered in" a number of religious organizations that were registered at the time the 1997 law was passed but could not prove 15 years of operation in Russia. For example, in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, the 15 year rule no longer prevented the registration of newly created local Jehovah's Witnesses religious organizations, nor reregistration of organizations which were registered at the time of implementation of the 1997 law, but which were less than 15 years old.

In practice the registration process, which involves simultaneous registration at both the federal and local levels, has proven onerous for a number of confessions; it requires considerable time, effort, and legal expense. International and well-funded domestic religious organizations, in particular, began the reregistration process soon after publication of the regulations governing reregistration. Russian Pentecostal groups, which have a solid and growing network of churches throughout the country, sought guidance from the Ministry of Justice on reregistration as early as November 1997. However, a large number of Pentecostal parishes (by some estimates up to 500) remain unregistered. This is partially because some congregations refuse to register out of philosophical convictions. In many other cases, local officials, sometimes prejudiced by close relations with local Russian Orthodox officials, have refused to register Pentecostal and other non-Orthodox organizations.

According to NGO and media reports and government officials, registration of Muslim religious organizations proceeded slowly, leaving many local religious organizations unable to reregister before the December 31, 2000, deadline. The process was complicated by irregularities in registration in some Muslim regions like Bashkortostan and Dagestan, which required federal intervention. An intraconfessional conflict between rival Muslim groups exacerbated the situation. A struggle between the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims in European Russia and Siberia, based in Ufa and led by Mufti Talgat Tadzhuddin, and the Moscow-based Russian Council of Muftis, led by Chief Mufti Ravil Gainutdin, appears to have hindered reregistration efforts by Muslim organizations. According to the Ministry of Justice, only 2,610 Muslim organizations had reregistered by May 2001, a decrease of nearly 400 registered organizations compared to 1997. The mutual accusations of

"Wahhabism" by the two groups have complicated matters, since this pejorative label (as used in Russia) may have had a detrimental affect on reregistration in certain regions and has made local ethnic Russians more wary of Muslim religious organizations. (The word "Wahhabi" refers to a Sunni branch of Islam that has become a pejorative term in Russia because of persistent allegations that "Wahhabi extremism" is to blame for terrorist attacks linked to the war in Chechnya.) Recognizing the scope of the problem, federal officials have directed that local branches of the Ministry of Justice refrain from liquidating Muslim organizations until the problem can be resolved. The implication is that those organizations that did not manage to reregister are expected to be able to do so even though the deadline passed several months ago. However, according to an April 11, 2000, report by Keston News Service, Kabardino-Balkariya authorities have liquidated 37 Muslim organizations that failed to submit documents for reregistration. Keston News Service also reported in April that the Kabardino-Balkaria regional parliament had passed a law banning extremist religious activities that was aimed primarily at "Wahhabism." A similar ban exists in Dagestan.

On November 24, 2000, Keston news service reported that the Federal Security Service (FSB) provided information to local newspapers in Kostroma to discredit the pastor of a local Pentecostal Church involved in litigation over its impending liquidation. Despite the fact that the articles appeared before the court process began, the Church won its court case.

The Church of Scientology has experienced many problems with both registration and harassment from the authorities. It was registered as a religious organization only in Moscow in 1994. Despite repeated attempts to reregister this organization in Moscow, the Moscow office of the Ministry of Justice reconsidered reregistering the organization only after many refusals and a December 2000 court ruling. However, the Ministry, having consulted with the Procurator, decided to challenge the court's decision. As a result, the Church is still not reregistered and faces liquidation.

In its preamble (which government officials insist has no legal standing), the 1997 Religion Law recognizes the "special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia's spirituality and culture." It accords "respect" to Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and certain other religions as an inseparable part of the country's historical heritage. Many citizens firmly believe that at least nominal adherence to the Russian Orthodox Church is at the heart of what it means to be Russian. This belief appears to have manifested itself in a church-state relationship that is detrimental to non-Orthodox denominations.

Under the 1997 Religion Law, representative offices of foreign religious organizations are required to register with state authorities. They are barred from conducting liturgical services and other religious activity unless they have acquired the status of a group or organization. Although the law officially requires all foreign religious organizations to register, in practice foreign religious representatives' offices (those not registered under law) have opened without registering or have been accredited to a registered religious organization. However, those offices cannot carry out religious activities and do not have the status of a religious "organization."

The Russian Orthodox Church has made special arrangements with government agencies to conduct religious education and to provide spiritual counseling. Although other denominations, such as Protestant groups, have been granted access to military personnel, it is on a much more limited basis than that accorded to the Russian Orthodox Church. The Church has signed agreements with the Ministries of Education, Defense, Health, Interior, and the Tax Ministry over the last year. The details of these agreements are far from transparent, but from the information available the Church appears to be accorded preferential treatment over other denominations by these ministries.

Deputy Minister of Education Chepurnykh sent out a letter July 12, 2000, to all institutions of higher education warning of the threat from certain Western religious groups termed "extremist and destructive" and accusing the West of trying to undermine citizens by introducing "Western values" into education. Among the "cults" mentioned in the letter are Jehovah's Witnesses, the Unification Church, the Church of Scientology, and the Mormons. The arguments in the letter echo statements made by Church officials including Patriarch Aleksiy II, who was reported on a December 20, 2000, television program as saying that the Russian Orthodox Church was concerned by the flood of various "cults" into Russia and by "pseudomissionaries." The Patriarch declared that, "certain forces want Satanists and other cults on our land, who employ psychotropic methods of hypnosis and steal the souls of our fellow countrymen." When the contents of the Ministry of Education letter became public, numerous minority denominations and NGO's protested. The

Keston Institute on November 17, 2000 reported that its correspondent received mixed responses from Ministry of Education officials. One official reportedly said that the Deputy Minister's letter contained "incorrect formulations," while another official vigorously defended it and claimed that foreign "cults" were behind a wave of ritual killings in schools and that "something had to be done about it."

During a December 26, 2000, press conference, Lev Levinson, a Moscow Atheist Society representative and legislative aide to Duma deputy Sergey Kovalev, complained that the principle of secular education, guaranteed in the Constitution, has eroded. Levinson complained that in Belgorod school children take Bible study as a compulsory subject. Levinson said that even more troubling to him was that bureaucrats improperly transfer funds to the Orthodox Church. He cited as an example the cases of Moscow municipal authorities in Novo Kosinskaya and Ivanovskaya districts who reportedly contributed about $1,379 (40,000 rubles) toward construction of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior.

Public statements by government officials and anecdotal evidence from religious minority groups suggest that the Russian Orthodox Church, in some cases may enjoy a status that approaches official. For example, religious minority groups based abroad have complained that customs officials at times have forwarded religious literature to the Russian Orthodox Church before approving its entry into the country. On October 6, 2000, NTV reported that then-Minister of Interior Rushaylo told a group that he was worried about the spread of various religious "cults" in Russia. He said that his ministry works closely with the Russian Orthodox Church in the interest of spiritual education and strengthening the moral fiber of Ministry of Interior personnel. Rushaylo admitted that relations with the Orthodox Church were much better than with Muslims, most likely because of the absence of a clear hierarchical structure in the organizations of the latter.

On October 17, 2000, NTV reported that the PolPred for the Urals region, Petr Latyshev, called for "strategic coordination" between the Russian Orthodox Church and the State on the basis of the Constitution and laws. Latyshev added that while all "traditional religious denominations" enjoy equal rights before the law, "we should admit that in our state Orthodoxy was and remains the foundation. We will resist any foreign spiritual expansion, taking every measure to help Orthodoxy without infringing on the rights of traditional religions." The Web site, "strana.ru," reported on December 18, 2000, that Latyshev had signed agreements, the first between a PolPred and the Church, with the Russian Orthodox hierarchy in Chelyabinsk, Yekaterinburg, Tobolsk, and Kurgan. In addition, the Southern regional PolPred, Viktor Kazantsev, has espoused publicly positions reflecting discrimination against certain non-Orthodox denominations. For example, the Stavropol newspaper Verst reported April 10, 2001 that Kazantsev asked the Russian Orthodox Church for help in fighting so-called "cults." In the article, Kazantsev complained that Mormons are taking over the Volgograd region, as are Krishnas in Cherkessya, Satanists and Pagan cults in Dagestan, Protestants in Kalmykiya, and Jehovah's Witnesses in Krasnodar and Stavropol. Kazantsev said, "We need to recognize without giving offense that the Russian State is primarily Orthodox, and we should behave accordingly." At the request of the Church, Kazantsev offered to help institute a course in public schools on Orthodoxy by the next school year.

NTV reported on October 29, 2000, that Minister of Tax Genadiy Bukayev and Patriarch Aleksiy II signed a cooperation agreement between the Tax Ministry and the Church. According to the agreement, "The parties will work together in preparing and conducting seminars and consultations on the most significant questions of taxation of religious organizations and in developing and executing a program in the socio-cultural sphere." On November 28, 2000, Tass news service reported that Rushaylo told a group of representatives from religious groups in Novosibirsk that there was a need to "neutralize sects preaching religious extremism." Rushaylo blamed so-called "Wahhabism" for initiating the conflict in Dagestan and Chechnya and called for "consolidating cooperation between law enforcement bodies and various religious confessions to tackle jointly prevention of religious extremism in Russia."

The Procurator General has been criticized by human rights activists and religious minority denominations for encouraging legal action against some minority religions and recommending, as authoritative, reference materials that are biased against Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and others. In correspondence with the public and government officials from other ministries, the Procurator has recommended literature that is extremely biased and is published by the Russian Orthodox Church. For example, in a letter to the Chelyabinsk Human Rights Ombudsman that came to light during a recent trial, the procurator's office responded to a request for information about Jehovah's Witnesses by recommending a publication by the Missionary Section of the Russian Orthodox Church entitled "New Religious Or-

ganizations in Russia of a Destructive and Occult Nature." In addition, the Procurator has distributed a 1999 manual entitled "Activities of Religious Groups. Psychological and Juridical Aspects: Informational Resource Work for Procurator Personnel," to all regional branches of the procuracy. The manual contains biased descriptions of groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, the Unification Church, and Scientology. Also, the manual appears to provide instructions on how to generate criminal cases against these groups, including sample letters from distraught parents of members of these denominations. After Duma deputy Sergey Kovalev lodged a formal complaint to the Procurator General, a copy of an internal expert analysis was forwarded in response. In the opinion of the Procurator's expert panel, "the authors of the manual in no way instigate religious strife," but rather direct procurator personnel to implement the law on freedom of conscience precisely and correctly."

According to Ministry of Justice figures in May 2001, approximately 18,130 organizations were reregistered or registered anew, while 2,095 (10 percent of 20,215) organizations are subject to liquidation (elimination of legal status as a juridical person). This represents an increase of over 1200 organizations officially registered since the 1997 religion law went into effect. Ministry of Justice officials estimate that as of May 2001, nearly 100 organizations have been liquidated through court proceedings. The majority of such organizations may exist on paper only. However, some of them appear to have been liquidated after the failure of repeated attempts to register with the local branch of the Ministry of Justice. The "Victory of Faith" Pentecostal church in Amursk (Khaborovsk region), for example, was liquidated after repeated attempts to reregister. The local branch of the Ministry of Justice issued a January 25 order to initiate liquidation proceedings, indicating that local authorities ignored oral instructions from federal officials to refrain from initiating liquidation proceedings until February. Eleven affiliated churches that fell under the "Victory of Faith" local religious organization were affected by the liquidation. Church officials and religious freedom advocates claim that the head of the Khabarovsk administration Department of Religion engaged in a campaign against the region's Pentecostals, hindering the church's registration efforts and harassing visiting foreign missionaries with frivolous bureaucratic exercises, such as unnecessary document checks and challenges to valid visas, in an attempt to discourage missionaries from staying in the region. As of end of the period covered by this report, it was unclear whether federal officials would intervene.

Two other groups that experienced problems in reregistering were the Salvation Army and Jehovah's Witnesses. Both have attempted repeatedly to reregister their Moscow local religious organizations without success. In the case of the Salvation Army, it contested the Moscow local branch of the Ministry of Justice's refusal of registration twice in municipal courts, losing both cases. The experience severely hampered the organization's activities as Moscow officials temporarily refrained from cooperating on charity projects, and landlords hesitated to renew leases citing imminent liquidation. The Salvation Army finally succeeded in registering as a centralized religious organization at the federal level in December 2000, but efforts to reverse the denial of registration to the Moscow local organization faced further court challenges at the end of the period covered by this report.

Jehovah's Witnesses unsuccessfully have attempted to reregister the Moscow community of Jehovah's Witnesses, filing an appeal with a municipal court challenging the refusal. As of mid-2001, the case had not come to trial. The municipal judge has postponed the case five times.

In a separate case in Moscow, not originally based on the 1997 law, Jehovah's Witnesses are fighting an attempt by the Procurator to ban the local religious organization on the grounds that it is a danger to society. On February 23, 2001, the Golovinskiy municipal court in Moscow ruled against the Procurator, finding no basis to the accusations. However, the Procurator challenged this ruling successfully in a court of appeal, which sent the case back to the Golovinskiy court. Legal proceedings were continuing at the end of the period covered by this report.

Jehovah's Witnesses indicate that they have experienced problems in reregistering in other locations as well, including Tver, Chelyabinsk, and Kabardino-Balkaria. Legal proceedings in these areas were underway in mid-2001. In Kabardino-Balkariya three local religious organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses were refused reregistration repeatedly, and on April 24, 2001, a judge in Nalchik ordered the Ministry of Justice to reregister the groups. However, the Ministry refused to do so and challenged the decision. In addition, on May 14 a Jehovah's Witnesses local religious organization in the same region was liquidated in separate proceedings. In a number of regions, including Tatarstan, Tula, Lipetsk and Oryol, registration was successfully achieved through the courts. Jehovah's Witnesses have managed to reregister the vast majority of their previously existing religious organizations (199) and

a religious center, despite a handful of difficult cases. Combined with newly registered organizations, they recorded a total of over 300 registered local organizations in 70 regions as of the end of the period covered by this report.

Some religious minority denominations accuse the FSB, Procurator, and other official agencies, of increasingly harassment of certain "nontraditional" denominations, in particular, Pentecostals, Scientologists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Unification Church. Churches have been targeted for ostensible criminal investigations, landlords have been pressured to renege on contracts, and in some cases the security services may have influenced the Ministry of Justice in registration applications.

The Church of Scientology has experienced many problems with both registration and with harassment from the authorities. Since 1999, in particular, the Moscow Scientology Church has come under intense pressure from the authorities. The Procurator formally charged the Church with criminal activities, including distributing medicine illegally. The case was brought to court, but on December 7, 2000, the court returned the case to law enforcement authorities for further investigation because of irregularities in the Procurator's case. In January 2001, the case was resumed but subsequently was dismissed for lack of evidence. The Procurator appealed; however, on May 19 the appellate court upheld the lower court's ruling clearing the Scientologists of all charges. The Church of Scientology reportedly is now considering a legal challenge to the Ministry of Justice's refusal to reregister it. The Church reports that the authorities have impeded the operation of its centers in Dmitrograd, Khabarovsk, Izhevsk, and other localities.

The Moscow Jewish Community, an organization involved in an intraconfessional dispute, came under intense scrutiny from the tax police, the Office of Visa Registration, and the Ministry of Interior for alleged criminal activities. In one instance, the attention came after an unresolved incident of violence within the community. The Commmunity, which is presently registered as a local religious organization, has sought to change its status to that of a central religious organization, but this application has been rejected by the Ministry of Justice's Moscow Administration, the same office that has impeded registration efforts by the Salvation Army and Jehovah's Witnesses. However, most of the law enforcement activities directed against the community appeared to be related to a political dispute between former President of the Russian Jewish Congress, Vladimir Gusinskiy, and the Government.

The office of the Procurator General has harassed Krishna believers with a series of frivolous investigations, including examining literature in order to make an expert opinion of whether the beliefs are harmful to society. In at least one instance in late 2000, experts found no basis to the charge that Krishna beliefs represent a danger, but the case was sent back for further evaluation with the possibility of future legal action.

The Mormons have succeeded in registering 35 local religious organizations. However, in several regions local officials impeded registration. For example, since mid-1998 the Mormons have attempted unsuccessfully to register a local religious organization in Kazan, Tatarstan. The Mormons successfully challenged the refusal in court, and the local branch of the Ministry of Justice registered the group. However, the Tatarstan authorities revoked the organization's registration. The Mormons maintain that this action was illegal. The Mormons also have had difficulty in securing visas for some of their foreign missionaries coming to Russia; in particular, they have had difficulties with the Vladivostok branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Mormons also have had problems in procuring residency permits for missionaries in regions such as Chelyabinsk and Kazan. They assert that the authorities in some areas, including Chelyabinsk, have impeded foreign religious workers from registering, presumably to restrict foreign proselytizing. They also experienced trouble in obtaining permission to build and then occupy an assembly hall in Volgograd; the building was completed eventually, but municipal officials have delayed issuing permission to use the completed building. The local branch of the Ministry of Justice in Chelyabinsk continues to reject the local Mormons' registration application based on the alleged incompatibility of Mormon activities with federal law. The Chelyabinsk Directorate of Justice also has rejected the registration applications of Baptist, Adventist, and Pentecostal churches on similar grounds.

Roman Catholic religious workers also experienced problems in obtaining desired residency permits and visas. Catholic workers who are assigned full time to parishes in Irkutsk and Samara must go abroad once a year to renew their visas, unlike other foreign workers who can apply for multiple-entry visas or extend their stays. Unlike some other religious workers who obtained permanent residency or citizenship on the basis of marriage to Russian citizens, celibate Catholic clergy do not have this opportunity.

Authorities continued to refuse visas to a number of other missionaries, apparently as a result of earlier conflicts with the authorities. Individuals denied visas

include Dan Pollard, formerly of the Vanino Baptist Church in Khabarovsk region, and David Binkley of the Church of Christ in Magadan, who were denied visas in spite of having been acquitted on tax and customs charges, and Charles Landreth of the Church of Christ in Volgograd who had been accused in the local press of being a spy. A fourth missionary, Monty Race of the Evangelical Free Church of America, who entered the country legally with a visa sponsored by a Moscow congregation, was refused registration to reside in Naberezhniy Chelniy, Tartarstan. Race, who is married to a Russian citizen and has two children, has also been refused permission to register as a resident foreign spouse of a citizen. The letter of refusal he received from the Ministry of Internal Affairs's local passport control office cites "national security" concerns.

Disputes concerning the return of religious property confiscated during the Soviet era are cited by religious groups as a source of concern to a number of communities. According to the Presidential Administration, since the 1993 decree went into effect 4,000 buildings have been returned to religious groups. Approximately 3,500 of these were to the Russian Orthodox Church. About 15,000 religious articles, including icons, torahs, and other items, have been returned to religious groups. For the most part, properties of other faiths used for religious services, including synagogues, churches and mosques, have been returned as well, although some in the Jewish community assert that only a small portion of the total properties confiscated under Soviet rule have been returned. On March 15, 2001, Prime Minister Kasyanov ordered the Restitution Commission to cease its activities. Despite the cessation of the Commission's activities, a number of properties and objects have not been returned. For example, the Jewish community, which has met with some success on communal property restitution, is seeking the return of a number of synagogues around the country, of religious scrolls, and of cultural and religious artifacts such as the Schneerson book collection (a revered collection of the Chabad Lubavitch).

Reports continue that some local and municipal governments prevented religious groups from using venues, such as cinemas, suitable for large gatherings. In many areas of the country, government-owned facilities are the only available venues. As a result, in some cases congregations that do not have their own property effectively have been denied the opportunity to practice their faith in large gatherings. For example, Sergey Ryakhovskiy's Pentecostal church, "The Moscow Church of God of Christians of the Evangelical Faith," learned in March 2001 that a local theater that for years had provided space for the Church's meetings reneged on a longstanding agreement after what the Church claims were threats by authorities. According to an April 12, 2001, Keston News Service report, the theater director was summoned to the Culture Committee of the Moscow Regional Administration where he received a letter from the chairman of the committee asking him to cancel his agreement with the church. The theater director reportedly told Ryakhovskiy that the Moscow governor's administration was reacting to an FSB report on the church. Although the governor's office denied these allegations to the Keston correspondent, the theater director refused to confirm or deny the allegations, citing a fear that he might lose his job. Similarly, according to a December 1, 2000, report on NTV, municipal authorities in Penza prevented members of the Protestant church "Living Faith" from using a rented movie theater. The congregation was forced to move to a dilapidated building without heat, where temperatures during the winter reached 15 degrees below zero centigrade. The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which does not recognize Patriarch Aleksiy's authority, has had numerous problems obtaining access to places for gathering. According to Keston News Service, as of April 2001, only a small percentage of the Church's 100 parishes meet in a building. Keston speculated that local officials appear reluctant to provide buildings to Orthodox churches not affiliated with the Moscow Patriarch.

According to a May 14, 2001 Keston report, the Vyborg region's chief architect refuses to allow a Protestant congregation to restore or use a building it bought in 1998. Authorities have refused to rezone the site for public (rather than industrial) use. Regional authorities who are attempting to remove a historic mosque have harassed Muslims in Vologda. Keston reported on May 11, 2001, that after the regional government lost its case in the Russian Supreme Court, the Muslim community was subjected to financial investigations, which the community claims are frivolous. Authorities in Sayanogorsk, in the Republic of Khakasiya, also have refused to allow the Pentecostal Church "Glory" to rent or use public space, despite the fact that the Church is registered and has approached the municipal administration repeatedly. Muslims in the Komi Republic and the Karelian regional capital of Petrozavodsk have not been able to build mosques because of what many believe is societal prejudice against Islam. On April 10, 2001, Keston News Service reported that Taganrog authorities ordered the Muslim community to demolish its mosque. Muslims claim

that the order is based on anti-Muslim bias and refuse to carry it out. Hare Krishna leaders in Moscow have sought unsuccessfully for several years to acquire property to build a new temple and center. The Hare Krishna face eviction from the current center as a result of the construction of a new road. Jehovah's Witnesses and Baptists in Moscow and other regions continue to have trouble leasing assembly space and obtaining the necessary permits to renovate buildings.

In Belgorod region, the regional parliament enacted a law restricting missionary activity, including the use of venues in which religious meetings could be held. Foreigners visiting the region are forbidden to engage in missionary activity or to preach unless the conduct of missionary activity had been stated in their visas (some groups reportedly sent religious workers on business or tourist visas in order not to alert the authorities to their activities). Protestant representatives in the region sent a letter of protest to the authorities asserting that the law was in conflict with the Russian constitution. No information was available as of the end of the period covered by this report concerning any attempts to enforce this law. Federal authorities have acknowledged that the Belgorod law is unconstitutional and at the end of the period covered by this report were working with the Oblast authorities to modify it.

Government authorities have been criticized for a long time for insufficient action to counter the prejudice and societal discrimination encountered by Jews and Muslims; however, over the last year the Presidential Administration has been much more vigorous in speaking out against prejudice and societal discrimination. President Putin and officials in his administration have made strong statements on the need for tolerance in a multiethnic Russia and have spoken out against anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, according to human rights activists and NGO's, anti-Semitism is still a significant part of the mindset of some Russian politicians and their constituents. Communist Duma Deputy Vasiliy Shandybin often has made derogatory references about Jews in public. For example, after the recent change in NTV management in April 2001, Shandybin complained that the Russian newsman Yevgeniy Kiselev had been replaced by the "American Zionist" Boris Jordan. In April 2001, when a Duma deputy proposed that deputies recognize the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, both Shandybin and his Russian Liberal Democratic Party colleague Vladimir Zhirinovskiy shouted down the proposal, complaining that no one was recognizing Russian victims. However, in May 2001, Duma deputy Aleksandr Fedulov proposed a resolution calling on President Putin to condemn anti-Semitism. The resolution was supported almost unanimously by the pro-government Yedinstvo faction, but did not garner enough votes to pass. The Communist faction voted unanimously against it.

In September 2000, a blatantly anti-Semitic article allegedly written by an official in the Presidential Administration appeared in the newspaper, Nezavisimaya Gazeta. As of the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had not confirmed whether or not the official was indeed a member of its administration at the time of writing. Kursk Governor Mikhaylov made anti-Semitic remarks to the press in late November 2000. PolPred Poltavchenko reprimanded the governor in public and forced him to issue an apology.

During the 2000 gubernatorial elections, candidates' supporters in a number of regions resorted to anti-Semitism. Central Elections Commission Head Aleksandr Veshnyakov in December 2000 strongly criticized the use of anti-Semitism in election campaigns and urged candidates to refrain from inciting ethnic or religious intolerance. After a series of "skinhead" attacks in Moscow in May 2001, President Putin, Deputy Prime Minister Matviyenko, and Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov all condemned such "hate crimes" and emphasized the country's multiethnic character.

The Government has implemented partially an interagency program to combat extremism and promote religious and ethnic tolerance. Broad in scope, the original plan called for a large number of interagency measures, such as the review of federal and regional legislation on extremism, mandatory training for public officials on how to promote ethnic and religious tolerance, and new educational materials for use in public educational institutions. Implementation of the plan, which is guided by an interagency commission on combating extremism headed by the Ministry of Education, was sporadic. Nevertheless, at least one NGO was able to work parallel to the program, participating in training law enforcement and other government officials (both local and federal) in promoting tolerance. The Saint Petersburg NGO Harold and Selma Light Center, in conjunction with a foreign-based NGO, conducted successful programs in several northwestern cities such as Petrozavodsk, and has now turned its attention to Ryazan.

In November 1998, the Duma adopted a resolution condemning public statements damaging to interethnic relations in the country. A Government review of the implementation of existing laws against acts of national, racial, and religious hatred re-

ported that 25 criminal investigations were conducted in 1998, and that 10 were opened by June 1999. The Ministry of Justice reported that 17 crimes were investigated under these statutes in 2000. Eight of these cases ended up in court. However, there is no information as to the number of convictions that resulted. Duma deputy Fedulov, during a public debate in May, claimed that only one conviction was obtained. The Moscow City Duma adopted the law forbidding the distribution and display of Nazi symbols in May 1999, and the Moscow regional Duma passed similar legislation in June 1999. As of April 2001, Moscow City Duma deputies were attempting to introduce amendments clarifying procedures for implementation of this law.

In June 2000, a schism in the Jewish Community led to the election by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Lubavitcher Rabbi Berel Lazar as Chief Rabbi of Russia over Rabbi Adolf Shayevich of the Moscow Choral Synagogue. Many in the Jewish community believe that the Government took sides in the dispute, showing overt support and preference for Lazar—for example, making him the sole representative of the Jewish community on the Administration's Religious Affairs Council—over the opposing faction, which was associated with media magnate Vladimir Gusinskiy, the then-President of the Russian Jewish Congress and a critic of the Russian Government. Under the leadership of the new president of the Russian Jewish Congress, Leonid Nevzlin, relations between that organization and the authorities appeared to have changed for the better. Critics point to President Putin's two special appearances during 2000 at events associated with Lazar, but other observers pointed out that Deputy Prime Minister Valentina Matviyenko, PolPred Grigoriy Poltavchenko, and other Presidential Administration officials attended and delivered remarks at the May 15, 2001 rededication of the Moscow Choral Synagogue (associated with Rabbi Shayevich).

In October 2000, Ministry of Interior and tax police entered the Moscow Choral Synagogue and conducted what community members believe to have been an illegal search of the premises. Members of the community accused the Government of employing law enforcement officials against a Gusinskiy-aligned community for political purposes. No charges resulted from the search. However, when it came time to renew the visa registration of the Moscow Chief Rabbi, who presides over the Choral Synagogue, authorities delayed issuing the renewal until the last minute, giving rise to more allegations of interference in religious affairs. The reorganization of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations in February 2001 led to more allegations of interference after it became known that longtime member Rabbi Shayevich had lost his position and that Rabbi Lazar would serve as the sole representative for Russian Jewry.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no official reports of religious detainees or prisoners. However, during a November 17, 2000, legal motion by the Chelyabinsk procurator to liquidate a Unification Church social organization, official documents revealed that member Galina Derevskova had been hospitalized against her will by the authorities in a psychiatric ward for 9 days while they attempted to gather evidence against the group. They reportedly forced Derevskova to sign a document after her internment stating that she had submitted herself to the institution for evaluation voluntarily. She was released with no indication of mental health problems.

Keston News Service reported April 19, 2001, that a Court sentenced Aleksandr Volkov from Novocheboksariy to 6 months in prison on March 13, 2001, for refusing to perform military service. Volkov, a Pentecostal Christian, refused to serve because of religious convictions.

Mormon missionaries throughout the country frequently were detained for brief periods or asked by local police to cease their activities, regardless of whether they were actually in violation of local statutes on picketing.

The Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia, along with several human rights organizations, have criticized the use of psychiatry in "deprogramming" victims of "totalitarian sects." In such cases, authorities use pseudo-psychological and spiritual techniques to "treat" persons who were members of new religious groups. There were no confirmed instances of this taking place during the period covered by this report.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens 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

The President and other government officials have been increasingly vocal about the need for societal tolerance in a multiethnic and multi-confessional society. While individual Russian politicians continue at times to make anti-Semitic statements, President Putin and his Presidential Administration have taken a very public stand against anti-Semitism and reached out to the Jewish community, including, in the last months of the reporting period, to both factions vying for leadership. President Putin has revamped the office in his Administration that deals with religious affairs and that office appears to be receptive to minority denominations' complaints and in some instances has assisted in resolving problems in the regions. The Presidential Administration co-sponsored a conference bringing together government officials from the regions, scholars, lawyers, NGOs and members of faith-based organizations.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While religious matters are not a source of societal hostility for most citizens, relations between different religious organizations are frequently tense, particularly at the leadership level, and there continue to be instances of religiously motivated violence. Many Russians believe that at least nominal adherence to the Russian Orthodox Church is at the heart of what it means to be Russian, and Russian Orthodoxy is considered in conservative nationalist circles as the de facto official religion of the country.

There is no large-scale movement in the country to promote interfaith dialog, although on the local level religious groups successfully collaborate on charity projects and participate in interfaith dialog. Russian Pentecostal and Baptist organizations, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church, have been reluctant to support ecumenism. Traditionally, the Russian Orthodox Church has pursued interfaith dialog with other Christians on the international level. However, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed grave reservations about the Pope's June 2001 visit to Ukraine, and the visit gave rise to a number of hostile statements by clerics and parliamentarians. The Patriarch has conditioned any future visit to Russia by the Pope on the settlement of outstanding issues between the two Churches.

Muslims, who constitute approximately 10 percent of the population, continue to encounter societal discrimination and antagonism in some areas where they are a minority. In October 2000, Muslim groups complained about a biased film on Russian Muslims entitled "Half Moon of the Caucasus" that aired on the state television channel, Russian State Television (RTR). The film portrays Muslims as affiliated with extremist forces in Chechnya and as disruptive to society. Muslims also have complained that citizens in certain regions have an irrational fear of Muslims, citing cases such as a recent dispute in Kolomna over the proposed construction of a mosque. Keston News Service reported on May 4, 2001, that Mufti Ravil Gainutdin complained that a Russian Orthodox Church priest in Kolomna called on the public to oppose construction of the mosque. Discriminatory attitudes have become stronger since the onset of the conflict in Chechnya in 1999. Authorities, journalists, and the public have been quick to label Muslims or Muslim organizations "Wahhabi," a term which has become equivalent with "extremists." For example, NTV reported on March 11, 2001, that Mordovian State University had instituted a careful selection process intended to exclude potential "Wahhabists." The university did not specify what criteria would be used in establishing who fit such a category. Such sentiment has led to a formal ban on "Wahhabism" in Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkharia.

A continuing pattern of violence, with either religious or political motivations, against religious workers in the North Caucasus was evident during the period covered by this report. Muslim separatists targeted Russian Orthodox priests for killing in Chechnya. Several Muslim clerics in Chechnya have been killed during the period covered by this report as well, including Magomed Khasuyev, Imam Umar Idrisov, and Imams Mudayev, and Umalatov who were all killed in January 2001.

Jewish emigration rates are significantly lower than in the last years of the Soviet period. The number of Jews emigrating to Israel for economic reasons as well as fear of persecution increased approximately 70 percent in 1998, but has decreased since. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported on March 19, 2001, that the total number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union (including Russia) to Israel decreased by 45 percent in the first 10 weeks of 2001, compared to the same period in 2000. According to Mikhail Chlenov, a Russian Jewish leader, the decrease in emigration is attributable to lower stress among the population.

Jews continue to encounter manifestations of societal discrimination. Anti-Semitic acts continue, and human rights groups have called for stronger governmental ac-

tion to counter anti-Semitic acts. In September 2000, a group of extremists attacked a school in Ryazan where Jewish religious and cultural classes were being held, threatening faculty members and vandalizing the premises. By mid-2000 only one individual has been identified as responsible. After being detained briefly, the suspect was released and ostensibly disappeared. Authorities claim the suspect is on the "All Russia Wanted list." Following the incident, anti-Semitic news articles appeared in Ryazan newspapers blaming the Jews themselves for the incident. During the gubernatorial campaign in January, anti-Semitic graffiti appeared around the city. According to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry (UCSJ), which monitors anti-Semitism in the various regions of the country, a punk rock concert held in Tver in March 2001 featured a band "Pagan Reign" who screamed anti-Semitic slogans such as "Beat the Yids! Save Russia!" Several Jewish cemeteries have been vandalized, including the cemeteries in Nizhniy Novgorod and Samara. The Russian news website "lenta.ru" reported on March 19, 2001, that a Samara judge declared Mikhail Pankov, the head of a local group of "Satanists" who were responsible for the vandalism, to be insane and sent him to a psychiatric institution for forced treatment. On April 25, 2001, Glasnost News Service reported that the memorial to Jewish soldiers killed in World War II, that was due to be opened May 9, 2001, in Vladikavkaz, was completely destroyed by unknown vandals.

On May 29, 2001, UCSJ released a special report on anti-Semitism in academia, citing prominent professors and university administration officials in the Altay region, Vladimir, Pskov, and Saint Petersburg who have expressed, either in their publications or in a public forum, anti-Semitic views. The report details how these regional educators and administrators propagate conspiracy theories about Jews and promote negative Jewish stereotypes. Nonetheless, UCSJ acknowledges that such academics represent only a minority.

The ultranationalist and anti-Semitic Russian National Unity (RNE) paramilitary organization, formerly led by Aleksandr Barkashov, appears to have splintered and lost political influence in many regions since its peak in 1998. Although reliable figures on its membership are not available, the RNE claimed a membership of 50,000 in 24 federation chapters in 1999. The RNE continues to be active in some regions, such as Voronezh, and RNE graffiti has appeared in a number of cities, including Krasnodar. The cities of Tver and Nizhniy Novgorod registered "Russian Rebirth," a splinter group of the RNE, which in turn prompted protests from human rights groups including the UCSJ. However, in several regions such as Moscow and Karelia, authorities have successfully limited the activities of the RNE by not registering their local affiliates. Representatives of the Church of Scientology accuse RNE and other ultra-nationalist organizations of violence or threats of violence against their activities in a number of Russian cities, including Nizhny Novgorod, Barnaul, and Ekaterinburg.

Anti-Semitic themes continue to figure in some local publications around the country, unchallenged by local authorities. However, traditionally anti-Semitic publications with large distributions, such as the newspaper Zavtra, while still pursuing such anti-Semitic themes as the portrayal of Russian oligarchs as exclusively Jewish, appear to be more careful than in the past about using crude anti-Semitic language.

As so-called "nontraditional" religions in the country continue to grow, many citizens, influenced by negative reports in the mass media and public criticism by Russian Orthodox Church officials and other influential figures, such as anticult activist Aleksandr Dvorkin, continue to feel hostility toward "foreign sects." During the Jubilee Bishops' Conference of the Russian Orthodox Church, August 13–16, 2000, the Church issued a document entitled "Fundamental Principles of the Russian Orthodox Church's Relations with Other Faiths." In the document the Church identifies denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons as proselytizing "cults" whose operations on the "canonical" territory of Russia must be stopped. According to the document, the mission of other "traditional" confessions is possible only under the condition that they refrain from proselytizing or tempting the faithful away from the Church with material goods.

Jewish groups, led by FEOR head Rabbi Berel Lazar, have taken a strong public stance against groups such as "Jews for Jesus," and have coordinated with the Russian Orthodox Church and other groups to fight the spread of so-called "cults" and "foreign missionaries." Activists in Rostov Velikiy picketed the proposed site for the construction of a Jehovah's Witnesses center on April 20, 2001, proclaiming their opposition to "totalitarian cults." Nizhniy Novgorod hosted a conference entitled "Totalitarian Cults: Threat of the XXI Century," which featured a number of presentations from both Russian and foreign "anticult" activists. The conference materials depicted such groups as Pentecostals, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Unification Church, and Scientology as "cults," despite the fact that all have legal status.

Members of some religions, including some Protestant groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unification Church, Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and the Mormons, continued to face discrimination in their ability to rent premises and conduct group activities (see Section II). In August 2000, a group of extremists attacked members of Jehovah's Witnesses congregation and a Mormon assembly in Volgograd. As of mid-2001, no one had been charged with this crime despite the fact that the victims identified at least one of the suspects. According to Blagovest Info News Agency, on April 17, 2001, an Evangelical church in the Moscow Oblast city of Chekhov was burned to the ground. The incident occurred after a number of threats from "anticult" activists. In the same city, according to NTV, evangelical efforts to show a "Jesus" film in January 2001 were blocked by authorities who first instructed several institutes of culture to cancel an earlier agreement to show the film and, after protests, forbade all public events at the time because of an alleged flu epidemic (other holiday events apparently took place).

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government has continued to engage the Government, a number of religious denominations and groups, NGO's, and others in a steady dialog on religious freedom. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the Consulates General in Yekaterinburg, St. Petersburg, and Vladivostok have been active throughout the period covered by this report in investigating reports of violations of religious freedom, including anti-Semitic incidents. U.S. Government officials engage a broad range of Russian officials, representatives of religious groups, and human rights activists on a daily basis. These contacts include: government officials; representatives of over 20 religious confessions; the Institute for Religion and Law; the Slavic Law and Justice Center; the "Esther" Legal Information Center; the Anti-Defamation League; lawyers representing religious groups; journalists; academics; and human rights activists known for their commitment to religious freedom.

The Ambassador publicly criticized in the strongest terms the attacks on the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses in Volgograd, as well as the attack on the Ryazan school where Jewish students were studying, calling on the Government for vigorous investigation of these crimes. The Ambassador traveled to Ryazan soon after the latter incident and presided over a roundtable of representatives from different ethnic and religious groups, including the Jewish community, and regional administration officials, to promote discussion of tolerance. The Embassy has worked with NGO's to encourage the development of programs designed to sensitize law enforcement officials and municipal and regional administration officials to discrimination, prejudice, and crimes committed on the basis of ethnic or religious intolerance. Embassy officials have met numerous Russian and American groups affiliated with the many religious denominations present in the country, participating in exchanges of opinion and conducting briefings on the status of religious freedom.

Senior Embassy officials discuss religious freedom with high-ranking officials in the Presidential Administration and the Government (including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), raising specific cases of concern. Russian federal officials have responded by investigating those cases and keeping Embassy staff informed on issues they have raised.

The Embassy played a role in resolving visa registration cases of several foreign religious workers of different denominations. The Embassy and consulates also have repeatedly investigated and raised with federal and local authorities problems experienced by individual missionaries, including the refusal of visas or registration. As implementation of the 1997 Religion Law continues, the Embassy maintains frequent contact with working-level officials at the Ministry of Justice, Presidential Administration, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In Washington as well as in Russia, the U.S. Government presses for adherence to international standards of religious freedom in the Russian Federation. Officials in the State Department meet regularly with U.S.-based human rights groups and religious organizations concerned about religious freedom in Russia as well as with visiting Russian representatives of religious organization. The 1997 Law on Religious Freedom has been the subject of numerous high-level communications between members of the executive branch of the U.S. Government and the Russian Government, involving the President, the Vice President, including the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State and other senior U.S. officials. On May 10, 2000, as part of a continuing exchange of information on the status of religious freedom in Russia, senior State Department officials, including Undersecretary for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, together with Senator Gordon Smith and National Security Council Senior Director for Europe and Eurasia, Dan Fried, participated in a round table with representatives of religious communities to examine the state of religious

freedom in Russia. An earlier roundtable had been held in September, 2000. An official of the Office of International Religious Freedom made a presentation in the June 2000 Moscow Conference co-sponsored by the Presidential Administration (see Section III), where she stressed the importance of respecting the rights of minority religions.

SAN MARINO

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 37.57 square miles and its population is 26,937. The Government does not provide statistics on the size of religious groups and there is no recent census data providing information on religious membership; however, it is estimated that over 95 percent of the population are Catholic. There are also small groups of Jehovah's Witnesses and adherents to the Baha'i Faith (who organize small, active missionary groups), some Muslims, and members of the Waldesian Church.

There are no private religious schools; the school system is public and is financed by the State. Public schools provide Catholic religious instruction; however, students may choose without penalty not to participate.

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 generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Although Roman Catholicism is dominant, it is not the state religion, and the law prohibits discrimination based on religion. The Catholic Church receives direct benefits from the State through income tax revenues as taxpayers may request that 0.3 percent of their income tax payments be allocated to the Catholic Church or to "other" charities, including two religions (the Waldesian Church and members of Jehovah's Witnesses).

In 1993 some parliamentarians objected to the traditional 1909 oath of loyalty sworn on the "Holy Gospels." Although they eventually swore as required, the parliamentarians contended that it violated Article 9 of the European Convention and brought suit in the European Court of Human Rights. Following this objection, Parliament changed the law in 1993 to permit a choice between the traditional oath and one in which the reference to the Gospels was replaced by "on my honor." On February 18, 1999, the European Court found the requirement that Members of Parliament swear their loyalty on the "Holy Gospels" violated religious freedom. However, its ruling also implicitly endorsed the revised 1993 legal formulation. The Court also noted that the traditional ("Holy Gospels") oath still is mandatory for other offices, such as the Captain Regent or a member of the Government; however, to date, no elected Captain Regent or government member has challenged the validity of the 1909 oath.

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

Amicable relations exist between the religious communities, and government and religious officials encourage mutual respect for differences.

Roman Catholicism is not a state religion but it is dominant in society, as most citizens were born and raised under Catholic principles that form part of their culture. These principles still permeate state institutions symbolically; for example, crucifixes may be found hanging on courtroom or government office walls. They also affect societal lifestyles independently of individual compliance with Catholic precepts (such as strictures on divorce).

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.

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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. However, anti-Semitism persists among some elements of the population.

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 Slovak Republic has a total land area of 18,933 square miles and its population is 5,396,193. There are approximately 3.2 million Roman Catholics who make up 60.4 percent of the population. There are 180,000 Byzantine Catholics (approximately 3.4 percent), 35,000 Orthodox believers (0.7 percent), 333,000 members of the Augsburg Lutheran Church (6.2 percent), and 80,000 members of the Reformed Christian Church (1.7 percent). Approximate membership numbers for the smaller groups are: Jehovah's Witnesses, 22,000; the Baptist Church, 2,500; the Brethren Church, 2,000; Seventh-Day Adventists, 1,700; the Apostolic Church, 1,200; the Evangelical Methodist Church, 1,100; Jewish congregations, 1,500; the Old Catholic Church, 900; the Christian Corps in Slovakia, 700; the Czechoslovak Husite Church, 700; and, according to the 1991 census, 27.2 percent of the population had no religious affiliation.

There are 3 categories of nonregistered religions that comprise about 30 groups: nontraditional religions (Ananda Marga, Hare Krishna, Yoga in Daily Life, Osho, Sahadza Yoga, Shambaola Slovakia, Shri Chinmoy, Zazen International Slovakia, and Zen Centermyo Sahn Sah); the syncretic religious societies (Unification Church, the Church of Scientology, Movement of the Holy Grail, and The Baha'I Faith); and the Christian religious societies (The Church of Christ, Manna Church, International Association of Full Evangelium Traders, Christian Communities, Nazarens, New Revelation, New Apostolic Church, Word of International Life, Society of the Friends of Jesus Christ, Sword of Spirit, Disciples of Jesus Christ, Universal Life, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Free Peoples' Mission).

The number of immigrants is insignificant. There are some very small numbers of refugees who practice different faiths than the majority of native-born citizens. Missionaries do not register with the State and no official statistics exist, although according to government information, there are missionaries from the Roman Catholic, Augsburg Lutheran, and Methodist faiths as well as a Jewish emissary active in the country. From among the nonregistered churches, there are Mormon missionaries.

There is very little correlation between religious differences and ethnic or political differences. The Christian Democratic Party (KDH), which has ties to the Catholic faith, is the only political party with a religious backing. Followers of the Orthodox Church live predominantly in the eastern part of the country near the Ukrainian border. Other religious groups tend to be spread quite evenly across the country.

According to a poll conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences in 1998, the number of practicing believers increased from 73 percent in 1991 to 83 percent in 1998. There was also an increase in the number of those who do not practice any religion, from 9.9 to 16.3 percent. Approximately 54 percent of Catholics and 22 percent of Lutherans actively participate in formal religious services. No more recent polls have been completed.

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 Constitution provides for the right to practice the religion of one's choice and also provides for the right to change religion or faith, as well as the right to refrain from any religious affiliation. The Government observes and enforces these provisions in practice.

The new Law 308 on Freedom of Religion passed on October 31, 2000, provides for freedom of religion and defines the status of churches and religious groups, including those groups not registered with the Government. It does not prohibit the existence of nontraditional religions. It allows the State to enter agreements with churches and religious communities. This law is applied and enforced in a nondiscriminatory fashion.

Governmental entities at all levels, including the courts, interpret the law in a way that protects religious freedom.

No official state religion exists; however, the Catholic Church, the dominant faith in terms of membership, receives significantly larger state subsidies because it is the most populous church. Some independent observers claim that because the Vatican has signed an international treaty with the Government, the Catholic Church is advantaged over other religious groups. However, according to the Culture Ministry, other churches are preparing agreements, as well.

There are several religious holidays that are celebrated as national holidays, including Epiphany, the Day of the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows, All Saints Day, St. Stephens Day, Christmas, and Easter. The treaty that the Government signed with the Vatican prohibits the removal or alteration of existing religious holidays considered as state holidays. However, none of these holidays appear to impact negatively any religious groups.

Registration of churches is not required, but under existing law, only registered churches and religious organizations have the explicit right to conduct public worship services and other activities, although no specific religions or practices are banned or discouraged by the authorities in practice. Those that register receive state benefits including subsidies for clergymen and office expenses. State funding also is provided to church schools and to teachers who lecture on religion in state schools. Occasionally, the State subsidizes one-time projects and significant church activities, and religious societies are partly exempt from paying taxes and import custom fees. A religion may elect not to accept the subsidies. There are 15 officially registered religions.

To register a religion new to the country, a 1991 law requires applicants to submit a list of 20,000 permanent residents who adhere to that religion. There is no case of a religious order being refused registration, and the religions already established before the law passed in 1991 were all exempt from the minimum membership requirement.

There are no specific licensing or registration requirements for foreign missionaries or religious organizations. The law allows all churches and religious communities and enables them to send out their representatives as well as to receive foreign missionaries without limitation. Missionaries neither need special permission to stay in the country, nor are their activities regulated in any way.

There were no cases of religions being denied registration and to our knowledge no religious groups failed to attempt to register because of the belief that their application would not be approved.

The public school curriculum allows students to choose to study religion or ethics from grade five to grade nine. These courses are often taught by religious leaders and the churches themselves are responsible for providing and paying instructors for them. There is a lack of appropriate teachers for certain religions.

The Church Department at the Ministry of Culture oversees relations between church and state. The Church Department manages the distribution of state subsidies to churches and religious associations. However, it cannot intervene in their

internal affairs and does not direct their activities. The Ministry administers a cultural state fund—Pro Slovakia—which, among other things, allocates money to cover the repair of religious monuments. There is a government institute for relations between church and state.

Under the auspices of the government Office for National Minorities and Human Rights, an official agreement was signed between the Government and the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches to conclude property disputes stemming from the Communist and post-World War II eras. Since 1989 the State has promoted interfaith dialog and understanding by supporting events organized by various churches. The state-supported Ecumenical Council of Churches in Slovakia promotes communication within the religious community. Most Christian churches have the status of members or observers in the Council. The Jewish community was invited, and sends observers, but chose not to participate.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs negotiated a treaty with the Vatican to define the framework of church-state relations and mutual commitments.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally unrestricted practice of religion. Although Government support is provided in a non-discriminatory way to registered churches that seek it, the requirement that a registered organization have 20,000 members disadvantages some smaller faiths. The Government monitors, although it does not interfere with, religious "cults" and "sects." Some property restitution cases remain unresolved.

The Institute of State-Church Relations monitors and researches religious cults and sects; however, it is difficult to identify these groups because they largely register as nongovernmental organizations rather than as religious groups. The Institute conducts seminars, issues publications, and provides information to the media regarding its findings.

Law 282/93 on Restitution of Communal Property enabled all churches and religious societies to apply for the return of their property that was confiscated by the Communist government. The deadline for these claims was December 31, 1994. The property was returned in its current condition and the State did not provide any compensation for the damage done to it during the previous regime. The property was returned by the State, by municipalities, by state legal entities, and under certain conditions by private persons. In some cases, the property was returned legally by the State but has not been vacated by the former tenant—often a school or hospital with nowhere else to go. There also have been problems with the return of property that had been undeveloped at the time of seizure but upon which there since has been construction. Churches, synagogues, and cemeteries have been returned, albeit mostly in poor condition. The churches and religious groups often lack the funds to restore these properties to a usable condition. The main obstacles to the resolution of outstanding restitution claims are the Government's lack of financial resources, due to its austerity program, and bureaucratic resistance on the part of those entities required to vacate restitutable properties.

While the Orthodox Church reported that six of the seven properties on which it had filed claims already had been returned, the Catholic Church and the Federation of Jewish Communities reported lower rates of success. The Catholic Church reported that more than half of the property that it had claimed had been returned to it already. In another 12 percent of cases the property had been returned legally to the Church but typically was occupied by other tenants and would require court action to be returned to church hands. The Church had not received any compensation for the remaining 40 percent of claims since these properties were undeveloped at the time of nationalization but since have been developed. The Church also is not eligible to reacquire lands that originally were registered to church foundations that no longer exist or no longer operate in the country, like the Benedictines.

The Federation of Jewish Communities (FJC) has reported some successful cases of restitution and has only a few pending cases that require resolution. These include cases in which property had been restituted to the FJC but not in usable condition, cases in which the property still is occupied by previous tenants, and lands upon which buildings had been constructed after the seizure of the property.

The FJC is dissatisfied with the Government's failure to discuss compensation for property that belonged to Jewish families who no longer have living heirs.

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

On December 15, 2000, the government Office for National Minorities facilitated the signing of an agreement between the Government and the Greek Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches.

A new piece of legislation, Law 308 on Freedom of Religion, passed on October 31, 2000; it provides for freedom of religion and defines the status of churches and religious groups, including those groups not registered with the Government. It does not prohibit the existence of nontraditional religions. It allows the State to enter into agreements with churches and religious communities. This law is applied and enforced in a nondiscriminatory fashion.

In February 2001, the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Judaism undertook a joint educational project on Jewish history and culture that is targeted to elementary and high school teachers of history, civic education, and ethics. This project is intended to assist in educating the public about Jewish themes and increase tolerance toward minorities. Currently the Government is seeking to obtain membership in the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among churches and religious societies are amicable. However, anti-Semitism persists among some elements of the population.

Despite protests by the Federation of Jewish Communities and Slovak National Party members, the official Slovak cultural organization Matica Slovenska continued their efforts to rehabilitate the historical reputation of Jozef Tiso, the leader of the Nazi-collaborationist wartime Slovak state. On March 14, 2001, a marginal nationalist party, Slovak National Unity (SNU), held a rally to commemorate the 62nd anniversary of the founding of the wartime Slovak state. Approximately 100 persons, including a number of skinheads, attended the rally. The police kept the event under tight control to prevent any violence. The chairman of the SNU, Stanislav Panis, in his tribute to Tiso appealed to the Government to make March 14 an official national holiday.

A musical skinhead group called Judenmord (Murder of Jews), has established a Webpage and participated in several concerts in the country as well as in the neighboring Czech Republic. The Jewish community has called on the Government to ban this openly anti-Semitic band, which the Government had not done by the end of the period covered by this report.

The Catholic Church intends to canonize the late Bishop Vajtasak, who was imprisoned after World War II and died as a consequence. Many protest this move, alleging that Vajtasak was a member of the National Council of the wartime pro-Nazi Slovak state and was aware of the deportations of Slovak Jews to Nazi concentration camps. The Jewish community possesses written records indicating that Vajtasak participated in the Government session that approved the deportation of Jews and the decision to pay 500 German marks to the German Government to cover their expenses in Nazi concentration camps.

In late May 2001, unknown culprits desecrated the Jewish cemetery in the central town of Levice for the fourth time in the past 3 years. The Jewish community has appealed to the mayor of Levice to properly investigate this incident.

The Jewish community has complained that a lawsuit against a former editor of publishing house Agres, Martin Savel, who published anti-Semitic literature and the anti-Jewish magazine Voice of Slovakia in the early 1990's, has never been resolved.

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.

The U.S. Embassy maintains contacts with a broad spectrum of religious groups. The Embassy encourages tolerance for minority religions.

Embassy officers meet with officials of the major religious groups on a regular basis to discuss property restitution issues as well as human rights conditions. Relations with religious groups are friendly and open. The Embassy continued its dialog with the Conference of Bishops, the Federation of Jewish Communities, and the Orthodox Church. The Embassy has good relations with the Ministry of Culture and has fostered an effective dialog between religious groups, the Ministry, and the Commission for the Preservation of U.S. Heritage Abroad on matters of importance to the commission. The Embassy lobbied actively members of the Government to establish the commission to resolve the questions of property without living heirs.

Embassy officers met with the head of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Jan Korec, and the director of the local branch of Amnesty International to discuss human rights concerns, including those of a religious nature. The Embassy organized meetings between official visitors and representatives of religious communities.

Embassy officers have played an active role in assisting in restitution cases involving U.S. citizens and have assisted the Government in its attempts to become a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research and to initiate a liaison project on Holocaust education in cooperation with the Task Force.

SLOVENIA

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 land area of 12,589 square miles, and its population is approximately 1.99 million. Estimates of religious identification vary, but according to the 1991 census, the numbers are: Roman Catholic, 1.4 million (72 percent); No answer, 377,000 (19 percent); Atheist, 85,500 (4.3 percent); Orthodox, 46,000 (2 percent); Muslim, 29,000 (1.5 percent); Protestant, 19,000 (1 percent); Agnostic, 4,000 (.2 percent); and Jewish, 201 (.01 percent).

Foreign missionaries, including a mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and other religious groups (including Hare Krishna, Scientology, and Unification organizations) operate without hindrance.

The Orthodox and Muslim populations appear to correspond to the country's immigrant Serb and Bosniak populations, respectively. These groups tend to have a lower socioeconomic status in society.

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 are no formal requirements for recognition as a religion by the Government. Religious communities must register with the Government's Office for Religious Communities if they wish to be recognized as legal entities; to date no groups have been denied registration. The Government proposed an amended Religious Communities Act to Parliament in 1998 that would have offered non-profit status to registered religious communities, but this bill has not yet been adopted.

In 1999, the Government signed an agreement on the legal position of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia with the Bishop's Conference, and concluded a similar agreement in 2000 with the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovenia. Other religious communities have expressed interest in negotiating similar agreements with the Government.

Religious groups, including foreign missionaries, must register with the Ministry of the Interior if they wish to receive value added tax rebates on a quarterly basis. All groups in the country report equal access to registration and tax rebate status.

The appropriate role for religious instruction in the schools continues to be an issue of debate. The Constitution states that parents are entitled to give their children "a moral and religious upbringing." Before 1945 religion was much more prominent in the schools, but now only those schools supported by religious bodies teach religion.

The Roman Catholic Church was a major property holder in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia before World War II. After the war, much Church property—church buildings

and support buildings, residences, businesses, and forests—was confiscated and nationalized by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

After Slovenian independence in 1991, Parliament passed legislation calling for denationalization (restitution and/or compensation) within a fixed period. The first post-independence government in 1991 was a center-right coalition headed by a Christian Democrat prime minister. However, a subsequent change of government in 1992 to a center-left coalition led by current Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek led to a virtual standstill in denationalization proceedings for several years. The strong opposition of the current Government to returning large tracts of forest and other property to the Catholic Church is a frequently cited reason for the paralysis of the denationalization process. As of mid-2001, over one-half of all cases had been adjudicated at the initial administrative level. Restitution of church property is a politically unpopular issue, and the Catholic Church, despite its numerical predominance, does not have the political support necessary to force a faster pace for denationalization.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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

Societal attitudes toward religion are complex. Historical events dating long before Slovene independence color societal perceptions of the dominant Catholic Church. Much of the gulf between the (at least nominally) Catholic center-right and the largely agnostic or atheistic left stems from the massacre of large numbers of alleged Nazi and Fascist collaborators in the years 1946–48. Many of the so-called collaborators were successful businessmen whose assets were confiscated after they were killed or driven from the country, and many were prominent Catholics.

Interfaith relations are correct, although there is little warmth between the majority Catholic Church and foreign missionary groups, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which are viewed as aggressive proselytizers.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy has discussed worldwide religious freedom in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. The Embassy has held extensive discussions with the Government on the topic of property denationalization in the context of the rule of law, although it has not specifically discussed church property during these sessions.

SPAIN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion; however, the Catholic Church enjoys some privileges unavailable to other faiths.

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 relationships 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 194,897 square miles, and its population is an estimated 40 million.

The Roman Catholic Church maintains that 93.63 percent of citizens are declared Catholics. However, many persons argue that this figure is based on numbers of baptisms, weddings, and first communions; events that are essentially social rites

practiced by many who do not attend church regularly or believe in Catholic teachings. According to a survey published in April 2000 by the Center for Sociological Investigations, 83.6 percent of citizens consider themselves Catholics, 2 percent followers of other religions, 7.9 percent nonbelievers, and 4 percent atheists. The Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities represents 350,000 Spanish Protestants, but estimates that there are 800,000 foreign Protestants, mostly European, who reside in the country at least 6 months per year. The Federation of Spanish Islamic Entities (FEERI), located in Cordoba, estimates that there are more than 450,000 Muslims, not counting illegal immigrants (who could number a quarter million). There are approximately 25,000 Jews registered with the major Jewish organization. However, 50,000 persons attend Jewish religious services in 13 of the country's 17 regions. There are 3,000 Buddhists registered, but according to their president, there are 3 times that many in practice.

There are 11,081 entities created by the Catholic Church in the first section of the Register of Religious Entities, and 570 non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities. The second section of the register, called the general section, contains non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities that do not have an agreement with the State, and their creations. There are 329 entities in this section. The third section contains canonical foundations of the Catholic Church. There are 153 entries in this section.

There are 899 non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities in the register. These include 747 Protestant church entities, which have 1,643 places of worship. These include: Charismatics—89 entities and 113 places of worship; Assemblies of Brothers—120 entities and 143 places of worship; Baptists—213 entities and 247 places of worship; Pentecostals—64 entities and 259 places of worship; Presbyterians—36 entities and 58 places of worship; one entity of the Evangelical Church of Philadelphia, which has 613 places of worship; Church of Christ—9 entities and 19 places of worship; the Salvation Army—1 entity and 9 places of worship; Anglicans—17 entities and 26 places of worship; interdenominational churches and entities—60 entities and 13 places of worship; Churches for Attention to Foreigners—25 entities and 9 places of worship; Adventists—3 entities and 76 places of worship; and other evangelical churches—106 entities and 53 places of worship. In addition, there are also: Orthodox—5 entities and 5 places of worship; Christian Scientists—3 entities and no places of worship; Jehovah's Witnesses—1 entity and 873 places of worship; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints—1 entity and 30 places of worship; Unification Church—1 entity and 1 place of worship; other Christian confessions—10 entities and 29 places of worship; Judaism—15 entities and 15 places of worship; Islam—99 entities and 45 places of worship; Baha'i Faith—2 entities and 12 places of worship; Hinduism—3 entities and no places of worship; Buddhism—13 entities and 13 places of worship; and other confessions—3 entities and 12 places of worship.

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 1978 Constitution, which declares the country to be a secular state, and various laws provide that no religion should have the character of a state religion. However, the Government treats religions in different ways. Catholicism is the dominant religion, and enjoys the closest official relationship with the Government. The relationship is defined by four 1979 accords between Spain and the Holy See, covering economic, religious education, military, and judicial matters. Among the various benefits enjoyed by the Catholic Church is financing through the tax system. Payments in 2000 amounted to approximately $10 million. Jews, Muslims, and Protestants have official status through bilateral agreements, but enjoy fewer privileges. Other recognized religions, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), are covered by constitutional protections but have no special agreements with the Government.

The Organic Law of Religious Freedom of 1980 implements the constitutional provision for freedom of religion. The 1980 law establishes a legal regime and certain privileges for religious organizations. To enjoy the benefits of this regime, religious organizations must be entered in the Register of Religious Entities maintained by the General Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. The register was established in 1981 and is updated regularly. To register with the Ministry of Justice, religious groups must submit documentation supporting their claim to be

religions. If a group's application is rejected, it may appeal the decision to the courts. If it is judged not to be a religion, it may be included on a Register of Associations maintained by the Ministry of Interior. Inclusion on the Register of Associations grants legal status as authorized by the law regulating the right of association. Religions not officially recognized, such as the Church of Scientology, are treated as cultural associations.

The Catholic Church does not have to register with the Ministry of Justice's religious entities list; however, some entities do register for financial or other reasons. The first section of the Register of Religious Entities, called the special section, contains a list of religious entities created by the Catholic Church and a list of non-Catholic churches, confessions, and communities that have an agreement on cooperation with the State. In 1992 agreements on cooperation with the State were signed by three organizations on behalf of Protestants, Jews, and Muslims; the organizations were the Federation of Evangelical Entities of Spain (FEREDE), the Federation of Israelite Communities of Spain (FCIE), and the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE).

Religion courses are offered in public schools but are not mandatory. The Catholic Church and other religious entities support religious schools.

Foreign missionaries proselytize in the country.

National religious holidays include Epiphany (January 6), Holy Thursday and Good Friday, Assumption (August 15), All Saints Day (November 1), Immaculate Conception (December 8), and Christmas (December 25); some communities celebrate local religious holidays. National religious holidays do not have a negative impact on other religious groups.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Leaders of the Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish communities report that they continue to press the Government for comparable privileges to those enjoyed by the Catholic Church. Their list of concerns includes public financing, expanded tax exemptions, improved media access, and fewer restrictions on opening new places of worship.

Before allowing entry by any religious figures other than Catholic army chaplains into military barracks the Defense Ministry requires soldiers to declare their non-Catholic religious affiliation. The State funds Catholic chaplains who serve in hospitals.

The government income tax form includes a box that allows taxpayers to assign 0.5239 percent of their taxes to the Catholic Church. Protestant and Muslim leaders would like their communities to receive government support, through an income tax allocation or other designation.

The Jewish community wants to receive financial support from the Government, but does not want to be included in the check-box list on the income tax form. This reticence is attributed to the community's past history, which included persecution and expulsion from the country in 1492. The Jewish community is seeking a one-time payment to ensure all congregations have the religious necessities (synagogue, cemetery, and school), as well as an annual subsidy to maintain this religious patrimony. The Jewish community also wants the Government to resolve problems associated with Jewish cemeteries. (Under the law, land for cemeteries is not granted in perpetuity, in the expectation that cemeteries may be moved and the land developed for urban uses if the need arises.)

In May 1999, the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament approved a nonbinding resolution calling on the Government to reinforce measures against the activity of destructive "sects" in the country and to create a permanent organization to monitor these organizations. Press reports cited the Interior Ministry as stating that there were 200 destructive sects in the country, which have between 100,000 and 150,000 members. The Law of Sects in Spain, passed in 1989, authorizes the police to investigate sects with a destructive character. As a result, a special unit was created within the police to investigate allegedly destructive sects.

The Government of the Canary Islands, one of Spain's 17 regions, has refused to grant permission to the Salvation Army to open a center for needy children, on the grounds that the Salvation Army is a "destructive sect."

In early April 1999, the Helsinki Human Rights Federation presented a report to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that included criticism of the country for failing to implement its commitment in the 1994 Budapest Document on freedom of religion and conscience. The report criticized the country for discrimination against "new religions," which often are considered by authorities to be dangerous and destructive, while older, established religions continue to receive financial and other privileges from the State.

Representatives of the Church of Scientology assert that the open indictment against Scientology International President Heber Jentzsch is religiously based, a claim denied by Spanish officials. The charges against Jentzsch relate to a fraud case arising from private complaints against Scientology offices Dianetica and Narconon. Police arrested Jentzsch and 71 others at a 1988 Madrid convention held by the International Association of Scientologists. Jentzsch was subsequently released on bail and returned to the United States. The current indictment, issued in 1994, charges Jentzsch and 20 Spanish citizens with 16 counts including illicit association, tax evasion, and crimes against the public health. The trial of the defendants other than Jentzsch began in Madrid in March 2001.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In February 2001, the Constitutional Court ruled that the Unification Church should be added to the Register of Religious Entities. The Unification Church had applied for registration in 1991 and was denied in 1992 by the General Directorate of Religious Affairs. Lower court rulings in 1993 and 1996 had upheld the denial. On May 4, 2001, the Ministry of Justice added the Church to the Register of Religious Institutions.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

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

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 officials met with religious leaders of a number of denominations during the period covered by this report.

SWEDEN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Church of Sweden, formerly the state church, effectively became separated from the State in 1999; however, it still receives some state support.

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 173,732 square miles and its population is an estimated 8.8 million.

Approximately 84 percent of the population belong to the Church of Sweden. It is possible to leave the state church, and an increasing number of persons do. In 1998 13,233 persons left the state church. In 1999 when the state church and the Government separated, a record 33,299 persons left and an estimated 16,000 persons departed in 2000.

There are about 165,000 Roman Catholics. The Orthodox Church has approximately 100,000 members, and the main national Orthodox churches are Greek, Serbian, Syrian, Romanian, Estonian, and Finnish. There also is a large Finnish-speaking Lutheran denomination. While weekly services in Christian houses of worship generally are poorly attended, a large number of persons observe major festivals of the ecclesiastical year and prefer a religious ceremony to mark the turning points of life. About 78 percent of children are baptized, 50 percent of all those eligible are

confirmed, and 90 percent of funeral services are performed under the auspices of the state church. Approximately 62 percent of couples marrying choose a Church of Sweden ceremony.

There is a relatively large number of smaller church bodies. Several are offshoots of 19th century revival movements in the Church of Sweden. Others, such as the Baptist Union of Sweden and the Methodist Church of Sweden, trace their roots to British and North American revival movements.

There are approximately 17,000 Jews, of whom 8,500 are active members of a congregation. There are Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jewish synagogues. Large numbers of Jews attend high holiday services but attendance at weekly services is low. The number of Muslims has increased rapidly in recent years to between 250,000 and 300,000 followers. Mosques are being built in many parts of the country. The Shi'a and Sunni branches of Islam are represented among immigrant groups. Around 100,000 of the Muslims in the country are active religiously. Buddhists and Hindus number around 3,000 to 4,000 persons each. Although no reliable statistics are available, it is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of the adult population are atheist.

The major religious communities and the state church are spread across the country. Large numbers of immigrants in recent decades have led to the introduction of nontraditional religions in those communities populated by immigrants.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and other foreign missionary groups 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. The rights and freedoms enumerated in the Constitution include freedom of worship, protection from compulsion to make known one's religious views, and protection from compulsion to belong to a religious community.

The country has maintained a state (Lutheran) church for several hundred years, supported by a general "church tax," although the Government routinely grants any request by a taxpayer for exemption from the tax. All churches receive state financial support.

In 1995 after decades of discussion, the state church and the Government agreed to a formal separation. This reform came into effect in 2000; however, the Church still is to receive some state support.

Foreign missionary groups do not face special requirements.

The Office of the Ombudsman Against Ethnic Discrimination investigates claims by individuals or groups of discrimination "due to race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, or religion." For many years the Government has supported the activities of groups working to combat anti-Semitism.

The Government promotes interfaith understanding and meets annually with representatives from various religious groups. The Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities (SST) is a government body. It cooperates with the Swedish Free Church Council. SST members are selected by religious bodies, which are entitled to some forms of state financial assistance.

Religious education is part of an overall time schedule for compulsory course work in public schools, but is not limited to instruction in the state religion.

The law permits official institutions, such as government ministries and Parliament, to provide copies of documents that are filed with them to the public, although such documents may be unpublished and protected by copyright law. This is due to a contradiction between the Constitution's freedom of information provisions and the country's international obligations to protect unpublished copyrighted works. This contradiction has affected copyrighted, unpublished documents belonging to the Church of Scientology that have been made available to the public by the Parliament in accordance with domestic legislation. The Government is in the process of drafting new legislation designed to eliminate the contradiction and protect copyrights.

In January 1998, the Government began a national Holocaust education project after a public opinion poll found that a low percentage of school children had basic knowledge about the Holocaust. Approximately 1 million copies of the education project's core textbook (available at no cost to every household with children, including in the most prevalent immigrant languages) are in circulation. The Government initiated an intergovernmental multinational Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, to combat anti-Semitism,

racism, and intolerance by placing international political support behind efforts to teach about the Holocaust. Eight other countries, including the United States, are members of the Task Force. In January 2000, the Government established January 27, the anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation, as a national day of remembrance.

In 1998 the Government published a report by a commission of experts entitled "In Good Faith—Society and New Religious Movements." The report sought to gauge the needs of persons leaving new religious movements for support from the national community. It paid special attention to the needs of children. According to the commission, each year approximately 100 persons seek assistance for various medical, legal, social, economic, or spiritual difficulties arising from their departure from new religious movements. The commission recommended passage of legislation making "improper influence" (such as forcing an individual to renounce his or her faith, or other such "manipulation") a punishable offense. The commission's proposal for legislation required further investigation by the Government. The commission also proposed the establishment of a foundation for the study of questions of belief and to help build bridges between new religious movements and mainstream society.

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 have 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

Citizens are tolerant of diverse religions practiced in the country, including the Mormon faith and Scientology; however, there is limited anti-Semitism, which occasionally manifests itself in the vandalization of synagogues with graffiti and in threatening letters. There were no cases of anti-Semitic vandalism reported in 1999 or 2000. Some immigrant groups have experienced discrimination or violence due to their ethnic background or race. The Government criticizes such practices and prosecutes offenders.

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. The U.S. Government is a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research. In January 2000, former Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat led the U.S. delegation to the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, and former President Clinton addressed the forum in a videotaped message.

SWITZERLAND

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 19,870 square miles (41,284 square kilometers) and its population is an estimated 7.21 million.

Approximately 95 percent of the population traditionally have been split evenly between Protestant churches and the Catholic Church. Since the 1980's, there has been a trend of persons, primarily Protestants, formally renouncing their church membership. According to the 1990 census, the percentage of the total population

not belonging to a religious group has risen to 7 percent, up from 4 percent 10 years earlier. Membership in religious denominations is as follows: 46 percent Roman Catholic, 40 percent Protestant, 2 percent Muslim, 1 percent Orthodox, and 1 percent unknown/undecided. Other denominations account for trace percentages of less than one percent. There are 58,500 persons belonging to other Christian groups, 29,175 belonging to new religious movements, 17,577 Jews, and 11, 748 Old Catholics.

Muslims have grown to at least 200,000 persons, fueled by the influx of Yugoslav refugees in recent years. Muslims practice their religion throughout the country. Although only two mosques exist—in Zurich and Geneva—there have been no reports of difficulties in Muslims buying or renting space to worship. Although occasional complaints arise, such as a Muslim employee not being given time to pray during the workday, attitudes generally are tolerant toward Muslims, who constitute the country's largest non-Christian minority.

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.

Religious liberty is protected by Article 15 of the Constitution, which grants freedom of creed and conscience, and by Article 261bis in the Federal Criminal Code, which prohibits any form of discrimination or debasement of any religion or of any religious adherents.

In a June 10, 2001 referendum, voters approved by a two-thirds majority the deletion of a requirement that the Federal Government expressly consent to the establishment of any new Catholic diocese in the country. The requirement, originally designed to preserve religious peace among the country's religious communities, was imposed in 1874 following the unsuccessful attempt of Pope Pius IX to establish a Catholic diocese in the reformist (Protestant) city of Geneva a year earlier. Since the article no longer served its original purpose and, in fact, discriminated against the Catholic Church, the Federal Government called on the electorate to abolish it.

There is no official state church. However, all of the cantons financially support at least one of the three traditional denominations—Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, or Protestant—with funds collected through taxation. Each of the 26 states (cantons) has its own regulations regarding the relationship between church and state. In all cantons an individual may choose not to contribute to church taxes. However, in some cantons private companies are unable to avoid payment of the church tax. A religious organization must register with the Government in order to receive tax-exempt status. There have been no reports of a nontraditional religious group applying for the "church taxation" status that the traditional three denominations enjoy.

Groups of foreign origin are free to proselytize. Groups such as Young Life, Youth for Christ, the Church of Scientology, Youth With a Mission, the Salvation Army, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Islamic Call are active in the country. Experts estimate that between 300 to 800 denominations and groups are established throughout the country.

Foreign missionaries must obtain a "religious worker" visa to work in the country. Requirements include proof that the foreigner would not displace a citizen from doing the job, that the foreigner would be financially supported by the host organization, and that the country of origin of religious workers also grants visas to Swiss religious workers. Youth "interns" may qualify for special visas as well.

Religion is taught in public schools. The doctrine presented depends on which religion predominates in the particular state. However, those of different faiths are free to attend classes for their own creeds during the class period. Atheists are not required to attend the classes. Parents also may send their children to private schools or teach their children at home.

In response to the issue of Holocaust era assets, the Government and private sector initiated a series of measures designed to shed light on the past, provide assistance to Holocaust victims, and address claims to dormant accounts in Swiss banks. These measures include: The Independent Commission of Experts under Professor Jean-Francois Bergier, charged with examining the country's wartime history and its role as a financial center; the Independent Committee of Eminent Persons under Paul Volcker, charged with resolving the issue of dormant World War II era accounts in Swiss banks; and the Swiss Special Fund for Needy Holocaust Victims, which received approximately $190 million (273 million Swiss francs) in contribu-

tions from the private sector and the Swiss National bank. A $1.25 billion settlement of the class action lawsuit filed in the U.S. against Swiss banks was announced in August 1998, completed in January 1999, and formally approved on July 26, 2000.

The debate over the country's World War II record contributed to the problem of anti-Semitism (see Section III). The Federal Council took action to address the problem of anti-Semitism. In December 1999, the Council reiterated a statement of regret first made in 1997 over the country's failures to assist minorities fleeing the Nazi regime. In December 1999, the Federal Council (Cabinet) announced the creation of a Center for Tolerance in Bern. Planning for the center under the chairmanship of a former parliamentarian is continuing, and financing will come from the public and private sectors. The Center plans to produce curricula material to address the roots of racism, provide exhibits designed to teach historical lessons, offer academic research opportunities, and host international symposia.

The Government does not initiate interfaith activities.

Of the country's 16 largest political parties, only three—the Evangelical People's Party, the Christian Democratic Party, and the Christian Social Party—subscribe to a religious philosophy. There have been no reports of individuals being excluded from a political party because of their religious beliefs. Some groups have organized their own parties, such as the Transcendental Meditation Maharishi's Party of Nature and the Argentinean Guru's Humanistic Party. However, none of these have gained enough of a following to win political representation.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Due to increasing concern over certain groups, the Government in 1997 asked an advisory commission to examine the Church of Scientology. The commission's 1998 report concluded that there was no basis for special monitoring of the Church, since it did not represent any direct or immediate threat to the security of the country. However, the report stated that the Church had characteristics of a totalitarian organization and had its own intelligence network. The commission also warned of the significant financial burden imposed on Church of Scientology members and recommended reexamining the issue at a later date. In December 2000, the Federal Department of Police published a follow-up report, which concluded that the activities of such groups, including Scientology, had not significantly altered since the first report and that their special monitoring was thus not justified.

In 1998 the city of Basel passed a law banning aggressive tactics for handing out flyers. This action was prompted by complaints about Scientologists' methods. In June 1999, the Church of Scientology suffered a setback when it failed in the country's highest court to overturn a municipal law that barred persons from being approached on the street by those using "deceptive or dishonest methods." The Court ruled that a 1998 Basel law, prompted by efforts to curb Scientology, involved an intervention in religious freedom but did not infringe on it.

The city of Buchs, St. Gallen, also has passed a law modeled on the Basel law. However, it is still legal to proselytize in nonintrusive ways, such as through public speaking on the street or by going door-to-door in neighborhoods.

In June 1995 in Zurich, Scientologists appealed a city decision that prohibited them from distributing flyers on public property. In a qualified victory for the Scientologists, a higher court decided in September 1999 that the Scientologists' activities were commercial and not religious, and that the city should grant them and other commercial enterprises such as fast food restaurants more freedom to distribute flyers on a permit basis. Fearing a heavy administrative and enforcement workload, the city appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court rejected the appeal in June 2000, reinforcing the decision by the previous court that the Scientologists' activities were commercial in nature. The Supreme Court decision is expected to establish a nationwide legal guideline on the issue.

In Winterthur city, authorities require Scientologists to apply for an annual permit to sell their books on public streets. The permit limits their activities to certain areas and certain days. This practice has been in effect since 1995 when a district court upheld fines issued to Scientologists by the city for accosting passersby to invite them onto their premises to sell them books and conduct personality tests. The court ruled that the Scientologists' activities were primarily commercial, rather than religious, which required them to get an annual permit for the book sale on public property and prohibited them from distributing flyers or other advertising material. The Supreme Court ruling in the Zurich case is expected to set a precedent for this case as well.

The European Court of Human Rights upheld the Canton of Geneva's legal prohibition of a Muslim primary school teacher from wearing a headscarf in the classroom. In its verdict handed down on February 15, 2001, the Court ruled that the

Geneva regulations do not violate the articles on religious freedom and nondiscrimination of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court found that the legal provisions did not discriminate against the religious convictions of the complainant, but were meant to protect the rights of other subjects as well as the public order.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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.

In the context of discussions over Nazi gold and Holocaust era assets, anti-Semitic slurs reportedly still remain a problem, although there was no marked increase over the previous year. Government officials, including the President, have spoken frequently and publicly against anti-Semitism. According to the 2000 Swiss National Security Report, between 1995—when the antiracism law was enacted—and December 2000, 149 cases were brought to court under the antiracism law, with 68 convictions. Of those, 19 persons were convicted for anti-Semitism, 15 for revisionism (i.e., denying, doubting, or qualifying the Holocaust), 31 for racist oral or written slurs, and 3 for other reasons.

In November 1998, the Federal Commission Against Racism released a report on anti-Semitism expressing concern that the recent controversy over the country's role during World War II had to some extent contributed to increased expressions of latent anti-Semitism. At the same time, the Commission described the emergence of strong public opposition to anti-Semitism and credited the Federal Council with taking a "decisive stand" against anti-Semitism. The Commission also proposed various public and private measures to combat anti-Semitism and encourage greater tolerance and understanding.

In response the Federal Council committed itself to intensify efforts to combat anti-Semitic sentiment and racism. The Federal Council welcomed the publicly funded Bergier Commission report in December 1999 that disclosed the country's World War II record on turning away certain refugees fleeing from Nazi oppression, including Jewish applicants. The Federal Council described the publication of the Bergier Report as an occasion for reflection and discussion of the country's World War II history. The Federal Council took action to address the problem of anti-Semitism (see Section II).

In March 2000, a Geneva research group released a survey in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee in New York, stating that anti-Semitic views are held by 16 percent of citizens. Other prominent survey firms, as well as some Jewish leaders, disputed the accuracy of the Geneva firm's survey, stating that the survey overestimated the prevalence of anti-Semitic views. According to the survey, 33 percent of Swiss People's Party (SVP) supporters voiced anti-Semitic views. However, the survey found that 92 percent of all Swiss youth rejected anti-Semitic notions. The survey reflected some inconsistencies. For example, during the recent period of controversy over the country's World War II record, public opinion in support of the country's antiracism laws actually strengthened.

Many nongovernmental organizations coordinate interfaith events throughout the country.

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. The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with both Government officials and representatives of the various faiths.

TAJIKISTAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions.

There was no change in the overall status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Government policies reflect a pervasive fear of Is-

lamic fundamentalism, a fear shared by much of the general population. The Government monitors the activities of religious institutions to keep them from becoming overtly political. Members of the organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, who overstep this boundary, are subject to arrest and imprisonment for subversion. The Government, including President Imomali Rahmonov, continued to enunciate a policy of active "secularism," which it tends to define in antireligious rather than nonreligious terms.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, a small number of religious extremists who are not representative of the general population are believed to be behind several church bombings. Some mainstream Muslim leaders occasionally have expressed concern that minority religious groups undermine national unity.

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 55,300 square miles and its population is about 6.4 million. An estimated 95 percent of the citizens consider themselves Muslims, although the degree of religious observance varies widely. Only an estimated 10 to 15 percent regularly follow Muslim practices (such as daily prayer and dietary restrictions) or attend services at mosques. The number of Muslims who fast during the holy month of Ramadan continued to increase; up to 99 percent of Muslims in the countryside and over 66 percent in the cities fasted during the latest month of Ramadan. About 3 percent of all Muslims are Ismailis; most of them reside in the remote Gorno-Badakhshan region as well as certain districts of the southern Khatlon region and in Dushanbe. The rest of the Muslim population is Sunni.

There are approximately 230,000 Christians, mostly ethnic Russians and other Soviet-era immigrant groups. The largest Christian group is Russian Orthodox, but there are also Baptists (five registered organizations), Roman Catholics (two registered organizations), Seventh-Day Adventists (one registered organization), Korean Protestants (one registered organization), Lutherans (no data on registration), and Jehovah's Witnesses (one registered organization). Other religious minorities are very small and include Baha'is (four registered organizations), Zoroastrians (no data on registered organizations), Hare Krishna (one registered organization), and Jews (one registered organization).

Each of these groups probably totals less than 1 percent of the population. The overwhelming majority of these groups live in the capital or other large cities.

Christian missionaries from Western nations, Korea, India, and other countries are present, but their numbers are quite small. Current estimates put the number of recent Christian converts at approximately 2,000 persons.

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, there are some restrictions, and the Government monitors the activities of religious institutions to keep them from becoming overtly political. Members of the organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, who overstep this boundary, are subject to arrest and imprisonment for subversion.

According to the Law on Religion and Religious Organizations, religious communities must be registered by the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers, which monitors the activities of Muslim groups, the Russian Orthodox Church, and possibly other religious establishments. While the official reason given to justify registration is to ensure that religious groups act in accordance with the law, the practical purpose is to ensure that they do not become overly political. In 1997 the Council of the Islamic Center was subordinated to the Committee on Religious Affairs. This move took place quietly, and with no apparent objection from the observant Muslim community.

More than 5,000 mosques are estimated to be open for daily prayers, although the Government's Committee on Religious Affairs no longer registers them or keeps records on their number. In addition, 237 so-called "Friday mosques" (large facilities built for Friday prayers) are registered with the Committee on Religious Affairs. These figures do not include Ismaili places of worship because complete data were unavailable.

Regularly throughout the period, covered by this report President Imomali Rahmonov strongly defended "secularism," which in the Tajik political context is a highly politicized term that carries the strong connotation—likely understood both

by the President and his audience—of being "antireligious" rather than "nonreligious." The President also occasionally criticized Islam as a political threat. While the vast majority of citizens, including members of the Government, consider themselves Muslims and are not anti-Islamic, there is a pervasive fear of Islamic fundamentalism among both progovernment forces and much of the population at large.

A 1998 law prohibits the creation of political parties with a religious orientation. The former United Tajik Opposition (UTO), the largest component of which was the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), along with international organizations and foreign governments, strongly criticized the law for violating the June 1997 peace agreement, which included a government commitment to lift the ban on member parties of the UTO. The post independence 1992–97 civil war was fought in part over differing views of the role of religion in the republic. In June 1998, President Rahmonov established a Special Conciliation Commission to resolve the dispute, which later reported that it had devised compromise language for the law banning parties from receiving support from religious institutions. A new version of the law, including the compromise language, was passed in the November 1998 parliamentary session. A 1999 constitutional amendment states that the State is secular and that citizens may be members of parties formed on a religious basis. Two representatives from a religiously oriented party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, were members in the lower house of the national Parliament during the period covered by this report.

Although there is no official state religion, the Government has declared two Islamic holidays, Id Al-Fitr and Idi Qurbon, as state holidays. These holidays do not negatively affect any religious groups.

There are small private publishers that publish Islamic materials without serious problems. There is no restriction on the distribution or possession of the Koran, the Bible, or other religious works. The Islamic Renaissance Party, a religiously oriented party, continued to publish its official newspaper, Najot (founded in 1999), although it lost access to government-owned printing presses for several months during the summer of 2000, apparently for political reasons. The party also began publishing Naison, a magazine for women, in May 2001. In addition, in May 2001, the Union of Islamic Scientists of Tajikistan began publishing the weekly journal Chashmandoz.

Privately owned mass-circulation newspapers regularly published articles explaining Islamic beliefs and practices.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Missionaries of registered religious groups are not restricted legally and proselytize openly. There were no reports of harassment of such groups, but neither are missionaries particularly welcomed. The Government's fear of Islamic terrorists prompts it to restrict visas for Muslim missionaries. There was evidence of an unofficial ban on foreign missionaries who are perceived as extreme Islamic fundamentalists.

Aside from the registration requirement, there are few official constraints on religious practice; however, government officials sometimes issue extrajudicial restrictions. For example, the mayor of Dushanbe prohibited mosques from using loudspeakers for the 5-times-daily call to prayer, and during the period covered by this report, similar restrictions were initiated in the southern Khatlon and northern Soghd regions. There are also reports that some local officials have forbidden members of the Islamic Renaissance Party to speak in mosques in their region. However, this restriction is more a reflection of political rather than religious differences. In Isfara following allegations that a private Arabic language school was hosting a suspected Uzbek terrorist, the authorities imposed restrictions on private Arabic language schools (to include restrictions on private Islamic instruction). Such restrictions appear to be based on political concerns, but restrictive on private religious instruction.

In early 2000, an unregistered Baptist congregation in Dushanbe was informed that it was required to register with the Government, but the Baptists refused on the grounds that they are a branch of the larger All-Baptist Churches, an organization of Baptist churches from throughout the former Soviet Union. They argued that only their leadership in Moscow has the right to register with a government authority. Proceedings began against the Baptist congregation in March 2000 and the court fined the congregation a little more than 50 cents (1,000 Tajik rubles). The congregation refuses to pay as a matter of principle. There have been some instances of petty harassment of the congregation, with the militia on at least one occasion taking down the sign outside the congregation's building. There were no further reports of harassment during the period covered by this report.

In the spring of 2001, there were reports that local authorities in the city of Qurghanteppa (also, Kurgan-Tyube) prevented a Christian church from registering.

Government-imposed restrictions on the number of pilgrims allowed to undertake the Hajj continued. However, individuals ultimately were permitted, to use private vehicles. In addition, pilgrims were allowed to travel to Mecca and Medina by bus from Mashhad, Iran. There were regional quotas on the number of pilgrims, permitted to undertake the Hajj, which led to increased corruption as places were sold. The motivation for quotas and other restrictions appears to be profit (maximizing bribes from Hajj pilgrims), rather than discouraging a religious practice.

Government publishing houses are prohibited from publishing anything in Arabic script; they do not publish religious literature. However, in 1998 the President initiated a project to publish a Tajik version of the Koran in both Cyrillic and Arabic script, which were printed in Iran and sold through the Iranian bookshop in Dushanbe.

Members of the Baha'i community occasionally were confronted by the police guard outside Dushanbe's Baha'i Center and asked why they had forsaken Islam. Others were called in by the Ministry of Security and asked why they had changed religious affiliation.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government detained numerous members of the Islamist organization, Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Emancipation) in the northern, primarily ethnic Uzbek, Leninobod district and imprisoned some of them. These measures were primarily a reaction to the political agenda that the Government attributes to this organization. According to a press account, over 50 of the Hizb ut-Tahrir organization's members were arrested between January and April 2000 and 1 member reportedly died in police custody. Courts sentenced 57 of these persons to between 1 and 2 years imprisonment. At least two of the detainees reportedly were charged with disseminating subversive literature and planning to overthrow the Government. Although there is no direct information on what grounds the others were charged, they probably were charged with subversive activities. In addition, it is probable, but not confirmed, that between 120 and 150 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir were arrested and sentenced to 5 to 15 years imprisonment. Although Islam is an essential element of the organization's makeup, the Government's hostility toward it appears to be motivated more by its political than by its religious goals. This organization is linked with an organization of the same name in Uzbekistan that calls for the creation of a Muslim caliphate in the country and has become a target of repression by the Uzbek Government, which has accused its members of acting against the constitutional order and of belonging to an extremist group.

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. Conflict between different religious groups is virtually unknown, in part because there are so few non-Muslims. However, some Muslim leaders occasionally have expressed concern that minority religious groups undermine national unity.

Terrorists bombed a Protestant church in Dushanbe in October 2000, killing seven persons and injuring many more. Government authorities later announced that several Islamic students had been arrested for the attack. The students reportedly confessed to the bombing; their apparent motive was religious. Specifically, they opposed foreign missionaries converting Tajik Muslims to Christianity. According to government authorities, the perpetrators were acting on their own and were not affiliated with either the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan or Hizb ut-Tahrir. In December 2000, two churches in Dushanbe, a Russian Orthodox church and a Seventh-Day Adventists' church were bombed. There were no injuries at either church, both of which were closed at the time of the bombing. Three persons were accused of the bombings; two persons were tried and one person reportedly escaped during the period covered by this report.

The small Baha'i community normally does not experience prejudice, but a prominent 88-year-old leader of the community was killed in his home in Dushanbe in September 1999. Members of the Baha'i community believe that he was killed because of his religion, since none of his personal possessions were taken from the murder scene. Police have made no arrests, but militant Islamists aligned with Iran

are considered likely perpetrators. There were no new developments on this case during the period covered by this report.

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.

Through public diplomacy, the U.S. Embassy has supported programs designed to create a better understanding of how democracies address the issue of secularism and religious freedom. Several participants in these programs are key members of the opposition who, through their writings and their debate on the definition of secularism, reveal a more sophisticated understanding of the concept and of how secularism and religious activism can coexist in a free society.

TURKEY

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government imposes some restrictions on religious minorities and on religious expression in government offices and state-run institutions, including universities.

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

Government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, extremist groups or individuals target minority communities from time to time. Some Christians and Baha'is faced social and government harassment, including detentions for alleged proselytizing or unauthorized meetings. A Muslim cleric was arrested in June 2001 for insulting the Government, holding an illegal religious meeting, and wearing prohibited religious clothing. A Syriac Christian priest stood trial in December 2000, but was acquitted in April 2001 for statements made in October 2000 "that incited enmity" concerning Armenian genocide claims. An intense debate continues over the government ban on wearing Muslim religious dress in state facilities, including universities. The Government, especially the National Security Council (NSC), continued to press for measures to combat "Islamic fundamentalism" or "reactionism" and sought to punish the prominent leader of an Islamic religious community for alleged anti-state behavior. After 2 years of considering the matter, in June 2001, the Constitutional Court closed the Islamist-led Fazilet (Virtue) party, the country's largest opposition political group, for antisecular activities and expelled two of its members from Parliament.

The U.S. Government frequently discusses religious freedom issues with the Turkish 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 301,394 square miles and its population is approximately 65.6 million. About 99 percent of the population are Muslim, primarily Sunni. The number of persons who actively practice their religion is low in many parts of the country, in part due to a strong adherence to secularism. In addition to the country's Sunni majority, there is a significant Shi'a minority, of which an estimated 12 million are Alevis. Alevis, a heterodox Muslim Shi'a sect, are a distinct persuasion whose rituals include men and women worshiping together through speeches, poetry, and dance. There are several non-Muslim religious minority groups, mostly concentrated in Istanbul and other large cities. While exact membership figures are not available, these include an estimated 50,000 Armenian Orthodox Christians, 25,000 Jews, and from 3,000 to 5,000 Greek Orthodox adherents. There are approximately 3,000 Protestants and 10,000 Baha'is. Additionally, there are an estimated 15,000 Syrian Orthodox (Syriac) Christians and small, undetermined numbers of Bulgarian, Chaldean, Nestorian, Georgian, and Maronite Christians. The number of Christians in the southeast is low, as the younger generation, especially among Syriacs, has migrated to Istanbul, Europe, or North America.

There are no known estimates of the number and religious affiliation of foreign missionaries 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; however, the Government imposes some restrictions on religious minorities and on Muslim religious expression in government offices and state-run institutions, including universities. The Constitution establishes Turkey as a secular state and provides for freedom of belief, freedom of worship, and the private dissemination of religious ideas. However, these rights are restricted by constitutional provisions regarding the integrity and existence of the State.

The Government oversees Muslim religious facilities and education through its Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). The Diyanet, which some groups claim reflects the beliefs of the Sunni Islamist mainstream to the exclusion of other beliefs, regulates the operation of the country's more than 70,000 mosques, and employs imams, who are civil servants. The Government asserts that the Diyanet treats equally all who request services.

A separate government agency, the Office of Foundations (Vakiflar Genel Mudurlugu), regulates some activities of non-Muslim religious minorities and their affiliated churches, monasteries, religious schools, and related property. The Vakiflar also regulates Muslim charitable religious foundations, including schools and hospitals. There are 160 minority foundations, including Greek Orthodox (about 70 sites), Armenian Orthodox (about 50), and Jewish (20), as well as Syrian Christians, Chaldeans, Bulgarian Orthodox, Georgians, and Maronis. Minority foundations, including those of religions recognized under the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 (Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Jewish), may not acquire property for any purpose, although they can lose it. If a community does not use its property because of a decline in the size of its congregation over 10 years, the Vakiflar takes over direct administration and ownership. If such minorities can demonstrate a renewed community need, they may apply legally to recover their properties.

During the period covered by this report, the military and judiciary, with support from other members of the country's secular elite, continued to wage a private and public campaign against Islamic fundamentalism, which they view as a political threat to the democratic secular republic. The NSC—a powerful military/civilian body established by the Constitution to advise senior leadership on national security matters—categorizes religious fundamentalism as a threat to public safety and order and introduced an 18-point antifundamentalist program in February 1997. Despite the NSC's activism on this issue, legislative measures have been taken on only 5 of the 18 points. In August 2000, with urging from the NSC, the Prime Minister declared a "decree with force of law" to facilitate dismissal of civil servants suspected of anti-state (including Islamist) activities, one of the remaining February 1997 points. The President refused to sign the decree and returned it to the Prime Minister for parliamentary consideration. Despite urging from the Turkish General Staff to consider this a high priority, Parliament has not taken up the issue.

As a minority within the predominant (Sunni Muslim) faith, Alevis freely practice their religion and build "Cem houses" (Alevi places of gathering). Many Alevis allege discrimination in the State's failure to include any of their doctrines or beliefs in religious instruction classes in public schools, and charge a Sunni bias in the Diyanet, which views the Alevis as a cultural rather than a religious group. No funds are allocated specifically from the Diyanet budget for Alevi activities or religious leadership. However, some Sunni Islamic political activists charge that the secular State favors and is under the influence of the Alevis.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

There is no law that explicitly prohibits proselytizing or religious conversions; however, many prosecutors and police regard proselytizing and religious activism with suspicion, especially when such activities are deemed to have political overtones. Police sometimes arrest proselytizers for disturbing the peace, "insulting Islam," conducting unauthorized educational courses, or distributing literature that has criminal or separatist elements. Courts usually dismiss such charges. If the proselytizers are foreigners, they may be deported, but generally they are able to reenter the country.

Participation in Tarikats (religious orders and communities) and other mystical Sunni Islamic, quasi-religious, and social orders has been banned officially since the 1920's but is largely tolerated. The NSC has called for stricter enforcement of the ban as part of its campaign against the perceived threat of Islamic fundamentalism. Nevertheless, prominent political and social leaders continue to be associated with Tarikats or other Islamic communities. In August 2000, Islamic leader Fetullah Gulen was indicted for "attempting to change the characteristics of the Republic"

by allegedly trying to establish a theocratic Islamic state. The prosecutor also alleged that Gulen attempted to "infiltrate" the military. The Government is seeking a maximum 10-year sentence based on Turkey's Anti-Terror Law. At the time of the indictment, the Chief of the Turkish General Staff said publicly that Gulen "plans to undermine the State" and has supporters in the civil service. Gulen, who is in the United States, is still being tried in absentia.

In June 2001, Sufi Muslim preacher Aydogan Fuat was arrested on charges of causing religious enmity, conducting illegal religious activities that threaten the secular State, and wearing banned religious clothing.

The military regularly dismisses from the service individuals whose official files reflect participation in Islamist fundamentalist activities.

The Government continued to enforce a more than 50-year-old ban on the wearing of religious head coverings at universities or by civil servants in public buildings. Dozens of women who wear head coverings, and both men and women who actively show support for those who defy the ban, have lost their jobs in the public sector as nurses and teachers; some others were not allowed to register as university students.

Small, peaceful protests against this policy occurred at various points during the period covered by this report. In July 2000, Deputy Prime Minister Bahceli confirmed a circular issued by the State Planning Organization barring any civil servants or family members wearing a headscarf from entering the organization's rest and recreation facilities. The courts have ruled that universities are public institutions and, as such, have an obligation to protect the country's basic principles such as secularism. The Turkish Higher Education Council (YOK) ruled in March 2001 that Fatih University could not register new students for the upcoming academic year, and might be subject to further sanctions, because the university allegedly has close ties to Fetullah Gulen and had violated the dress code by allowing students to wear headscarves. However, a higher administrative court reversed the YOK decision in May 2001.

In May 1999, the State filed a motion to close the Islamist Fazilet (Virtue) Party for promoting antisecular activity and for representing the ideologies of the former Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party, which was banned in 1998. The indictment also called for banning Fazilet's leaders from politics for 5 years and stripping its over 100 Members of Parliament of their seats. In February 2001, the Constitutional Court's chief prosecutor updated the indictment, arguing that videotapes from Fazilet's May 2000 convention prove that it is a continuation of Refah, but seeking to strip only two parliamentarians of their seats. He noted that pictures of Refah leader and former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan were displayed prominently during the party convention. In June 2001, the Constitutional Court ruled to close Fazilet and expel two party members from Parliament. The Court found Fazilet guilty of being a center of activities "contrary to the principle of the secular Republic." The European Court of Human Rights continues to consider the appeal of the 1998 closure of Refah.

In December 2000, under a new "suspension of punishment law," Erbakan's March 2000 sentence of 1-year's imprisonment was suspended before he entered prison. Erbakan had been convicted of violating the Penal Code (Article 312) by "promoting enmity" along religious lines, for a speech he had made in 1994, in which (among other things) he referred to parliamentarians as "infidels."

Government authorities do not interfere on matters of doctrine pertaining to minority religions, nor do they restrict the publication or use of religious literature among members of the religion.

The authorities monitor the activities of Eastern Orthodox churches. While the Government does not recognize the ecumenical nature of the Greek Orthodox patriarch, it acknowledges him as head of the Turkish Greek Orthodox community and does not interfere with his travels or other ecumenical activities. Since 1971 the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul has sought to reopen the seminary on the island of Halki in the Sea of Marmara. The seminary has been closed since 1971, when the State nationalized all private institutions of higher learning. Under current restrictions, including a citizenship requirement, religious communities remain unable to train new clergy for eventual leadership. Coreligionists from outside Turkey have been permitted to assume leadership positions.

After a 1997 law made 8 years of secular education compulsory, the Government stopped new enrollments in Islamic imam-Hatip schools (in existence since 1950), although children already in those classes were allowed to finish their grades. The state-managed imam-Hatip schools were very popular among conservative and Islamist Turks as an alternative to more secular public education. Currently, students may pursue study at Islamic imam-Hatip high schools upon completion of 8 years in the secular public schools. Imam-Hatip schools are classified as vocational,

and therefore the graduates face some barriers to university admission such as an automatic reduction in their entrance exam grades. Only the Diyanet is authorized to provide religious training, usually through the public schools, although some clandestine private religious classes may exist. Students who complete 5 years of primary school may enroll in Diyanet Koran classes on weekends and during summer vacation.

State-sponsored Islamic religious and moral instruction in public 8-year primary schools is compulsory. Upon written verification of their non-Muslim background, minorities "recognized" by the Government under the 1923 Lausanne Treaty (Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Jewish) are exempted by law from Muslim religious instruction. These students may attend courses with parental consent. Other non-Muslim minorities, such as Catholics, Protestants, and Syriac Christians, are not exempted. Syriac Christians submitted a report in August 2000 to the President and Prime Minister requesting the right to use their own language for education and broadcasting.

There are legal restrictions against insulting any religion recognized by the State, interfering with that religion's services, or debasing its property.

Under the law, religious services may take place only in designated places of worship. Under municipal codes, only the State can designate a place of worship, and if a religion has no legal standing in the country it may not be eligible for a designated site. Non-Muslim religious services, especially for religions that do not have the status of "official minorities," often take place in diplomatic property or apartments. The Roman Catholic Church in Ankara, for example, is confined to diplomatic property, while Protestants throughout the country operate "storefront" or home churches.

A small Protestant community in Istanbul, which won a legal victory in May 2000 when a court allowed it to establish its own "foundation," is now seeking further legal permission to own property and pay a minister. Normally all "religious" foundations had to have been in existence since the early days of the Republic in order to be deemed as such. Other Turkish Protestant groups have begun the lengthy process of applying for permission to form foundations.

Some religious minority groups have lost property in the past, or continue to fight against expropriations. An Armenian community that had dwindled to only two persons in Kirikhan, Hatay province, may lose its church to the Vakiflar. In February 2001, the community won the first stage of its appeal of the 1999 decision to expropriate the church, but the legal proceedings continue. In addition, bureaucratic procedures and considerations relating to historic preservation at times have impeded repairs to religious facilities, although the Syriac Christians were able to complete needed repairs on some buildings in Mardin. Restoration or construction may be carried out in buildings and monuments considered "ancient" only with authorization of the Regional Board on the Protection of Cultural and National Wealth.

In February 2001, the Baha'i community lost a legal appeal against government expropriation of a sacred site near Edirne, and brought the case to the High Administrative Court. The Ministry of Culture had granted cultural heritage status to the site in 1993, but in January 2000, the Baha'i community was notified by the Ministry of Education that the property had been expropriated for future use by the adjacent primary school. The Ministry has deposited funds in the Baha'i community's bank account for the expropriated property but the Baha'i are continuing to fight the expropriation.

Although religious affiliation is listed on national identity cards, there is no official discrimination based upon religious persuasion.

Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom

In May 2001, an Islamic leader began serving a 2-year sentence for "inciting religious hatred." Mehmet Kutlular, leader of the Nur Cemaati religious community, had published a statement in October 1999 alleging that the August 1999 earthquake (that killed over 17,000 people) was "divine retribution" for laws banning headscarves in state buildings and universities. He exhausted his final appeal in early 2001 and will serve a minimum of 9 months and 23 days.

Police occasionally bar Christians from holding services in private apartments and from proselytizing by handing out literature. These activities also occasionally lead to police detention and trials. The trial of Turkish Christian Kemal Timur opened in January 2001 on charges of insulting Islam. Timur, who was arrested and detained for one day in May 2000, alleges that he was beaten on the soles of his feet while in detention. His trial is continuing. A Christian congregation in Gaziantep has encountered difficulty in obtaining permission to hold services. One member of the group was briefly detained for allegedly bribing people to convert to Christianity. Two Turkish Christians who had been detained near Izmir in March 2000

on a charge of "insulting Islam" by distributing Bibles were acquitted in May 2000. Several Christians in Istanbul continue to stand trial on the charge of "illegal assembly" for holding church and bible study meetings in an apartment. The group of seven (one American, five Turks and one Australian) was detained overnight in May 2000.

The Baha'i community has also faced problems with the police, including the January 2001 arrest of two men (one American) for allegedly proselytizing in Sivas. The men were released immediately, pending an investigation. Also in January, a local imam in Sivas criticized proselytizing by members of the Baha'i faith. In his public rebuke, he read a Koranic verse alluding to those "whose killing is necessary." Baha'i officials have met with local authorities to inform them of the nature of their activities and to request an end to harassment.

A Syriac priest in Diyarbakir was briefly detained in December 2000, put on trial, but acquitted in April 2001 of charges that he "incited ethnic hatred" by stating in October 2000 that allegations of "Armenian genocide" during World War I were justified.

Except for the above cases, there were no reports of persons who were detained or imprisoned solely for their religious beliefs.

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.

Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom

In December 2000, the President issued a Christmas goodwill message (for the second time in the country's history) and, for the first time, a Hanukkah message. Also in December 2000, National authorities and the municipality of Istanbul renamed a street in Istanbul (where the former Apostolic Delegation stands) after Pope John XXIII, in honor of his life and work as "a friend of the Turks."

In June 2001, hundreds of visiting Armenian Americans, led by the Turkish Armenian Patriarch and a visiting American Prelate, celebrated a mass in Kayseri, central Turkey, in honor of 1,700 years of Armenian Christianity. Turkish government officials and representatives of the U.S. Embassy attended the ceremony. The group then traveled extensively throughout the country, visiting sites of personal and religious significance.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Jews and most Christian denominations freely practice their religions and report little discrimination in daily life. However, many Turks who have converted to Christianity experience some form of harassment or pressure from family and neighbors. Some members of religious minorities claim that they have limited career prospects in government or military service. Proselytizing is socially unacceptable.

Extremist groups or individuals target minority communities from time to time. In April 2001, the Jewish community in Istanbul received a phone threat against a 500-year-old synagogue. Police provided additional security upon request. Many religious minority members, along with many in the secular political majority of Muslims, fear the possibility of rising Islamic extremism and the involvement of even moderate Islam in politics. Several Islamist newspapers regularly publish anti-Semitic material.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Mission discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Mission officials, including staff of the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul and the U.S. Consulate in Adana, enjoy close relations with the Diyanet, the Ecumenical Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate, Jewish communities in major cities, and other religious groups. The U.S. Embassy has urged the Government of Turkey to re-open the Halki Seminary. The Ambassador and other embassy officers also remain in close contact with local nongovernmental organizations that monitor freedom of religion and with minority religious group representatives.

Embassy and Consulate staff members are in close contact with representatives of religious minorities in the country and consult frequently on the status of religious freedom. They also monitor and report on incidents of detention of foreigners found proselytizing, and have attended the trials of Americans and others facing charges relating to free expression and the free practice of religion.

TURKMENISTAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and does not establish a state religion; however, in practice the Government exercises control over all forms of religious expression, including the only two registered religions, Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodox Christianity. The Government requirement that religious groups must have at least 500 members in order to register effectively prevents all other religions from registering. Nonregistered religious congregations are present in the country, but the Government severely restricts their activities. Such groups are prohibited from gathering publicly, proselytizing and disseminating religious materials. The Government's interpretation of the law severely restricts their freedom to meet in private homes.

The Government's respect for freedom of religion deteriorated during the period covered by the report. Harassment of unregistered religious groups intensified and included torture, arrest, and seizure or destruction of property.

There is no notable societal discrimination or violence based on religion in the country. Society historically has been tolerant and inclusive of different religious beliefs. The Government's restrictions on nontraditional religions apparently do not stem from doctrinal differences or societal friction between the majority Muslim population and non-Muslim communities. Rather, some observers have speculated that official restrictions on religious freedom, a holdover from the Soviet era, reflect the Government's concern that liberal religious policies could lead to political dissent, including in particular the introduction of Islamic extremist movements into the country. The Government appears to view participation in nontraditional religions as a threat to the stability and the neutrality of the State.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Representatives of the Embassy met frequently with the Government to appeal for greater support for religious freedom. The Ambassador, along with ambassadors from the European Union, repeatedly urged the Government to release religious prisoner Shageldi Atakov. Embassy officers attended several court hearings on the eviction of a Baptist pastor from the house in which his congregation held services.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 188,407 square miles and its population is approximately 5 million.

Reliable statistics regarding religious affiliation are not available. According to the Government's 1995 census, ethnic Turkmen constituted 77 percent of the population and are predominantly Sunni Muslim. Minority populations include ethnic Uzbeks (9.2 percent), ethnic Russians (6.7 percent) and ethnic Kazakhs (2 percent). The remainder of the population consists of Armenians, Azeris and other ethnic groups. Both the ethnic Uzbeks and Kazakhs are Sunni Muslim. There are small pockets of Shi'a Muslims in the country, many of whom are ethnic Iranians living along the border with Iran. There has been a modest, government-sponsored and tightly controlled revival of Islam since independence. During the Soviet era, there were only 4 mosques operating; now there are an estimated 318. Nevertheless, mosque-based Islam does not play a dominant role in society, in part due to 70 years of Soviet rule and in part because of the country's indigenous religious culture. Traditionally, Turkmen express Islam more through rituals associated with birth, marriage, and death, and through pilgrimage to the tombs of saints, rather than through regular attendance at a mosque.

While the 1995 census showed that Russians comprised almost 7 percent of the population, emigration to Russia and elsewhere probably has reduced this proportion considerably. The remaining 5 percent of the population consists of Armenians, Azeris, and other ethnic groups. Among the Russian population, practicing Christians are most likely to be members of the Russian Orthodox Church, but their level of religious observance is uncertain. There are 11 Russian Orthodox churches in the main cities, 3 of which are in Ashgabat. The Russian Orthodox Church is led by a priest resident in Ashgabat, but is under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Archbishop in Tashkent. There are five Russian Orthodox priests, but no seminaries. There are plans to build a Russian Orthodox cathedral in Ashgabat, but no date has been set to begin construction. There are no Armenian Catholic churches. There are also small communities of Pentecostal Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, Baptists, Baha'is, and Hare Krishna. None of these groups is registered; or maintains churches. (The Seventh-Day Adventist church was demolished by the Government in November 1999.) While most Christians are ethnic Russians, there are groups of ethnic Turkmen Christians as well. There is a Roman

Catholic community in Ashqabat that meets in the chapel of the Vatican Embassy. It includes both citizens and foreigners. A very small community of ethnic Germans, most of whom live in and around the city of Serakhs, reportedly practices the Lutheran faith.

An estimated 1,000 ethnic Jews live in the country. Most of their families came here during World War II from Ukraine, but there are also some Jewish families living in Turkmenabat, on the border with Uzbekistan, who are members of the community known as "Bokharski" Jews, referring to the city of Bokhara, in Uzbekistan. Virtually all Jews in the country are reportedly nonpracticing. There are no synagogues or rabbis in the country. The size of the Jewish community is dwindling as members emigrate to Israel, Germany, and the U.S.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, as does the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, which was amended in 1995 and 1996; however, in practice, the law has been interpreted to control religious life tightly and to restrict severely the activities of all religions.

According to the law on religious organizations, all congregations are required to register with the Government. However, in order to register, a congregation must have 500 citizens of at least 18 years of age in each locality in which it wishes to register (i.e., it is not sufficient to have at least 500 members in the country as a whole). These requirements have made it impossible for religious communities other than Sunni Muslims and Russian Orthodox Christians to register. The situation is exacerbated because ethnic Turkmen members of Christian groups are hesitant to sign their names to a public document that shows that they have converted. Ethnic Turkmen who have converted to Christianity have been subjected to official harassment and mistreatment.

Nonregistered religious groups are officially prohibited from conducting religious activities, including gathering, disseminating religious materials, and proselytizing. This is a consequence of the Government's interpretation of the law rather than because of the law itself, which does not prohibit nonregistered religious groups from gathering. In fact, the Law on Public Associations specifically excludes its application in the case of religious gatherings. Nevertheless, government authorities regularly apply the Law on Public Associations when nonregistered religious groups meet, even if the meetings occur in private homes. Participants are subject to fines and administrative arrest, according to the country's administrative code, and, once administrative measures are exhausted, are subject to criminal prosecution. In such cases, the Soviet-era 1988 regulation on the "procedure for conducting gatherings, meetings, marches, and demonstrations" is applied, although gatherings in private homes are not within the scope of this regulation.

There is no state religion, but the majority of the population is Sunni Muslim. An individual is thought of as being born into an ethnicity and religion at the same time. Departures from the pattern are rare and do not meet with much support in society. The Government has incorporated some aspects of Islamic tradition into its effort to redefine a national identity. At the same time, it is concerned that foreign Islamic movements do not spread into the country. The Government maintains control over the practice of Islam in several ways. It pays the salaries of all Muslim clerics. In 1997 it began prohibiting mosque-based imams from gathering pupils and teaching about Islam. Following President Niyazov's closure of the Zamakhshari Madrasa in Dashoguz in June 2001, the Theological Faculty at Turkmen State University in Ashgabat became the only institution to conduct Islamic education. In addition, the Government continues to control participation in the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hajj), choosing all participants and limiting the number permitted to participate. In 2001 only 185 Turkmen citizens were given permission by the Government to participate in the Hajj, far fewer pilgrims than the country's quota, which was 4,600. The Government provided free transportation to Mecca and a member of the Council on Religious Affairs accompanied the group.

The Government provides some financial and other support for the construction of new mosques to the Council on Religious Affairs. This body consists of four government officials, one secular official, two Muslim clerics, and the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. It acts as an intermediary between the government bureaucracy and registered religious organizations. It has no role in promoting interfaith dialog. Through the Council, the Government also maintains control over the other registered religious institution, the Russian Orthodox Church. Although the Government does not pay the salaries of parish priests, the head of the Church is a member of the Council on Religious Affairs and, as such, is an official of the Government.

Religious holidays that are also national holidays are all Muslim. These include Gurban Bairam (Eid al-Adha), a 3-day holiday that commemorates the end of the Hajj; and Eid al-Fitr, which commemorates the end of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. These holidays do not have an overt negative impact on any non-Muslim groups.

There is no religious instruction in public schools. However, the Government requires instruction on "Rukhnama," President Niyazov's spiritual guidebook on Turkmen culture and heritage, which was released in February 2001, in all public schools and institutes of higher learning. The Russian Orthodox Church conducts religious instruction classes for children. Home-schooling is allowed only in cases of severe illness or disability, and not for religious reasons.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government's registration requirements for religious groups, which specify that a group must have at least 500 citizens over the age of 18 as members in each locality, effectively prevent all religions but Sunni Islam and the Russian Orthodox Church from practicing openly. However, the only groups specifically banned by the Government are extremist groups that advocate violence.

The Government restricts organized religions in establishing places of worship. The Government does not allow unregistered groups to gather publicly or privately or to establish a church; it punishes individuals or groups who violate these prohibitions.

The Government restricts the number of Muslim places of worship whose construction requires government permission. According to the Council on Religious Affairs, every village should have one mosque. While large, monumental mosques, such as the ones in Ashqatab, and Gok Tepe, and the one planned for Kipchak, are supported by the Government, village mosques are supported by the local population. In theory villagers wishing to build a mosque must first obtain land from the local authorities, then get permission from nearby residents and provide the funding for construction and maintenance.

The Government also controls and restricts access to Islamic education. Beginning in 1997, the Government began to prohibit mosque-based imams from teaching Islam to pupils. In a meeting with media and academic leaders in June 2001, President Niyazov criticized the expansion of a network of Islamic schools and ordered the closure of one of the two theological centers remaining in the country, the Zamakhshari Madrasa in Dashoguz. The only remaining government center for Islamic education is the Theological Faculty at Turkmen State University in Ashgabat. The Government also exercises control over who is allowed to participate in the Hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. The Government chooses all participants. In February 2001, only 185 pilgrims were chosen, although the country could have sent many more.

The Government also has attempted to restrict the freedom of parents to raise their children in accordance with their religious beliefs. When an Adventist pastor was detained in Turkmenabat in October 2000, one of the Government's formal charges against him was that he was corrupting minors because children of congregation members were present at the prayer service.

Foreign missionary activity is prohibited, although there is evidence that both Christian and Muslim missionaries have some presence in the country. Ethnic Turkmen members of unregistered religious groups who are accused of disseminating religious material receive harsher treatment than non-ethnic Turkmen, especially if they have received financial support from foreign sources.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In November 1999, the Government razed the Seventh-Day Adventist church in Turkmenbat. In October 2000, the Adventist pastor was detained and questioned for several days in Turkmenabat after police and Internal Security Service (KNB) officials raided a prayer service he was conducting in a private apartment. In March 2001, an unregistered Baptist congregation was evicted from the private house in which it had held religious services for over 20 years. In April 2001, a Jehovah's Witnesses service in a private apartment was disrupted by a group of KNB, police, and city officials. In June 2001, the city of Ashgabat determined that the owner of the apartment, a Jehovah's Witness adherent, should be evicted from the apartment and not provided with another because she had used the apartment for holding unauthorized religious meetings. In April 2001, a Pentecostal pastor lost his long court battle against eviction from the house in which he held religious services; the Ashgabat city government implausibly claimed he had made unauthorized renovations that rendered it unsafe for occupation. Despite the pastor's intention to appeal, the city has allowed 20 workers to live in the house. Also in May 2001, a Baptist

pastor and two fellow church members were detained by Mary KNB officials and questioned for several hours after the KNB broke up an open air religious service conducted by the pastor outside Mary. Local police officials prohibited the Baptists from ever travelling to Mary again.

In March 2000, the Government arrested religious leader Hoja Ahmed Orazgylychev and demolished the unregistered mosque and religious school operated by Orgazgylychev and his followers. Orazgylychev subsequently was released and sentenced to internal exile in Tedjen. Orazgulychev was charged with participating in a kidnaping plot, but his arrest came after he criticized President Niyazov for directing that local children dance around a Christmas tree during New Year's celebrations.

In November 2000, four ethnic Turkmen Baptists were detained, interrogated, and tortured by KNB officials in Anau, outside of Ashgabat, after Christian literature was found in their car by local police. In December the four Baptists again were detained and harassed by the KNB in Ashgabat and Turkmenabat. In December 2000, three of the ethnic Turkmen Baptists were forced to sign documents ceding houses, used for religious purposes, over to the Government, although they were allowed to keep their personal property.

In February 2001, human rights organizations and the international press reported that Baptist prisoner Shalgeldi Atakov had suffered a heart attack in prison and was gravely ill. Atakov has been in prison since 1999 for allegedly making an illegal transfer of automobiles in 1994. His original sentence of 2 years had been extended to 4 years and he was fined $12,000, an unusually large fine for such an offense. Atakov denied the charges and claimed that he was being imprisoned because of his religious beliefs. Following high-level approaches by foreign governments and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Atakov was transferred to a hospital prison near Mary. After his recovery, he was returned to his original prison and then, according to the authorities, was transferred in April 2001 to the maximum security prison in Turkmenbashy for violating prison rules. Although the religious press contains many statements about the circumstances surrounding his imprisonment, including the allegation that he was tortured in prison, and his subsequent potential release, such statements were impossible to confirm. Also in February 2001, according to the Keston News Service, the local authorities of the Niyazov district of Ashgabat sealed the country's last functioning Baptist church. In March 2001, the authorities reportedly broke the seals and removed all of the church's contents. The church had been in existence for 20 years, and was corporately owned by the congregation, which had been registered under the Soviets and lost registration in 1997 under the new law.

The religious press reported that Dmitri Melnichenko, a member of a Baptist Church in Ashgabat, was arrested and tortured because of his persistent refusal, on religious grounds, to perform military service. These reports have not been independently confirmed.

Several members of Jehovah's Witnesses who had been imprisoned for conscientious objection were not released at the end of their term because they refused to swear an oath of loyalty to the President.

There were no other reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

A group of young Roman Catholics, all Turkmen citizens, traveled to Rome in August, 2000, to meet with the Pope and participate in the World Youth Day conference. This was a departure from the country's severely restrictive policies on travel. The Baha'i community, whose members had been prevented from conducting services since 1997, gathered publicly to celebrate Novruz Bairam in March 2001, and sent a delegation from Turkmenistan to Israel in June 2001 to participate in the opening ceremony of a Baha'i garden in Haifa.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There was neither general, overt societal discrimination nor any violence based on religion during the period covered by this report. Turkmen culture historically is tolerant and inclusive of different religious beliefs. For example, in the early part of the 20th century, Ashgabat was a refuge for members of the Baha'i Faith escaping persecution in Iran, and the first Baha'i temple was built in Ashgabat. Government repression of minority religions does not reflect doctrinal or societal friction

between the majority Muslim population and minority religions. Rather, observers believe that it reflects the Government's concern that the proliferation of nontraditional religions could lead to loss of state control, civil unrest, and the undermining of the Niyazov Government. The societal attitude toward conversion from Islam to any other religion generally is surprise, and often disapproval. Although most citizens do not emphasize mosque attendance or observance of many Islamic customs practiced in other parts of the Muslim world, they view being Muslim as an integral part of the national culture and of Turkmen identity.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

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

During the period covered by this report, the Embassy has approached the Government regularly regarding the issue of religious freedom, at every level up to the President. In December 2000, the Charge joined EU ambassadors in protesting the brutal treatment of four ethnic Turkmen Baptists detained by the Government in November 2000, and demanded restitution of their property. In January 2001, an embassy officer, along with embassies from the EU and OSCE representatives, was successful in gaining access to the court hearing over the eviction of a Pentecostal pastor from his house. The embassy officer attended all subsequent hearings in the eviction case. In February 2001, following news that Baptist prisoner Shageldi Atakov was gravely ill, the Ambassador and EU ambassadors urged the Foreign Minister to release religious prisoner Shageldi Atakov, immediately. The Government responded by transferring Atakov to a prison hospital outside of Mary for treatment. In May 2001, embassy officers met with Atakov's family in Kakkha and later with Atakov in Ashgabat.

UKRAINE

The Constitution and 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion provide for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

During the period covered by this report, the Government's respect for religious freedom improved somewhat; however, religious organizations continued to experience difficulties with registration and bureaucracy at the local level. President Leonid Kuchma continued to meet with leaders from across the country's religious spectrum. The President and members of the cabinet spoke out on numerous occasions in support of religious tolerance and cited the June 2001 visit of Pope John Paul II as evidence of this tolerance. Restitution of religious property seized during Soviet rule continues, although at a slower pace than in previous years.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. According to Jewish leaders, acts of anti-Semitism continued to decline during the period covered by this report. However, inter-Orthodox relations, the erection of crosses at or near Jewish and Moslem burial grounds, and Pope John Paul II's June 2001 to Ukraine were sources of tension between various religious groups.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy maintains a dialog with the State Committee for Religious Affairs, religious leaders, and Ukrainian and Western representatives of faith-based social service organizations active in the country. Representatives of the U.S. Department of State participate in this process as well, meeting with various representatives of the country's religious communities in Washington.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 223,089 square miles and its population is approximately 49.5 million. A June 2001, nationwide survey conducted by the research center Sociological Research (SOCIS) found that over 40 percent of citizens claimed that they were atheists. This statistic highlights the fact that a significant portion of the population who claim a denominational association may be only nominal believers. Religious practice is strongest in the western part of the country. The overwhelming majority (over 90 per cent) of religiously active citizens are Christian, with the majority of these being Orthodox. About 10 per cent of believers are members of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Roman Catholics claim 1 million adherents in the country, or about 2 percent of the total population. The country has

small but significant populations of Jews and Moslems, as well as growing communities of Baptists, Adventists, evangelical Christians, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Most citizens identify themselves as Orthodox Christians of one of three churches. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, is the largest single religious community in the country and is the largest of the country's Orthodox Churches as well. This Church has 9,049 registered communities, most of them located in Central, Southern, and Eastern Ukraine. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, is headed by Metropolitan Volodymyr Sabodan of Kiev. It is part of the Russian Orthodox Church, and it is the only canonically recognized Orthodox Church in the country.

The second largest Orthodox Church is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate. This Church was formed after independence and has been headed since 1995 by Patriarch of Kiev and All Rus'-Ukraine, Filaret Denisenko, once the Russian Orthodox Metropolitan of Kiev. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate, has 2,781 registered parishes, approximately 60 per cent of which are in the western part of the country.

The smallest of the three major Orthodox Churches is the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Outlawed by Stalin in 1933, the Church survived mainly in diaspora. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was legalized in 1989 and has 1,015 registered communities, most in the western part of the country. In the interest of the possible future unification of the Orthodox Churches of the country, it did not name a Patriarch to succeed the late Patriarch Dmitriy. Metropolitan Mefodiy of Ternopil and Podil heads the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church; it counts among its spiritual leaders Metropolitan Konstantin, a leader of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in the United States.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is the second largest faith in the country. This Church celebrates a Byzantine liturgy similar to the Orthodox but is in full communion with the Pope. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was forced to reunite with the Orthodox Church after the Second World War but survived in hiding in the country and in diaspora. Legalized in 1989, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church's 3,317 registered communities serve a majority of believers in western Ukraine, about 10 per cent nationwide, or about 4.5 to 5 million persons. The head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is Lyubomyr Cardinal Huzar, Major Archbishop of Lviv.

The Roman Catholic Church traditionally is associated with the country's historical pockets of citizens of Polish ancestry, located predominantly in the center and west of the country. The Roman Catholic Church has 807 registered communities serving roughly 2 percent of the population. Marian Cardinal Jaworski, Archbishop of Lviv, heads the Roman Catholic Church in the country.

The Jewish community has a long history dating back centuries to when much of present-day Ukraine was the Russian Empire's Pale of Settlement. Many of the country's Jews were victims of the Holocaust; still others were victims of Soviet repression. Published reports cite estimates of the country's Jewish population ranging from 250,000 to 325,000 persons. Some Jewish leaders claim a population as high as 500,000 persons. An estimated 35 to 40 percent of the Jewish population are active communally; there are 229 registered Jewish communities in the country.

The Jewish population faces demographic difficulties. Emigration to Israel and the West reduces the country's Jewish population by approximately 30,000 persons annually. In addition, the average age of Jews is 60 years and scholars and local Jewish leaders say that about 12 deaths occur for every birth in the community. In spite of these demographic indicators, Jewish life continues to flourish, with additional communities registered every year. Most active Jews are Orthodox, their leader is Chief Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich. The smaller Progressive (Reform) Jewish movement, although smaller, continues to grow, with 42 communities at the end of the period covered by this report. The Chief Rabbi of the Progressive movement is Rabbi Alexander Dukhovny. During the period covered by this report, Conservative Judaism, called Traditional Judaism in Ukraine, opened its first congregation in Uzhorod.

Islam also has been practiced in the territory that is now Ukraine for centuries. Most of the country's Moslems are Crimean Tatars. The Crimean Tatars forcibly were deported from Crimea in 1944 but began to return in 1989. Approximately 260,000 persons or 12 per cent of Crimea's population are Crimean Tatar. The leader of the Muslims of Crimea is Mufti Emirali Ablayev.

There has been a growth of Protestant churches since independence. Evangelical Baptists are perhaps the largest group, claiming over 130,000 members in more than 2,100 communities. Other growing communities include Seventh-Day Advent-

ists, Pentecostals, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah's Witnesses, and evangelical Christians.

Communities representing nontraditional religious movements continue to grow. Since independence, 42 Krishna Consciousness communities, 36 Buddhist communities, and 12 Baha'i communities have been formed.

Foreign religious workers are active in many faiths, particularly in Protestant and Mormon communities where missionary activity has been central to community growth. The Jewish community also depends on foreign religious workers; only one of the country's rabbis is a citizen.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The 1996 Constitution and the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion provide for separation of church and state and the right to practice the religion of one's choice. The Government generally respects these rights in practice, although some minority and nontraditional religions continued to experience difficulties in registration and purchasing or leasing property at the local level.

The law requires virtually all religious organizations to register with the State. The State Committee for Religious Affairs is responsible for liaison with religious organizations and for execution of state policy on religion. The Committee's headquarters is in Kiev and it maintains representations in all regional capitals as well as in Sevastopol. Every religious organization with more than 10 adult members must register its articles and statutes either as a local or a national organization in order to obtain the status of a "juridical entity," a status necessary to conduct many economic activities including publishing, banking, and property transactions. Registration is also necessary for an organization to be considered for restitution of religious property. National organizations must register with the Committee for Religious Affairs, and then each local affiliate must register with the local office of the State Committee in the region in which they are located. By law the registration process should take 1 month, or 3 months if the State Committee requests an expert opinion on the legitimacy of a group applying for registration. Denial of registration can be appealed in court. In addition to registration, local offices of the State Committee supervise compliance of religious organizations with the provisions of the law.

In the first half of 2001, the country's parliament, the "Verkhovna Rada" (Supreme Council), considered three proposals for changes to the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion. According to the State Committee, as well as representatives of religious communities, changes put forward in the various proposals included changes to registration procedures, strengthening (or weakening) the State Committee on Religious Affairs, codifying presidential decrees on restitution of religious property, and expanding the types of religious property eligible for restitution. All three drafts failed, with none garnering half the votes needed for passage.

There is no state religion, although the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, tends to predominate in the eastern part of the country and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church tends to predominate in the west. Some religious leaders allege that local government officials in the east and west favor the predominant confessions in those regions, although each of the country's major religions and many of its smaller ones maintain a presence in all parts of the country. While the Government has spoken out in favor of unity of the Orthodox Churches in the country, it has tried to deal evenhandedly with all of the Orthodox Churches.

The Government generally permits religious organizations to establish places of worship and to train clergy. It continued to facilitate the building of houses of worship by allocation of land plots for new construction and through restitution of religious buildings to previous owners. However, there were bureaucratic obstacles and the overall pace of restitution slowed in comparison with previous reporting periods.

Officially, religious instruction is prohibited in the public school curriculum. Schools run by religious communities can and do include religious education as an extracurricular activity. During the period covered by this report, the Government began attempts to introduce training in "Basic Christian Ethics" into the schools. While the country's Jewish leaders support the teaching of ethics and civics in school, they insist on a nonsectarian approach to this training. A working group of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches has been formed to discuss the content of such a program. The Council meets under the auspices of the State Committee of Religious Affairs and is composed of the leaders of 18 of the country's largest Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities, representing over 90 per cent of the country's religious adherents. Religious leaders describe the Council as collegial, encouraging interfaith dialogue and dispute resolution.

There are numerous religious holidays, including Christmas Day, Easter Monday, and Holy Trinity Day, all are celebrated according to the Julian Calendar shared by Orthodox and Greek Catholics. These holidays do not negatively impact any religious groups.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Members of numerous communities described difficulties in dealing with the Kiev's municipal administration in obtaining land permits and building permits, problems not limited to religious groups. Restitution continued at a slower pace than in previous years. Some religious leaders were pleased with this pace, while others felt that it was too slow.

A 1993 amendment to the 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion limits the activities of foreign religious workers in the country. In order to obtain religious worker visas invitations must be obtained from registered religious organizations and the approval of the State Committee on Religious Affairs is required. During the year 2000, 14,797 foreign religious workers were admitted. In the first 5 months of 2001, 5,520 foreign religious workers were admitted. The majority of foreign religious workers were from the United States and most worked in Protestant communities. In previous years, fewer than half of 1 per cent of applications for religious visas were refused, according to the State Committee, usually because forms were completed improperly. While no refusal data was available for the period covered by this report, no religious communities claimed to have experienced problems obtaining religious worker visas during this period.

Under existing law, religious organizations maintain a privileged status as the only organizations permitted to seek restitution of property confiscated by the Soviet regime. Currently, only buildings and objects immediately necessary for religious worship are subject to restitution. Communities must apply to regional authorities for restitution. While the consideration of a claim should take a month, it frequently takes much longer. Draft laws considered by the Parliament in 2001 would have expanded the types of property eligible for restitution to include religious schools and administrative buildings; all such proposed drafts were defeated. According to the State Committee for Religious Affairs, over 3,600 buildings and 10,000 religious objects have been returned to religious communities since the country's Independence in 1991. A total of 47 of these buildings were returned in the period covered by this report, to all three Orthodox churches, Jewish, Moslem, Ukrainian Greek Catholic, and Roman Catholic communities.

Outstanding claims for restitution remain among all the major religious communities. Many properties that remain subject to restitution are occupied, often by state institutions, or are historical landmarks. The slowing pace of restitution is, among other things, a reflection of the country's difficult economic condition, which severely limits funds available for the relocation of the current occupants of seized religious property. Competition among Orthodox churches for particular properties also complicates the restitution issue. In conjunction with a January 15, 2001, Cabinet of Ministers Decree, the State Committee on Religious Affairs began a project to facilitate the periodic usage by religious groups of religious buildings that are state architectural landmarks whose return is not planned.

Representatives of the both the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church alleged government preference for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate in eastern regions of the country. The Kiev Patriarchate cited local authorities' failure to return cathedrals in Kharkiv or Zhytomyr.

On Independence Day, August 24, 2000, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, celebrated the restitution of the Kiev Monastery of the Caves' Assumption Cathedral and its solemn rededication. This led to a peaceful demonstration by supporters of the Kiev Patriarchate. This Cathedral is of great historical significance for the country's Orthodox Christians and it was restored at government expense, which caused some to claim that this act showed the Government's preference for the Moscow Patriarchate. However, in May 2000, the Government returned St. Michael's Monastery, also of historical significance and rebuilt with government funds, to the Kiev Patriarchate. The State Committee on Religious Affairs, although supportive of a unified, independent Orthodox Church for the country, has maintained neutrality in its relations with the various Orthodox churches.

Autocephalous Church representatives cited instances of difficulties in providing religious services to soldiers and of the need to clear prison ministry activities with prison chaplains of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Representatives of evangelical Christian communities expressed concern over instances of discrimination against their adherents. In two cases, they assert that believers were forced to leave jobs in the military or in military production because

their evangelical churches had contact with missionaries from the United States. Such incidents appear to be isolated. An evangelical pastor also noted that local authorities in some cities had denied permits for religious processions and that in a village in the Odessa region an evangelical church opposed by a local Orthodox community had been refused permission to hold regular Church services. Evangelical Churches, like many other religious communities, experienced difficulties in procuring land plots. Representatives of the Progressive Jewish Communities of Ukraine claimed that pressure from Chabad Lubavitch officials on local Dnipropetrovsk authorities has led to a 5-year delay in the granting of registration to a Progressive Jewish community in the city. According to press reports and representatives of Jewish communities, the Dnipropetrovsk Chabad Community opposes the registration of any Jewish community but Chabad in the city, which was home to the father of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson.

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

There were a number of improvements in the Government's respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, including court action against anti-Semitic publications, the resolution of a longstanding registration case, and liberalization in the by-laws of the State Committee of Religious Affairs. In addition, several religious institutions previously restituted were rededicated ceremonially and numerous other new religious buildings were opened. Some in the religious community attribute the generally good relations to the work of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches, whose membership represents the faiths of over 90 per cent of the country's religiously active population.

According to a report on anti-Semitism prepared by the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine, in December 2000, a Kharkov local court ordered the suspension of publication of the "Dzhereltse" newspaper and the payment of a fine in the amount of approximately $4,000. The paper had been found liable for "kindling ethnic hatred, violating human and civil rights, and offending the national dignity of the Jews." According to the report, this is the first case in the country's history in which anti-Semitism has been punished by law.

In 1999 the Shimon Dubnov Ukrainian Academy of Jewish History and Culture filed suit against "Vechirniy Kiev," a Kiev daily newspaper, for an anti-Semitic article "Judeophobia Against Ukraine," published in 1998. The newspaper countersued members of the Academy, claiming that it had been charged falsely of being chauvinistic. On March 15, 2001, a Kiev court ordered both the newspaper and the Academy to pay damages of approximately $550 and $1,100 respectively. While less than pleased with the verdict, Jewish leaders welcomed the willingness of the Ukrainian Government to provide legal assistance.

A longstanding registration case was resolved in April 2001 in Sevastopol, when an 18 month-old registration application from a Progressive Jewish Community finally was approved by the local Committee for Religious Affairs. In a move intended to improve interfaith dialog, the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches adopted in the spring of 2001 a change to its bylaws permitting religious leaders who are not permanent members of the Council to apply to attend its meetings as observers.

During the period covered by this report, several religious institutions were opened or rededicated. The Chabad community of Dnipropetrovsk rededicated the Golden Rose Choral Synagogue. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, ceremonially rededicated the Assumption Cathedral on the grounds of Kiev's Monastery of the Caves. Ukrainian Greek Catholics of the Eparchate of Kiev dedicated a land plot for their future cathedral on Kiev's left bank. Kiev's Chabad Community celebrated its 10-year anniversary and the opening of a mikvah or ritual bath. In May 2001, the Union of Evangelical Baptist Christians dedicated a House of Prayer in Kharkiv and Jehovah's Witnesses opened an Administrative Center in Briukovychi, Lviv Oblast. Finally, in March 2001, Kiev municipal authorities agreed to offer a plot of land near the site of the Nazi massacre at Babi Yar for a Holocaust museum and community center. This museum and center is expected to be built in the coming years under the auspices of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. According to Jewish leaders, acts of anti-Semitism continued to de-

cline during the period covered by this report. However, inter-Orthodox rivalry, the erection of crosses at or near Jewish and Moslem burial grounds, and the visit of Pope John Paul II caused tension among some religious groups.

Orthodoxy in the country is divided into three major Churches, only one of which (the Moscow Patriarchate) is currently recognized as canonical by world Orthodoxy. The possibility of unification of some or all of these Orthodox Churches and granting them canonical status as an autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church has been debated during the period covered by this report. Leaders of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev Patriarchate, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church began negotiations on unification. They hoped that as one unit, they would be recognized as the country's Orthodox Church by Orthodoxy's "First Among Equals," Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. By the end of the period covered by this report, an agreement had been reached to allow priests of these two churches to concelebrate liturgies, but the unification of church structures had not been accomplished. Patriarch Bartholomew has supported efforts aimed at Orthodox unity, meeting with or sending delegations to each of the country's three main Orthodox Churches to discuss the issue. Patriarch Bartholomew has not expressed an opinion as to who should lead a united Ukranian Orthodox Church. In general, support for an independent Orthodox Church (based on the Kiev Patriarchate and Autocephalous Churches) is strongest among western Ukrainians and center-right political parties; Eastern Ukrainians and leftist parties tend to support continued union with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Twice during the period covered by this report the erection of crosses at or near Muslim and Jewish burial sites challenged religious accord. In Crimea, Bishop Lazarus of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, Bishop Lazarus announced an initiative to place 1,000 crosses around Crimea to celebrate the second millennium of the birth of Jesus and a millennium of the Christianization of Rus. One of the crosses, in the village of Morskoye, was placed on a hilltop overlooking a Crimean Tatar Muslim village and cemetery. Local Tatars, who were not consulted about the placement of the cross, removed it. Through dialog, Bishop Lazar, Crimean Mufti Ablayev, Orthodox residents, and the local Crimean Tatar Mejlis (Council) were able to come to a peaceful settlement of the conflict over this cross by relocating it to a nearby hill overlooking a predominantly Orthodox community.

However, disputes over the erection of crosses in Jewish cemeteries remain unresolved. In Sambor, Lviv Oblast, Jews, with the assistance of a foreign benefactor, began construction of a memorial park at the site of an old Jewish cemetery, which was the scene of Nazi atrocities. Nationalists, with the apparent assistance of local officials, erected crosses on the site to mark the Christian victims of Nazi terror there. While memorial organizers supported the recognition of all groups who suffered on the Sambor site, they opposed the use of Christian religious symbols on the grounds of the Jewish cemetery. At the same time, local nationalists remain opposed to the use of Jewish symbols or Hebrew in the memorial. Jewish and Greek Catholic leaders intervened in an attempt to find a just and peaceful solution to the dispute. In spite of a proposal by the memorial's foreign sponsor to relocate the crosses to another site at his expense, local government leaders had not resolved this conflict by mid-2000.

In Kiev crosses remain on the territory of an old Jewish cemetery near the site of a Nazi massacre at Babi Yar. Jewish leaders assert that the crosses were erected without a building permit and have asked that the crosses be removed.

Pope John Paul II's June 2001 visit was the source of discussion and debate in religious and government circles. The Government actively promoted the Pope's visit as a sign of tolerance. The Pope echoed this theme, as well as asking for forgiveness for sins committed by Catholics. His 5-day visit included masses, a meeting with the all-Ukrainian Council of Churches, and visits to the Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial and a memorial to victims of Stalinism at Bykivnia. The public events were attended by tens of thousands in Kiev and by hundreds of thousands in Lviv. Most religious and political leaders and public opinion supported the Pope's visit. However, the visit was criticized by the Russian Orthodox Church and its affiliate in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate. The Moscow Patriarchate organized small peaceful protests prior to the visit but held no demonstrations during the visit itself. The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, used the occasion of the visit to emphasize disputes with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church over church property in the western part of the country. These disputes, in part a legacy of the Soviet Union's forcible reunification of the Greek Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches after World War II, remain a source of tension in interfaith relations in Ukraine.

The country has a long history of problems with anti-Semitism; however, the period covered by this report saw a continued decrease in anti-Semitic acts and anti-

Semitic publications in local newspapers and an increase in government action against anti-Semitism (see Section II). Leaders of the Jewish community welcomed the changes in the editorial staffs of the newspapers, "Vechirniy Kiev" and "Za Vilnu Ukrainu." Under new editors, these newspapers, which had been among the chief offenders in publishing anti-Semitic articles, ceased such activity. During the period covered by this report, a synagogue in Kherson was the target of gunfire. No injuries were reported. Jewish community representatives were disturbed by the presence of anti-Semitic slogans in anti-Kuchma demonstrations, which took place in the spring of 2001.

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.

The U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, as well as other Embassy officers, demonstrated U.S. Government concern for religious freedom by maintaining an ongoing dialog with government and religious leaders on this topic. Embassy officers also attend significant events in the religious life of the country.

Embassy officers maintained close contact with lay leaders as well as clerics in religious communities and with representatives of faith-based social service organizations such as Caritas and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, both of which are active in the country. In addition, the U.S. Embassy facilitated similar meetings with such groups for U.S. Members of Congress and other U.S. officials visiting Ukraine.

The Embassy closely monitored the cases of erection of crosses in Moslem and Jewish cemeteries. The U.S. Embassy raised the Sambor case with the State Committee on Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Culture as well as with Ukrainian religious leaders of different faiths. In addition, the U.S. Government raised this case in the context of the U.S./Ukraine Cultural Heritage Commission. U.S. Embassy officers followed the Morskoye/Crimea case through contacts with the Crimean Tatar Mejlis.

U.S. Embassy officers attended the dedication of the Golden Rose Choral Synagogue in Dnipropetrovsk, the mikvah or ritual bath at the Brodsky Synagogue in Kiev, a plot of land for Kiev's Ukrainian Greek Catholic Cathedral, and the dedication of the Kiev Monastery of the Caves' Assumption Cathedral by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate.

Representatives of the U.S. Department of State met during the period covered by this report with various Jewish and Christian leaders from the country.

UNITED KINGDOM

Government policy provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The 1998 Human Rights Act incorporates the principle of religious freedom into law. The Church of England and the Church of Scotland are established churches.

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. However, centuries-old sectarian divisions—and instances of violence—are part of the troubles in Northern Ireland.

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 94,525 square miles and its population is approximately 59.5 million. There are no official statistics collected on religious beliefs or church membership, except in Northern Ireland. The census conducted in April 2001 contains a voluntary question on religion; the results are expected to be available in the spring of 2003. Although their methodologies differ greatly, the numbers collected by individual religious communities highlight patterns of adherence and belief.

About 65 percent of the population are estimated to identify with some form of Christianity. About 45 percent of the population identify with Anglican churches, 10 percent with the Roman Catholic Church, 4 percent with Presbyterian churches, 2

percent with Methodist churches, and 4 percent with other Christian churches. Only about 8.7 percent of the population attend a Christian church on a regular basis. Church attendance in Northern Ireland is estimated at 30 to 35 percent. An additional 2 percent of the population are affiliated with non-Trinitarian churches, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Church of Christ, Christian Scientists, and Unitarians. A further 5 percent are adherents to other faiths, including Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism.

About 28 percent of the population are nonreligious. About half of all parents choose to have their children baptized. A similar proportion of all weddings (41.3 percent) is conducted as religious ceremonies, but the number has decreased in recent years. The vast majority of funerals are religious, and surveys suggest that 63 to 70 percent of the population believe in God.

Between the Reformation and the mid-19th century, the country predominantly was Protestant. The Jewish community dates from 1656, with the arrival of Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal, but it experienced much of its growth during the 1800's and 1900's, when Ashkenazic Jews arrived from Eastern Europe. Irish immigration during the 1800's fostered the resurgence of Roman Catholicism, and later immigration from British colonies (and now the Commonwealth) led to the establishment of thriving Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu communities. These latter communities tend to be concentrated around larger cities.

The conflict between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland has been drawn along religious lines, but the avowed policy of the Government remains one of religious neutrality and tolerance (See Section III).

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Government policy 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 1998 Human Rights Act, which entered into force in October 2000, provides for freedom of religion, including the freedom to change one's religion or belief.

There are two established (or state) churches, the Church of England (Anglican) and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). The Queen is the "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England and must always be a member of the Church and promise to uphold it. The Queen appoints Church of England officials on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Crown Appointments Commission, which includes lay and clergy representatives. The Church of Scotland appoints its own office bearers, and its affairs are not subject to any civil authority. There are no established churches in Wales or Northern Ireland, but the Church in Wales, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Church of Ireland are members of the Anglican Communion.

Religious groups are not required to register with the Government. No church or religious organization—established or otherwise—receives direct funding from the State. Religious bodies are expected to finance their own activities through endowment, investments, and fund-raising. Since 1977 the Government has appropriated funds for the repair of historic church buildings, such as cathedrals, but such funding is not restricted to Church of England buildings. The Government also contributes 70 percent to the budget of the Church Conservation Trust, established by the Church of England in 1969 to preserve "redundant" Church of England buildings of architectural or historic significance. A similar body, the Historic Chapels Trust, founded with the aid of a Government grant, works to preserve, repair, and maintain non-Anglican houses of worship, such as mosques, temples, or synagogues. No such bodies exist in Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland. In March 2001, the Government announced a countrywide grant scheme to help fund the costs for the repair and maintenance of listed buildings used as places of worship.

Most religious institutions are classified as charities and, as such, enjoy a wide range of tax benefits. (The advancement of religion is considered to be a charitable purpose.) In England and Wales, the Charity Commission reviews the application of each body applying for registration as a charity. Commissioners base their decisions on a substantial body of case law. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Inland Revenue performs this task. Charities are exempt from taxes on most types of income and capital gains, provided that the charity uses the income or gains for charitable purposes. They also are exempt from the value-added tax. Donors to charities also enjoy tax relief for their donations. Transfers to charities are exempt from the inheritance tax, capital gains tax, and stamp duty.

Some "voluntary schools" provided by religious groups enjoy state support. While the majority of these schools are Anglican or Catholic, there are a small number

of Methodist, Muslim, and Jewish schools. There also are privately funded schools with religious foundations, including a growing number of Muslim schools.

Religious education in publicly maintained schools is required by law throughout the country. According to the Education Reform Act of 1988, it forms part of the core curriculum for students in England and Wales (the requirements for Scotland were outlined in the Education Act of 1980.) The shape and content of religious instruction is decided on a local basis. Locally agreed syllabi are required to reflect the predominant place of Christianity in religious life, but they must be nondenominational and refrain from attempting to convert pupils. All parents have the right to withdraw a child from religious education, but the schools must approve this request.

In addition schools have to provide a daily act of collective worship. In practice this action mainly is Christian in character, reflecting Christianity's importance in the religious life of the nation. This requirement may be waived if a school's administration deems it inappropriate for some or all of the students. Under some circumstances, non-Christian worship may instead be allowed. Teachers' organizations have criticized school prayer and called for a government review of the practice.

Where a substantial population of religious minorities characterizes a student body, schools may observe the religious festivals of other faiths. Schools also endeavor to accommodate religious requirements, such as providing halal meat for Muslim children.

The Government makes an active effort to ensure that public servants are not discriminated against on the basis of religion and strives to accommodate religious practices by government employees whenever possible. For example, the Prison Service permits Muslim employees to take time off during their shifts to pray. It also provides prisoners with Jewish and Muslim chaplains. The military generally provides soldiers who are adherents of minority religions with chaplains of their faith.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In November 2000, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled inadmissible a challenge by the United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) to the existing ban on nationwide broadcast licenses for religious broadcasters. Due to the limited broadcast spectrum, the 1990 Broadcasting Act precludes certain groups, including those "wholly or mainly of a religious nature," from obtaining the few available national licenses. Due to their limited number, digital radio multiplex licenses, provided for in the 1996 Broadcasting Act, also are unavailable to religious groups. In December 2000, the Government published a White Paper recommending legislation to allow religious groups to own local digital radio licenses. Religious groups can and do compete successfully for the more numerous local and regional stations, and cable and satellite channels; they can advertise. The UCB now broadcasts by satellite without restriction.

The Church of Scientology asserts that it faces discrimination due to the failure of the Government to treat Scientology as a religion. Scientology ministers are not regarded as ministers of religion under prison regulations, thus are not permitted to provide official pastoral care to prisoners; nor are they considered ministers of religion for the purpose of immigration relations. The Government bases its treatment of Scientology on a 1970 judgment by the Court of Appeal, which held that Scientology chapels did not qualify as places of worship under the Places of Worship Registration Act of 1855. In 1999 the Charity Commission rejected a Church of Scientology application for charitable status, concluding that Scientology is not a religion for the purposes of charity law. The Church has not appealed the decision.

In general membership in a given religious group does not confer a political or economic advantage on individual adherents. However, on the national level, the House of Lords provides an exception to this rule. The Anglican Archbishops of York and Canterbury; the Bishops of Durham, London, and Winchester; and 21 other bishops, in order of seniority, receive automatic membership in the House of Lords, whereas prominent clergy from other denominations or religions are not afforded this privilege. Reform of the House of Lords, including the representation of other Christian denominations and other faiths, is being debated.

While it is not enforced and is essentially a legal anachronism, blasphemy against Anglican doctrine remains technically illegal. Several religious organizations, in association with the Commission for Racial Equality, are attempting to abolish the law or broaden its protection to include all faiths.

A February 2001 report commissioned by the Home Office found that some religious groups, particularly those identified with ethnic minorities, reported unfair treatment on the basis of their religious belief. Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and black-led Christian churches were more likely to report problems ranging from lack of rec-

ognition or inclusion of religious beliefs in education to discrimination and/or lack of accommodation of religious beliefs by employers.

In Northern Ireland, government programs and continued economic growth have reduced the overall unemployment rate (6.3 percent as of March 2000). Although there is some evidence that unemployment rates among Catholics remain higher than among Protestants, the often-quoted figure, based on 1991 data, that Catholic male unemployment is twice the rate of Protestant male unemployment, has not been updated reliably.

In accordance with the Good Friday Agreement, the Government established a 20-member Equality Commission. One of the Commission's mandates is to help enforce the Fair Employment and Treatment Order of 1998, which incorporates previous equality legislation and outlaws discrimination based on religion or political opinion in the workplace, and aids in access to goods, facilities, services, and premises. Under the order, all public sector employers and all private firms with more than 10 employees must report annually to the Equality Commission on the religious composition of their workforces and must review their employment practices every 3 years.

In addition Section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act stipulates that all public authorities must show due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, including on the basis of religious belief. Each public authority must report its plans to promote equality to the Equality Commission, which is to review such plans every 5 years.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), Northern Ireland's police force, currently is not required to conform to Section 75, and Catholics now comprise less than 8 percent of the police force. However, the Police (Northern Ireland) Act of 2000, which incorporates many of the recommendations of the 1999 Patten Commission report, mandates measures designed to expand Catholic representation in the new Police Service of Northern Ireland. These include the establishment of an independent recruitment agency and a recruitment policy mandating equal intake of qualified Catholics and non-Catholics. The Patten Commission projected that, following implementation of these reforms, Catholics, who comprise approximately 40 percent of the population, would make up 30 percent of the police force within 10 years.

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. While the troubles in Northern Ireland are the product of political, economic, and social factors, conflict between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland is rooted in centuries-old sectarian divisions between the Protestant and Catholic communities.

The majority of citizens in Northern Ireland support the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which aims to create a lasting settlement to the conflict in Northern Ireland and a society based on equality of opportunity and human rights.

Employment discrimination on religious grounds is prohibited by law in Northern Ireland, although not in the rest of the country. Those who believe that their freedom of religion has been infringed have the right to appeal to the courts for relief. The 1998 Human Rights Act prohibits public authorities from discriminating on the basis of religion.

The police in Northern Ireland reported 31 attacks against both Catholic and Protestant churches, schools, and meeting halls in 2000. Such sectarian violence often coincides with heightened tensions during the spring and summer marching season. Some parades by the "Loyal Institutions" (the Royal Black Preceptory, Orange Order, and Apprentice Boys), whose membership is almost exclusively Protestant, have been prevented from passing through nationalist areas because of public-order concerns.

During the period covered by this report, there were no reports that the public had raised concerns with the Home Office regarding the Church of Scientology.

According to the Board of Directors of British Jews, the number of anti-Semitic incidents during 2000 was 398, compared with 270 in 1999 (adjusted figure). Public manifestations of anti-Semitism are confined largely to the political fringe, either far right or Islamist. In reaction to the October 2000 violence in the West Bank and

Gaza, a number of synagogues were attacked by persons throwing bricks or other objects through windows, and anti-Semitic leaflets were posted in Manchester, Birmingham, and London. In October 2000, a Jewish man was stabbed in London in an apparent racist attack.

The country has both active interfaith and ecumenical movements. The Council of Christians and Jews, founded in 1942 to promote Christian-Jewish understanding, works to advance better relations between the two religions and to combat anti-Semitism. The Interfaith Network links a wide range of religious and educational organizations with an interest in interfaith relations, including the national representative bodies of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian communities. The Inner Cities Religious Council encourages interfaith activity through regional conferences and support for local initiatives.

The main ecumenical body is the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, which serves as the main forum for interchurch cooperation and collaboration. Interchurch cooperation is not limited to dealings among denominations at the national level. For example, at the local level Anglican parishes may share their church with Roman Catholic congregations.

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.

In Northern Ireland, longstanding issues related to religion have been part of the political and economic struggle largely between Protestant and Catholic communities. As an active participant in the peace process, the U.S. Government has supported efforts to diminish sectarian tension and promote dialog between the two largest religious communities.

UZBEKISTAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and for the principle of separation of church and state; however, in practice the Government only partially respects these rights. The Government perceives unauthorized Islamic groups or mosques as extremist security threats and outlaws them. The Government permits the existence of mainstream religions, including approved Muslim groups, Jewish groups, the Russian Orthodox Church, and various other denominations, such as Catholics, Lutherans, and Baptists and generally registers more recently arrived religions. However, the law prohibits or severely restricts activities such as proselytizing, importing and disseminating religious literature, and offering religious instruction.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government continued its harsh campaign against unauthorized Islamic groups it suspected of anti-State sentiments or activities. The Government arrested hundreds of alleged members of these groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, and sentenced them to lengthy jail terms. The Government also imprisoned dozens of Muslims suspected of being "Wahabbist," a term used loosely to encompass both suspected terrorists and any former students of certain independent imams or foreign madrassas (Islamic schools). The number of Muslim women prosecuted for their alleged involvement in religious groups increased during this reporting period. A number of minority religious groups, including a variety of Christian confessions, Baha'i, and Hare Krishna, had difficulty satisfying the strict registration requirements set out by the law.

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy is engaged actively in monitoring religious freedom and maintains contact with both government and religious leaders.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 117,868 square miles and its population is approximately 24,756,000. There are no official statistics on membership in various faiths, but 80 to 85 percent of the population are nominally Muslim. Since 1991 when the country gained independence from the Soviet Union, there has been a resurgence, particularly in the Fergana valley, of the Sunni variety of Islam tradi-

tional in the region. Another 10 to 15 percent of the population are nominally Russian Orthodox. Only a small portion of members of these two leading faiths actually practices, although the numbers who do so are growing. Because of the decades of Soviet rule, Islam was not previously an important factor in the lives of most citizens.

There are roughly 30,000 Ashkenazy and Bukharan Jews remaining in the country, concentrated in the main cities of Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand. Almost 70,000 have emigrated to Israel or the United States since independence. The remaining 5 to 10 percent of the population include small communities of Korean Christians, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Seventh-Day Adventists, evangelical and Pentecostal Christians, Buddhists, Baha'is, and Hare Krishnas.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and for the principle of separation of church and state; however, in practice the Government only partially respects these rights. The Government is secular and there is no official state religion.

Although the laws treat all religious confessions equally, the Government shows its support for the country's Muslim heritage by funding an Islamic university and subsidizing citizens' participation in the Hajj. The Government promotes a moderate version of Islam through the control and financing of the Spiritual Directorate for Muslims (the Muftiate), which in turn controls the Islamic hierarchy, the content of imams' sermons, and the volume and substance of published Islamic materials.

The Religion Law requires all religious groups and congregations to register and provides strict and burdensome criteria for their registration. Among its requirements, the law stipulates that each group must present a list of at least 100 Uzbek citizen members (compared with the previous minimum of 10) to the local branches of the Ministry of Justice. This provision enables the Government to ban any group simply by denying its registration petition. Government officials designed the law to target Muslims who worship outside the system of state-organized mosques. A special commission created in 1998 may grant exemptions to the religious law's strict requirements and register groups that have not been registered by local officials. The commission has granted exemptions to 51 such groups, including congregations with fewer than 100 Uzbek members. However, no formal procedures or criteria have been established to bring a case before this commission, which did not meet during the period covered by this report.

To register, groups also must report in their charter a valid legal address. Local officials on occasion have denied approval of a legal address in order to prevent churches from registering. Some churches, particularly those with ethnic Uzbek members, have not submitted registration applications because they know they are unable to comply with the law's requirements. For example, although church leaders cite high registration fees and the 100-member rule as obstacles, the most frequent problem is the lack of an approved legal address. Some groups have been reluctant to invest in the purchase of a property without assurance that the registration would be approved. Others claim that local officials arbitrarily withhold approval of the addresses because they oppose the existence of Christian churches with ethnic Uzbek members.

As of May 24, 2001, the Government had registered 2,008 religious congregations and organizations, 1,830 of which were Muslim. The 178 registered minority religious groups include 59 Korean Christian, 32 Russian Orthodox, 22 Pentecostal ("full gospel"), 23 Baptist, 10 Seventh-Day Adventist, 8 Jewish (1 Ashkenazy, 6 Bukharan, 1 mixed), 7 Baha'i, 4 Lutheran, 4 "New Apostlic," 3 Roman Catholic, 2 Jehovah's Witnesses, 2 Krishna Consciousness groups, 1 Bible Society, and 1 Armenian Apostolic. Several of these congregations had fewer than the required 100 members but received exemptions from the requirement. During the previous reporting period, the last one for which statistics are available, 335 applications were denied, 323 of which were from Muslim groups. The number of mosques has increased significantly from the 80 or so permitted during the Soviet era, but has decreased from the 4,000 or more that opened after the country gained independence and before registration procedures were in place. Some groups with too few members have reported that they prefer not to bring themselves to the attention of the authorities by submitting a registration application that does not, on its face, meet legal requirements.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

There were significant governmental restrictions on religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government deprived some politically oriented re-

ligious groups of their right to worship by denying them registration. It also restricted many religious practices and activities, and punished citizens for their religious beliefs. Russians, Jews, and foreigners generally enjoy greater religious freedom than traditionally Muslim ethnic groups, especially ethnic Uzbeks. Christian churches generally are tolerated as long as they do not attempt to win converts among ethnic Uzbeks. Christians who are ethnic Uzbeks are secretive about their faith and rarely attempt to register their organizations. Christian congregations that are of mixed ethnic background are reluctant to list their Uzbek members on registration lists for fear of incurring official displeasure.

In May 1998, the Parliament passed two laws that restrict religious activity. The Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations provides for freedom of worship, freedom from religious persecution, separation of church and state, and the right to establish schools and train clergy. However, the law also severely limits religious activity. It restricts religious rights that are judged to be in conflict with national security, prohibits proselytizing, bans religious subjects in schools, prohibits private teaching of religious principles, forbids the wearing of religious clothing in public by anyone other than clerics, and requires religious groups to obtain a license to publish or distribute materials.

The second legislative change enacted in May 1998 consisted of a series of revisions to the Criminal and Civil codes that stiffened the penalties for violating the religion law and other statutes on religious activities. It provided for punishments for activities such as organizing a banned religious group, persuading others to join such a group, and drawing minors into a religious organization without the permission of their parents.

The Criminal Code was amended again in May 1999 with two changes that affected religious freedom. The changes draw a distinction between "illegal" groups, which are those that are not registered properly, and "prohibited" groups, which are banned altogether. The first measure makes it a criminal offense punishable by up to 5 years in prison to organize an illegal religious group or to resume the activities of such a group (presumably after being denied registration or ordered to disband). Furthermore, the measure punishes any participation in such a group by up to 3 years in prison. The second measure sets out penalties of up to 20 years in prison and confiscation of property for "organizing or participating" in the activities of religious extremist, fundamentalist, separatist, or other prohibited groups. In practice, the courts ignore the theoretical distinction between illegal and prohibited groups and frequently convict members of disapproved Muslim groups under both statutes.

Some churches continue to face obstacles in obtaining registration from the Government. Local authorities have blocked registration of Baptist congregations in Gazalkent, Guliston, Andijon, and Novy Zhizn. The Deputy Mayor of Gazalkent allegedly told church leaders that their application might be approved if they removed from the Church's membership list all names of ethnic Uzbek origin. In December 2000, the Baptist congregation in Guliston was denied registration, ostensibly on the grounds that its proposed church was in a residential area.

Although two congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses are registered, eight others that have attempted to register during the period covered by this report were unsuccessful. Church officials believe that the fact that many members of these groups are ethnic Uzbeks (while the pastors of these groups are not ethnic Uzbeks) is at the root of the bureaucratic obstructionism that they encounter. The Government's Committee on Religious Affairs (CRA) denied the Greater Grace Christian Church of Samarkand permission to have a Finnish, rather than Uzbek, pastor. The Church's application for registration therefore is blocked until this issue is resolved. In March 2001, the CRA stated that the Government planned to instruct Christian congregations with foreign pastors to replace their pastors with Uzbek citizens. The CRA maintained that graduates of a registered Korean Christian seminary in the country could replace the foreign pastors.

In November 2000, the Ministry of Justice ruled that the Tashkent International Protestant Church could not be registered because its members were not Uzbek citizens. However, the CRA gave permission for the Church to meet and hold services. The Church has appealed to the Presidential Commission on the Implementation of the Religion Law, which has authority to grant exceptions to the requirements of the law. However, since that appeal, the Commission has not met.

While supportive of moderate Muslims, the Government is intolerant of Islamic groups that attempt to operate outside the state-run Muslim hierarchy. The Government controls the content of imams' sermons and the volume and substance of published Islamic materials. At the beginning of 1998, the Government ordered the removal of loudspeakers from mosques in order to prevent the amplified public announcement of calls to prayer. The Government permanently closed several hundred unauthorized mosques during 1998. The authorities suspect Muslims who meet pri-

vately to pray or study Islam of being extremists, and such believers are at risk of arrest.

The Government is determined to prevent the spread of ultraconservative or extremist varieties of Sunni Islam, which it labels "Wahabbism" and considers a security threat. President Islam Karimov frequently has declared the Government's intention to rid the country of Wahhabists and underground Islamic groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir. The Government considers these groups to be political and security threats and represses them severely. Hizb ut-Tahrir members desire an Islamic government and the group's literature includes much anti-Western, anti-Semitic, and antidemocratic rhetoric, but they deny that they advocate violence. Some independent Muslims deny that they are extremists and claim that they are being persecuted for their religious beliefs.

The Koran reportedly is banned in most detention facilities.

Religious groups are prohibited from forming political parties and social movements.

Under the laws dealing with religion, only registered central offices of religious organizations are permitted to produce and distribute religious literature. Seven such offices have been registered to date: a nondenominational Bible society, two Islamic centers, and Russian Orthodox, Full Gospel, Baptist, and Roman Catholic offices. However, the Government discourages and occasionally has blocked registered central offices from producing or importing Christian literature in the Uzbek language even though Bibles in many other languages are available in Tashkent bookstores. The Government bans the teaching of religious subjects in schools and also prohibits the private teaching of religious principles.

Although authorities tolerate the existence of many Christian evangelical groups, they enforce the law's ban on proselytizing. The Government often monitors and harasses those who openly try to convert Muslims to Christianity. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses claim that they are subjected routinely to police questioning, searches, and arbitrary fines. Several churches, including the Baptist church in Gazalkent, have reported that local officials did not accept membership lists that included Uzbek names.

In July 2000, police closed a summer youth camp sponsored by the registered Korean Christian church "Mir" in Nukus, Kakalpakstan. In August Karakalpak authorities revoked the church's registration and ordered Pastor Vladimir Kim to close it on the grounds that the camp had taught religion to minors without parental consent, a violation of the religion law. Kim maintained that all of the minor's parents had signed consent forms. Although the church was allowed to reopen in January 2001, it has not been reregistered.

In December 2000, local police and justice department officials ordered the closure of a training facility for Adventist clergy in Navoi. The authorities who ordered the closure cited the 1998 Religious Law that prohibits groups that do not have a registered religious center from training religious personnel.

On May 17, 2001, the Ministry of Justice informed in writing the Baptist Union that the holding of Sunday School classes for the children of congregation members was a violation of the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations. The letter threatened revocation of the Baptist Union's registration if it did not immediately cancel Sunday School. The Baptist Union responded to the letter and, in turn, received another letter from the Ministry still refusing to allow the Sunday School classes.

Also in May 2001, the Roman Catholic parish in Ferghana received an order from the regional Prosecutor General to close its Sunday School on the grounds that the school was an institution of higher learning and had not been registered properly. However, later in the month the CRA found that the Catholic Sunday School was not a formal institution, had been closed improperly, and should be allowed to reopen. Sunday School classes resumed at the school.

In 1999 the international nongovernmental organization (NGO) Human Rights Watch compiled a list of 28 confirmed cases from 1997 and 1998 in which university and secondary school students were expelled for wearing religious dress. (Only clerics may wear religious clothing in public.) Several of these students from Tashkent's Oriental Studies Institute brought suit in civil court to be reinstated but were unsuccessful, and they had not been reinstated as of the end of the reporting period.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government continued to commit numerous serious abuses of religious freedom. The Government's campaign against independent Muslim groups, begun in the early 1990's, resulted in numerous serious human rights abuses during the period covered by this report. The campaign was directed at three types of Muslims: alleged Wahhabists, including those educated at madrassas (schools) abroad and fol-

lowers of missing imams Nazarov of Tashkent and Mirzaev of Andijon; those suspected of being involved in the 1999 Tashkent bombings or of being involved with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), whose roots are in Namangan; and suspected members of Hizb ut-Tahrir throughout the country.

Because it is likely that those responsible for the 1999 bombings were members of a political organization with religious ties, the Government considers so-called Wahhabists as closely connected to terrorism even when they are not. Both groups, the Wahhabists and those suspected of involvement in the bombings, stem from the growth of independent Islam that the Government has sought to suppress since the early 1990's. The distinction is that the Government considers the Wahhabists to be extremists and potential terrorists and those suspected of involvement in the bombings to be active terrorists.

The Government does not consider repression of these groups to be a matter of religious freedom, but instead to be directed against those who oppose the political order. However, authorities are highly suspicious of those who are more pious than is the norm, including frequent mosque attendees, bearded men, and veiled women. In practice this approach results in abuses against many devout Muslims for their religious beliefs.

There were credible reports that police mistreatment resulted in the deaths of persons in custody. Law enforcement officials regularly beat and torture suspects held in pretrial detention—including those accused of religious extremism—in order to extract confessions. Severe mistreatment of convicted prisoners is also common. Although there is specific information available on only a few deaths from mistreatment in custody, human rights observers claim that the number of such cases throughout the country during the period covered by this report is much higher. Law enforcement officials have been known to threaten families not to talk about their relatives' deaths.

On July 7, 2001, the body of Shovruk Ruzimuradov was returned to his family from police detention. Police reportedly beat and tortured Ruzimuradov to death. Ruzimuradov, a human rights activist and opposition figure known to be a pious Muslim, was arrested on June 15, 2001 by an assault team of 31 police officers armed with automatic weapons. After searching his house, police claimed to have found nine Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets as well as 28 bullets and narcotics. Relatives reported that the police had planted the contraband themselves. According to NGO reports, police detained, threatened, and blocked the road against human rights activists and opposition figures who attempted to travel to Ruzimuradov's funeral. An official investigation of his death concluded that Ruzimuradov committed suicide. Nonetheless, four officials were dismissed for mishandling Ruzimuradov's detention, and disciplinary actions were taken against others.

On February 28, 2001, well-known writer Emin Usman died in pretrial detention; he was being held by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to Memorial, a Moscow-based human rights organization, his body featured a large open wound on the back of the head. Authorities who returned the body told Usman's family that he had committed suicide, although the official death certificate listed a brain tumor as the cause of death. Usman allegedly was involved with Hizb ut-Tahrir.

In late December 2000, Habeebullah Nosirov, a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir who was convicted in 1999, died in prison in Jaslik. According to the family of the deceased, he died of injuries sustained from severe beatings by police while he was in prison. Habeebullah Nosirov was the brother of Haffezullah Nosirov, who was the "Amir" or chief of the Hizb ut-Tahrir organization in the country until he was arrested and tried earlier in the year.

On October 8, 2000, the body of Numon Saidaminov, Haffezullah Nosirov's alleged successor as Amir of Hizb ut-Tahrir, was returned to his family from detention by the National Security Service (NSS). Although officials stated that he died of a heart attack, a doctor who examined the body allegedly confirmed that the cause of death was a severe beating that occurred 2 days prior to the examination. Saidaminov's body had open wounds and bruises on the fingernails, anus, and the bottoms of the feet, which are consistent with sexual violence and torture.

There were no new reports of disappearances of religious leaders during the period covered by this report. It is believed widely that Imam Abidkhon Nazarov, who has been missing since March 5, 1998, fled the country to avoid arrest and was not abducted by security forces. During the period covered by this report, there were no reported developments in the 1995 disappearance of Imam Abduvali Mirzaev, the 1997 disappearance of his assistant, Nematjon Parpiev, or the 1992 disappearance of Aboullah Utaev, leader of the Uzbekistan chapter of the outlawed Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). Most independent observers believe that the three missing Islamic activists are either dead or in custody.

There was one report of a person who disappeared after being taken into custody. Plainclothes police officers apprehended Bakhodir Khasanov, an instructor of French at the Alliance Francaise, in front of witnesses on July 17, 2000. The authorities have not acknowledged that he is being held in detention. This is the fourth time that the authorities have detained Khasanov. The security services' interest in Khasanov apparently stems from the fact that many members of the Khasanov family are pious Muslims, although acquaintances claimed that Bakhodir was not especially religious. Bakhodir's father and brother both are imprisoned. His brother Ismail was convicted in August 1999 for alleged links to Islamic extremists and was retried on additional charges of involvement in events in Yangiabad, although these events took place while he was in prison. In November 1999, police arrested Khasanov's 70-year-old father after planting Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets on him. He signed a confession after police forced him to watch them beating his son Ismail, and he is serving 3 years in prison.

The security services have arrested, detained, and harassed Muslim leaders for perceived acts of insubordination and independence. On April 9, 2001, a Tashkent court convicted former Imam Abdulvakhid Yuldashev, a former associate of missing Imam Nazarov, along with 12 other defendants. Yuldashev was sentenced to 19 years in prison for organizing an underground Islamic militant group. He was arrested in June 2000, held incommunicado for several months, and was denied access to a lawyer during most of his pretrial detention in the basement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). In mid-August, the MVD investigator in the case allowed a meeting with lawyer Hamid Zainutdinov, but Yuldashev declined the lawyer's services. Zainutdinov later wrote an appeal to the Prosecutor General stating that it was evident by the wounds on his feet and by his demeanor that Yuldashev had been tortured and forced to refuse counsel. In court Yuldashev described how investigators had beaten him and burned his genitals in order to extract confessions during detention. The judge declined to investigate these charges. Evidence at the trial consisted almost entirely of statements by the other prisoners who also claimed in court to have been beaten in detention.

The Koran reportedly is banned in most detention facilities and there are numerous reports that Muslims in places of detention are punished severely if they are caught praying.

Arbitrary arrest and detention of Muslim believers is common. Following both the December 1997 murder of police officials in Namangan and the February 1999 terrorist bombings in Tashkent, police detained hundreds and perhaps thousands of suspected Wahhabists. The majority of those detained were released after questioning and detention that lasted as long as 2 months. The police routinely planted narcotics, ammunition, and, beginning in 1999, religious leaflets, on citizens to justify their arrests. According to human rights activists, the police arrested many of those whose religious piety, sometimes indicated by their dress or beards, made them suspect to the security services.

To determine whom to arrest, the Government used the local mahalla (neighborhood) committees as a source of information. Shortly after the February 1999 Tashkent bombings, President Karimov directed that each committee assign a "defender of the people," whose job it was to ensure that young persons in the neighborhoods were not joining independent Islamic groups. The committees identified for police those residents who appeared suspicious. Human rights observers noted that in practice the committees often suspected those same individuals who already had been detained by the police in the wake of either the 1997 murders of officials in Namangan or the Tashkent bombings, and who subsequently had been released because there was no case against them. During the period covered by this report, there were dozens of cases in which persons who had previously been detained and released were retried.

The absence of a free press and the rarity of public trials make it impossible to determine how many persons have been incarcerated. Nonetheless, the Moscow human rights center, Memorial, has compiled a list of over 1,400 names of persons arrested and convicted for political and religious reasons from January 1999 until April 2000. The number of those in pretrial detention is unknown but is probably several hundred persons. Nearly all those listed were accused of being Muslim extremists. Some human rights groups have speculated that the total of those in custody is in the tens of thousands. By the end of June 2001, the Government had convicted at least 140 persons for direct involvement in the bombing plot. Of these, at least 20 received death sentences and most of these are believed to have been executed.

Although the Constitution provides for the presumption of innocence, the system of justice operates on the assumption that only the guilty are brought to trial. To bolster this claim, government officials point out that since the bombings, approxi-

mately 5,000 persons who were detained later were released. According to government officials, most of these persons were released after they renounced their allegiance to Islamist groups and pledged never again to engage in anti-State activities, while others were released for lack of evidence.

The Government typically held unannounced trials of large groups of alleged extremists, and rarely allowed international observers to attend. Human rights observers contended these groupings of defendants were arbitrary, since the prosecution only occasionally argued that those on trial actually were connected to one another. Defendants often claimed that the confessions on which the prosecution typically based its cases were extracted by torture. Judges ignored these claims and invariably convicted the accused, handing down severe sentences—usually from 15 to 20 years' imprisonment.

In one such trial, which ended on November 24, 2000, a court sentenced 23 defendants accused of establishing a criminal Wahhabist organization in Kokand between 1989 and 1992 to between 16 and 20 years in prison. Eleven of the defendants were already in prison on charges related to the same alleged activities. Among the defendants were five brothers of Khamramon Khamidov, who died—reportedly from mistreatment—in prison in 1998. Defendants and witnesses said during the trial that their signatures on statements written before the trial were extracted under duress. The defendants admitted that they established an organization that, until forced to disband in 1992, opposed criminality and corruption in Kokand but committed no actions against the State.

Accused Hizb ut-Tahrir members also were tried in large groups, claimed mistreatment, and were sentenced to lengthy jail terms. In a trial which ended on May 17, 2001, a court sentenced all but 1 of 24 alleged members of Hizb ut-Tahrir to between 8 and 18 years in prison for anti-State activities, including belonging to a religious fundamentalist group. The court convicted the remaining defendant under a lesser charge and released him under amnesty. One of the defendants, Odiljon Umarov, was 17 years old and received an 8-year sentence. His father also was arrested and scheduled for trial in May 2001. Another defendant, Mirzakarim Avasov, who denied belonging to Hizb ut-Tahrir, was the younger brother of Hizb ut-Tahrir member Mirzafar Avasov, who had been arrested in January 2000. According to persons familiar with the case, Mirzakarim originally was taken into custody in order to help investigators extract a confession from his older brother. Members of the National Security Service reportedly tortured Mirzakarim with electric shocks in front of his brother until Mirzafar agreed to sign a statement incriminating himself and others.

The Avasov case was typical of a trend of arresting family members of persons who are wanted by the authorities but are at large, or even of persons already in jail. Typically, while the fugitives or previously imprisoned persons may have admitted being involved in religious groups, their family members deny involvement. The motive in arresting family members in the former category appears to be to hasten the apprehension of fugitives. Imprisoning family members of those already in jail reportedly is based on the belief that aggrieved relatives may turn against the State.

One such case occurred during the investigation of Nahmiddin Juvashev, who was in pretrial detention in late 2000. According to Human Rights Watch, Juvashev originally was arrested in 1999 when, believing the Government's promise of amnesty for repentant Islamists, he turned himself in as a former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir to the Jizzak office of the NSS. The NSS officials allegedly tortured him in detention, and the court sentenced him to 9 years in prison. In August 1999, he was released after the Supreme Court overturned his conviction on the basis of the promised amnesty; however, he was rearrested in the summer of 2000. On September 6, the authorities arrested Juvashev's brother Idrisbek Umarkulov when, in the course of a search (allegedly conducted without a warrant) of the Juvashev family home, NSS officers claimed to find a sawed-off shotgun and bullets for another weapon. Family members and witnesses claimed that the officers planted the items in the house.

In July 2000, a court convicted Kamoletdin Sattarov of Andijon of anti-State activity after police allegedly planted two Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets on him. The authorities had jailed his brother Muradjon in 1999 for membership in the Hizb ut-Tahrir. Kamoletdin has admitted that Muradjon was involved with the group but denied that he shared his brother's political or religious beliefs. Investigators in Kamoletdin's case found individual appeal forms of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights in his home and used them as evidence against him during his trial.

All adult male members of the family of missing Imam Abidkhon Nazarov remain in jail and allegedly are beaten periodically by interrogators trying to learn Nazarov's whereabouts.

Human rights observers noted an increase in the number of women arrested during the year for their alleged involvement with religious groups. Rahima Ahmadalieva was arrested on March 17, 2001, and reportedly is held in the basement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Tashkent. Ahmadalieva is the wife of Imam Ruhiddin Fahruddinov, who was accused by the Government of "Wahhabism" and is believed to be in hiding. On March 20, Ahmadalieva's daughter Odina Makhsudova was detained briefly and forced to give a statement that incriminated her mother. Makhsudova alleged later that police were verbally abusive to her and her mother, forced them to remove their headscarves, and threatened to rape them. She claimed that her mother was mistreated physically. She quoted police officials as saying that her mother would be freed as soon as her father turned himself in.

In another case, prosecutors brought charges against Feruza Kurbanova for alleged membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir. The trial, which was well-attended by international observers, ended in March, when the judge dismissed two of the three charges and sentenced Kurbanova only to probation on the third charge. Kurbanova's husband is serving an 8-year sentence for his alleged involvement in the organization.

On March 21, 2001, police in Andijon broke up a demonstration of 200–300 women and children whose relatives were imprisoned for allegedly distributing Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets. Three women were arrested during the protest and were detained for 1, 3, and 20 nights in jail respectively. On March 23, the women tried to assemble again, but police reportedly ordered many of them into waiting buses. However, none of the women were arrested. On April 12, 2001, similar protests occurred in Tashkent and Andijon. Police, wielding batons, broke up the Tashkent protest violently, injuring numerous demonstrators. One demonstrator was arrested. On July 2, women attempted to hold protests at the Andijon and Tashkent city halls. Police and security forces were well prepared for the would-be demonstrators and forced them into waiting buses before they could assemble.

There were few reports of human rights abuses against members of minority religions during the period covered by this report; however, police occasionally broke up meetings of unregistered groups. Leaders of such groups have been assessed fines or have been imprisoned. In June 2001 in Tashkent, the head of the local mahalla told Baptist Pastor Nikolai Shevchenko that he faced an 8-year prison term for leading an unregistered church; however, at the end of the reporting period the legal case against Shevchenko was dropped. Local authorities also filed charges against 10 other members of the Baptist Church; however, these charges were dropped. In August 2000, police allegedly detained for 2 days a group of unregistered Baptists meeting in a private apartment in Chirchik, during which the police allegedly beat them. After a similar incident in October 1999 in Karshi, the Committee on Religious Affairs claimed that it took steps to ensure that police allow such Baptist congregations, which consider registration to be inconsistent with their religious beliefs, to meet undisturbed for worship.

In July 2000, police in Nukus, Karakalpakstan, arrested Nikolai Rudinsky, pastor of a small, unregistered Baptist group, after allegedly planting narcotics in his bicycle pack; he was released in late September 2000.

An ethnic Korean Christian pastor, Stanislav Kim, was released from prison under amnesty in October 2000. In February 1999, a court convicted Kim on charges of tax evasion and financial impropriety. Acquaintances of Kim believe that he was jailed in part because local officials believed that Kim's religious activities conflicted with his duties as a director of a state concern.

The authorities have attempted to silence human rights activists who criticize government repression of religious Muslims and others. In December 2000, the Government pardoned and released imprisoned human rights activist Mahbuba Kasimova. However, on April 26, 2001, militia detained her for 3 hours and questioned her about her attendance at trials of "religious persons" and her contacts with relatives of defendants. The officers warned her to cease her human rights monitoring activities. Human rights activist Ismail Adylov was released from jail on July 3. He was arrested in July 1999, after police allegedly planted 100 Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets among his effects to justify the arrest (Adylov was not known to be religious). In September 1999, a remote regional court sentenced him to 6 years in prison for allegedly possessing incriminating papers.

The Government is suspicious of all religious literature that does not emanate from the Muftiate. Possession of tracts by authors deemed to be Wahhabist can lead to arrest and prosecution. Hundreds of Uzbeks have been imprisoned for possessing or distributing Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets, which are both political and religious in content. Others have been imprisoned for possessing Islamic texts in Arabic.

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

There were several cases during the reporting period of persons brought to trial for involvement in religious extremist organizations who were granted parole or amnesty. Among these were Feruza Kurbanova, five of the defendants in the trial of Imam Abduvakhid Yuldashev, and one of the 24 defendants in the May 17 Hizb ut-Tahrir case in Tashkent. While there have been cases in the past of prosecutors declining to prosecute persons, according to human rights observers these were the first cases of a judge giving light sentences in religious cases. In September 2000, Baptist Pastor Nikolai Rudinsky, who had been arrested on false charges, was released after U.S. Embassy intervention.

The Government's Center for Human Rights and the Committee on Religious Affairs sponsored a series of three roundtables to foster inter-confessional dialog. Participants from minority religions noted that these were opportunities to speak openly about restrictions on religious freedom.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are amicable relations among the various religious communities. There is no pattern of discrimination against Jews. Synagogues function openly; Hebrew education, Jewish cultural events, and the publication of a community newspaper take place undisturbed. However, many Jews are emigrating because of bleak economic prospects and because of their connection to families abroad. Jewish leaders in Samarkand reported that anti-Semitic fliers signed by the Hizb ut-Tahrir have been distributed throughout the country.

Members of ethnic groups that traditionally are associated with Islam who convert to Christianity sometimes encounter particular societal and low-level governmental hostility.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy is engaged actively in monitoring religious freedom issues and problems and maintains contact with both government and religious leaders. The Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for the Newly Independent States met with the Foreign Minister on three occasions during the period covered by this report. In each of these meetings, he expressed U.S. support for freedom of opinion and religion. In September 2000, the Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom met with the Uzbek Ambassador to raise current issues. Officials in Washington have met on several occasions with Uzbek embassy officials to convey U.S. concerns regarding the state of religious freedom. The U.S. Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission discussed religious freedom on at least six occasions with the Foreign Minister and other officials, as well as in the context of the U.S.-Uzbek human rights working group.

In November 2000, the Ambassador met with the Deputy Director of the Committee on Religious Affairs in the Cabinet of Ministers. The Embassy's human rights officer maintains regular contact with the Committee on Religious Affairs as well as religious leaders and human rights activists.

After the U.S. Embassy intervened following the arrest of Pastor Nikolai Rudinsky in Nukus (see Section II), the Government quickly released him.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

Federal and Republic law provide for freedom of religion, and the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Yugoslavia) and the constituent Republic of Serbia generally respect this right in practice; however, under the Milosevic government—prior to October 5, 2000—there were incidents of government infringement on freedom of worship, and the federal and republic level legal systems provided little protection for the religious rights of minority groups. The Government of the Republic of Montenegro generally respects religious rights in practice. There is no state religion in the country; however, the Serbian Orthodox Church receives preferential treatment. In Kosovo, the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), charged under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 with the administration of the territory, con-

tinued to work to secure peace and foster respect for human rights regardless of ethnicity or religion. Nonetheless, there were attacks by Albanian Muslims against Orthodox Serbs during the period covered by this report in retribution for the massive human rights abuses conducted by Yugoslav and Serbian authorities against Albanians prior to June 1999.

The status of respect for religious freedom by both the Federal and Serbian Republic Governments improved somewhat during the period covered by this report, following former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's electoral defeat by Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) coalition on September 24, 2000. Officials of the new Government expressed a commitment to improving respect for human rights and to eliminating discrimination; however, in practice the new Government has provided preferential treatment to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The views of ethnic groups in the region historically have been influenced strongly by religion, and most instances of ethnic discrimination have at least some religious roots. There were some instances of societal discrimination against religious minorities in Serbia. In Kosovo societal tensions were particularly noticeable and caused security for Serbs and other minorities to worsen during the period covered by this report. Numerous Orthodox Churches in Kosovo were attacked, presumably by ethnic Albanian extremists, although the number of such attacks decreased. In Montenegro tensions between the unofficial (because it is not recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul) Montenegrin Orthodox Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church continued and were politicized by opposing political factions, despite the Montenegrin Government's attempts to moderate the situation.

The U.S. Government encourages the Yugoslav Government to promote ethnic and religious tolerance the country. Since diplomatic relations were reestablished in November 2000, Embassy officials have met with representatives of religious and ethnic minority communities in Serbia and Montenegro and with government officials to promote respect of religious freedom and protection of human rights. The U.S. Government also supports UNMIK and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), including their efforts to protect Orthodox churches, shrines, and other religious sites to prevent any renewed outbreak of attacks on such sites.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 39,500 square miles and has a population of approximately 10,662,000. The predominant faith in the country outside of Kosovo is Serbian Orthodoxy, although religion is not a significant factor in public life. Those Serbs who profess a religion predominantly are Serbian Orthodox and make up approximately 65 percent of the population. Montenegrins, who constitute about 6 percent of the total population and live mainly in Montenegro, also primarily follow Serbian Orthodoxy. The Muslim population, composed mostly of Slavic Muslims who live predominantly in the Sandzak region bordering Serbia and Montenegro, and ethnic Albanians located primarily in Kosovo, constitutes about 19 percent of the total population. Like Serbs and Montenegrins, many Muslims in the country are not religious, and the term "Muslim" is often more a reference to ethnic identity than to religious belief. About 4 percent of the population are Roman Catholic, and consist of ethnic Hungarians who live primarily in Vojvodina, ethnic Albanians, and Croats who live in Vojvodina and scattered communities in Montenegro. About 1 percent of the population is Protestant. Other minority religious groups make up another 12 percent of the population.

Missionaries from a number of different groups are present in the country, including members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and a range of evangelical Protestant Christians (including Baptists, Evangelical Methodists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Reform Christians).

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The law in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as in the constituent republics of Serbia and Montenegro, provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, up to October 2000, under the Milosevic government, the Government and the legal system provided very little protection for the religious rights of minority groups in those areas under the Serbian Government's administration. There is no state religion; however, the Serbian Orthodox Church receives preferential treatment.

Although in the past the Milosevic government was allied closely with and gave preferential treatment to the Serbian Orthodox Church, a split between the two

widened considerably in 2000. Since assuming office, Federal President Kostunica has increased the profile of the Serbian Orthodox Church in public life, and has made high-profile visits to major Serbian Orthodox religious sites. He also has expressed his support for introducing religious education in schools, instituting religious services into the Yugoslav army (VJ), and returning confiscated property to the Serbian Orthodox Church. State-run television broadcasts religious coverage on major Serbian Orthodox holidays. In November 2000, both the Federal and Serbian Republic level Ministries of Religious Affairs announced their support for introducing voluntary religious education in primary and secondary schools, with the support of the Serbian Orthodox, Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Jewish religious communities. Some Protestant groups and human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) expressed concern for these plans, fearing that non-Orthodox children would be stigmatized. During the period covered by this report, the Federal and Republic Ministries for Religious Affairs were in the process of preparing a draft law on religious education in schools for approval by the Ministry of Education, but no law was passed.

Religious groups are required to apply to the Federal Ministry for Religious Affairs in order to be recognized in the country. The Federal Ministry has denied recognition to the Montenegrin Orthodox Church as a religion on the basis that no Orthodox body has granted recognition to the organization. There were no other reports of applications that were denied during the period covered by this report.

In Montenegro the Constitution specifically recognizes the existence of the Serbian Orthodox Church, but not other faiths. The Montenegrin Orthodox Church is registered with the Government of Montenegro Ministry of Interior in Cetinje, the former capital, as an NGO. The Government of Montenegro has remained officially neutral in the dispute between followers of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Montenegrin Orthodox Church. Political parties have used this issue in pursuit of their own agendas. Pro-Serbian parties strongly support moves for the establishment of the Serbian Orthodox Church as an official state religion, while pro-independence parties have pushed for the official recognition of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church. Members of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church worship freely, and generally worship in those churches (formerly Serbian Orthodox) whose memberships have elected to align themselves with the Montenegrin Orthodox Church.

In Kosovo applicable law, as defined by UNMIK regulation, incorporates international human rights conventions and treaties, including those provisions that protect religious freedom and prohibit discrimination based on religion and ethnicity. Both UNMIK and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) officially promote respect for religious freedom and tolerance in administering Kosovo and in carrying out programs for its reconstruction and development.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In March 2001, VJ announced its intention to introduce Serbian Orthodox chaplains into its military units. The VJ had not yet decided whether Catholic priests and Muslim imams also would be represented in the Army Chaplaincy. According to the Keston Institute, some representatives of minority religious groups and NGO's expressed concern that by favoring the majority religion the VJ is not protecting equal religious rights for all soldiers.

Under the Milosevic government, there was no progress in the restitution of property that belonged to the Jewish community prior to World War II, despite President Milosevic's past promises to resolve the disputes. The Orthodox and Catholic Churches have had similar difficulties with the restitution of their property confiscated by the Communist regime (1944–89). Federal President Kostunica made public statements supporting the restitution of confiscated property; however, no progress was reported at the end of the period covered by this report.

When it suited its political aims, the Milosevic government did not hesitate to attack verbally the Serbian Orthodox Church, which became outspoken in its criticism of the regime during the period covered by this report. The Church openly called for Milosevic to step down in 1999 as a result of his failed national policies, and the Church demonstrated tacit support for President Kostunica during the September 2000 Federal elections.

Protestants and foreign clergy actively practice and proselytize. Missionaries from a number of different groups are present in the country, including members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and a range of evangelical Protestant Christians (including Baptists, Evangelical Methodists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Reform Christians). However, some of these groups have complained of societal discrimination.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

From 1992 until October 2000, the Milosevic government attempted to suppress all of its enemies in the country, Serb and non-Serb alike. To achieve his political ends, Milosevic exploited ethnic, religious, and political divisions through his control of the media and the organs of state security. The focus of this suppression was primarily along ethnic lines, and in general encompassed religion only as a component of ethnicity.

Prior to their expulsion from Kosovo in June 1999, Serbian Interior Ministry troops, police, and paramilitary formations committed widespread and severe abuses against Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population. The regime attempted to rid the province of almost its entire ethnic Albanian population, killing thousands of ethnic Albanians and forcing nearly one million to become refugees. This ethnic cleansing was distinct from religiously motivated violence; however, because most Kosovar Albanians are Muslim, the Serbian campaign also resulted in deliberate destruction of mosques and other Islamic landmarks.

For similar reasons, under the Milosevic government, police repression continued against ethnic and religious minorities elsewhere in Serbia. There were reports of harassment of Bosniak Muslims by Serb authorities in the Sandzak region along the border between Serbia and Montenegro. In August 2000, the police arrested members of the moderate Sandzak Democratic Party (SDP) who were distributing party leaflets for the September Federal elections. Their campaign materials were confiscated and the members were released a few hours later. Under the new Government, reports of police repression of Bosniak Muslims in the Sandzak have ceased.

In Kosovo the withdrawal of Serbian troops in 1999 and establishment of UNMIK resulted in an improved situation for the majority, largely Muslim, ethnic Albanian population. One of the most serious challenges facing the international community in its administration of Kosovo has been to stop attacks on Orthodox churches and shrines and on the Orthodox population of Kosovo (see Section III).

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

Under the new democratically-elected Government, much of the repression of ethnic and religious minorities that occurred under Milosevic ceased, and respect for religious freedom improved. Reports of police abuses against Bosniak Muslims in the Sandzak region have ceased. The number of attacks on Serbian Orthodox churches in Kosovo, presumably by ethnic Albanian extremists, decreased significantly during the period covered by this report.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Ethnicity and religion are intertwined closely throughout the country. In many cases it is difficult to clearly identify discriminatory acts as primarily religious or primarily ethnic in origin. However, the incidents of discrimination and harassment of religious minorities that occurred during the period covered by this report appear to have been based primarily on ethnicity rather than religion.

The Keston Institute reported that on September 26, 2000, a group of 13 young men attacked two Romani women and one Romani man, all members of a Romani Pentacostal church in Leskovac, with sticks, bats, and chains. The attack took place 2 days after three young men interrupted the church's evening services and threatened the congregation, throwing firecrackers and shouting that they would force the Roma to leave town. The church reported the incidents to the local police, who advised them to file charges against the men. No further information concerning the case was available, and no further incidents were reported by the end of the period covered by this report.

Societal harassment of the Catholic minority in Vojvodina, largely consisting of ethnic Hungarians and Croats, was reported. In early 2000, Catholic churches frequented by the Croat minority were attacked; however, there were no reports of this type of activity during the period covered by this report. Ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina, most of whom are at least nominally Catholic, as well as Catholic Croats allege discrimination in employment. In April 2000, unidentified assailants disrupted a debate on religion organized by the Catholic Church in Novi Sad. The police intervened and restored order.

Bosniak Muslims in the Sandzak region allege discrimination in housing, employment, health care, commerce, and education.

A number of anti-Semitic incidents occurred during the period covered by this report. Early in 2001, there were reports of anti-Semitic leaflets circulated in Kikinda.

On February 13 and 14, 2001, stickers with swastikas and anti-Semitic messages were placed on the entrance of the Jewish Community of Belgrade, on the gate of the synagogue, and on the fence of the Jewish cemetery. A similar incident had occurred earlier during the winter. Jewish community members believe the perpetrators were members of a radical nationalist group. President Kostunica publicly condemned the acts. Also in February 2001, a memorial plate hung at the site of a former synagogue in Zrenjanin was broken. The incident was reported to the police but the perpetrators were not found. On May 8, 2001, in Subotica in Vojvodina, unknown assailants attacked and beat a Jewish community leader for the second time (a similar attack had occurred 3 weeks earlier). The victim was a lawyer who represented opposition members during the Milosevic government. A police investigation was initiated. Members of the Jewish community also charged that the "Palma" television station has aired programs with guests who openly expressed anti-Semitic ideas. For example, Dragos Valajic, a Serb nationalist, spoke of the "Jewish conspiracy" on one program.

Ethnicity and religion also are closely intertwined in Kosovo. Muslim Kosovars generally are not religious. Kosovar Serbs identify themselves with the Serbian Orthodox Church, which defines not only their religious but also their cultural and historical perspectives. During and after the conflict, some Orthodox leaders played a moderating political role, but most have since withdrawn from public life as secular Serb leaders have stepped forward. Societal violence against Serbs continued to decrease steadily during the course of the period covered by this report, although this positive trend was marred periodically by surges of ethnically motivated violence, such as the February 2001 bombing of a bus carrying Kosovar Serbs coming from Nis, which killed 10 persons. While these incidents were ethnically, not religiously, motivated, security concerns had a chilling effect on the Serb community and their freedom of movement, which also affected their freedom to worship. Serb families with relatives living in both Kosovo and Serbia are restricted by security concerns from traveling to join them for religious holidays or ceremonies, including weddings and funerals.

In July 2000, the now-defunct daily Dita published an article, with photographs, alleging that Orthodox priests committed war crimes. The Serbian Orthodox Church denied that the photographs depicted any known priests. Two ethnic Albanians were arrested for subsequently attacking and injuring a priest and two seminarians in a drive-by shooting. One suspect was sentenced in absentia; the other was acquitted.

Attacks on Serbian Orthodox churches, presumably by ethnic Albanian extremists, continued during the period covered by this report, although these incidents decreased significantly. On September 1, 2000, the Orthodox church in Musnikovo, near Prizren, was damaged and desecrated. On December 22, 2000, unknown assailants threw a hand grenade at the only functioning Serbian Orthodox church in Pristina, breaking windows and causing other damage. On February 7, 2001, unknown assailants planted a bomb in an Orthodox church in the village of Gornji Livoc, destroying it. The Keston Institute reported that local police prevented a similar church attack in Gornja Kufca/Kusce. On February 8, 2001, unknown assailants reportedly fired shots at the Draganac monastery. Also in February 2001, ethnic Albanians attacked the last remaining Serb village in the Dukagjin Valley (Rahovac/Orahovac). Mortar rounds fell in fields near the houses and next to an Orthodox cemetery.

In light of societal violence in Kosovo against properties owned by the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbian Orthodox religious symbols, UNMIK authorities took extra steps to protect religious sites and to ensure that members of all religious groups could worship safely. KFOR deployed security contingents at religious sites throughout the province to protect them from further destruction, such as that which had occurred immediately after KFOR's intervention in June 1999. KFOR remains solely responsible for guarding all Serbian Orthodox patrimonial sites, although it has proposed to UNMIK that this function gradually be handed over to the indigenous Kosovo Police Service.

Islamic, Orthodox, and Catholic religious leaders have tried to encourage tolerance and peace in Kosovo, in both the religious and political spheres.

There were few reported instances of abuses based on religion in the Republic of Montenegro. Relations between religious communities generally are peaceful in Montenegro. Catholic, Muslim, and Orthodox communities coexist within the same communities and often use the same municipally owned properties to conduct worship services. However, during the period covered by this report, tensions continued to rise between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the self-proclaimed Montenegrin Orthodox Church. There were a few incidents of violence between the supporters of these two competing Orthodox churches. The Montenegrin Orthodox Church has claimed holdings of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. The Serbian Or-

thodox Church remains the predominant faith in Montenegro and has rejected the property claims.

Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses are officially registered religions in Montenegro. However, their followers report that their efforts to build and renovate churches have been impaired by persons they believe to be loyal to the local Serbian Orthodox Church. A local NGO reported that unknown assailants burned a Seventh-Day Adventist church in Niksic at the end of 2000. The perpetrators were not found.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government has sought to promote ethnic and religious tolerance in the country. The absence of diplomatic relations before November 2000 limited severely the U.S. Government's ability to engage directly with religious representatives except in Kosovo, where U.S. Office officials have maintained close contacts with religious leaders. Since the reestablishment of diplomatic relations, Embassy officials have met with representatives of religious and ethnic minority communities and with officials of the new Government to promote respect of religious freedom and protection of human rights. The Secretary of State removed the formal identification of the Milosevic government in Serbia—identified in 1999 and 2000 as a "particularly severe violator" of religious freedom—in January 2001 after Vojislav Kostunica was elected president.

In July 2000, the U.S. Government sponsored a conference at Airlie House that brought together Kosovar Albanian and Serb civil society and political leaders to discuss reconciliation, tolerance and a joint vision for Kosovo's future. Orthodox religious leaders participated in the Airlie House process. In December 2000, the U.S. funded a Democracy Commission grant to Radio KIM (Radio Caglavica), based at Gracanica Monastery. Serbian Orthodox Bishop Artemije's clerical staff runs the station, and it broadcasts news, music, interviews, and cultural programs. Bishop Artemije visited Washington D.C. in February 2001 and met with Secretary of State Colin Powell, who repeated the strong messages in support of ethnic tolerance that Secretary Albright delivered last year. U.S. KFOR peacekeeping troops have worked to prevent ethnic and religious violence in Kosovo and have guarded religious sites. The U.S. is involved actively in UNMIK, the interim administration mission in Kosovo, which is aimed at securing peace, facilitating refugee return and reconstruction, laying the foundations for democratic self-government in the province, and fostering respect for human rights regardless of ethnicity or religion.

In Montenegro the U.S. Government seeks to ensure respect for human rights, including religious freedom and has provided significant support and assistance to the republic government.