

OVERVIEW AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Why and How the Reports are Prepared

The Department of State submits this report to the Congress in compliance with section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998. U.S. embassies prepare the initial drafts of the reports based on information from government officials, religious leaders, nongovernmental organizations, journalists, human rights monitors, religious groups, academics, and others. U.S. foreign service officers go to great lengths, sometimes under trying and dangerous conditions, to collect the information on which the reports are based.

The Office of International Religious Freedom collaborates in collecting and analyzing information for the country reports, drawing on its own consultations with foreign government officials, religious leaders, nongovernmental organizations, representatives from the UN and other international and regional organizations and institutions, journalists, academic experts, and Department of State offices. The Department's guiding principle is to ensure that all relevant information is assessed as objectively, thoroughly, and fairly as possible.

New This Year

This year, we are utilizing a number of new technologies to make the International Religious Freedom Report and the Human Rights Report more dynamic and user-friendly. The reports are now available via www.humanrights.gov (or directly, at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm>) in a format that allows readers to search the texts and compare reports across regions and themes. We also developed a streamlined format for both reports. Rather than catalog every abuse of religious freedom, however egregious, we spotlight examples that typify and illuminate the types of problems frequently reported in each country in 2011. Specific inclusions or omissions should not be interpreted as a signal that a particular case is of greater or lesser importance to the U.S. government, or that a case is the only available example. Rather, our goal is to shed light on the nature, scope, and severity of the violations we report. For the first time, the International Religious Freedom Report covers the calendar year, as does the Human Rights Report. Readers can reference the two reports jointly and benefit from year-end data.

How the Reports Are Used

A wide range of U.S. government agencies and offices uses the reports to shape policy; conduct diplomacy; and inform assistance, training, and other resource allocations. The Secretary of State also uses the reports to help determine which countries have engaged in or tolerated “particularly severe violations” of religious freedom, otherwise known as countries of particular concern.

A Word on Definitions

When this report states that a government “generally respected” the right of religious freedom over the reporting period, it signifies that the government attempted to protect religious freedom in the fullest sense while recognizing that the protection and promotion of religious freedom is a dynamic endeavor. “Generally respected” is thus the highest level of respect for religious freedom assigned by this report.

Acknowledgements

This report reflects six months of dedicated effort by hundreds of people in the Department of State and at U.S. missions abroad. We thank the dedicated staff at our embassies and consulates for monitoring and promoting religious freedom, and for chronicling in detail the status of religious liberty.

Within the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, the editorial staff of the International Religious Freedom Report consists of the following: Editor in Chief Mary E. Daly; Office Director Victoria Alvarado; Senior Editors Robert W. Boehme, Kimberly A. Jorgensen, Joannella Morales, Greta N. Morris, and Marc J. Susser; Editors and Assistants Steffanie Altman, Nida Ansari, Nasreen Badat, Kyle M. Ballard, Abigail Bellows, M. A. Borst, Sita Liane Chakrawarti, Warren Cofsky, Kathleen Crowley, Clara Davis, Stacy Bernard Davis, Debra Eichenbaum, Will Grandberry, Elena Green, Olivia Hilton, Sameer Hossain, Julia Hozakowska, Anjoly Ibrahim, Kari Johnstone, Emilie Kao, Adela Levis, Amy Lillis, Elijah Logsdon, Gwendolyn Mack, Joel Malkin, Darin McAnelly, Amber McIntyre, Thomas Mitchell, Daniel L. Nadel, Elizabeth Huse Neil, Megan Robb, Bridget E. Rochester, Rachel Sauer, Michael W. Seidenstricker, Dustin Smith, Jacqueline Van De Velde, Laurel Voloder, Victoria S. Wolf, Deniece O. Yeboah, and Kendra Young; Technical Assistant Corey Martin. The reports are produced under the direction of Assistant Secretary Michael H. Posner and Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Suzan Johnson Cook.