

LUXEMBOURG

Executive Summary

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

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

The U.S. government met with government representatives in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss matters related to religious freedom. Additionally, the U.S. government conducted sustained outreach to local community leaders during the year on religious freedom, among other human rights issues.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country is historically Roman Catholic, and Catholicism remains the predominant religion. While the government may not collect or maintain statistics on religious affiliation, a study by the Center for Studies of Population, Poverty and Socio-Economic Policy (CEPS/Instead) published during the year estimates more than 70 percent of the population is Catholic. Information provided by local religious communities and the aforementioned study indicates the following percentages for the country's remaining religious communities: Protestant (Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican), 2 percent; Muslim, 2 percent; Christian Orthodox (Greek, Serbian, Russian, and Romanian), 1 percent; and Jewish, 0.3 percent. The Baha'i Faith, the Universal Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), are represented in smaller numbers.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. While there is no state religion, the constitution provides for state payment of salaries and

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pensions of clergy of those religious groups that sign a convention with the government. For a religious community to qualify for this convention, it must establish an official and stable representative body with which the government can interact. The following religious groups receive support: Catholic; Greek, Russian, Romanian, and Serbian Orthodox; Anglican; the Reformed Protestant Church of Luxembourg; the Protestant Church of Luxembourg; and Jewish congregations.

Religious instruction in public schools is a local matter, coordinated between representatives of the Catholic Church and 106 communes. There are government-salaried religious instructors at all levels in public schools. Parents and pupils may choose between instruction in Catholicism or an ethics course. Schools grant exemption from this instruction on an individual basis.

The government subsidizes all private religious schools affiliated with a parent religion that has signed a convention with the state. The government also subsidizes a Catholic seminary.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Shrove Monday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Whit Monday, Assumption Day, All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, Christmas, and the second day of Christmas.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

The government is in the process of negotiating a convention with the country's Muslim community. However, according to the government and press reports, the negotiations are on hold due to ongoing legislative deliberations regarding the relationship between church and state. The government has established a commission to study the church-state issue, with a resolution expected toward the end of 2012.

On July 3, the Muslim community passed one of the preconditions for a convention by electing a new Shura (consultative body) with a broader representational base. The number of voter inscriptions for the election reportedly stood at approximately 2,300. Even though a majority of the Islamic centers in the country participated in the elections, several centers opted not to participate.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

Embassy officers met with representatives of government ministries at all levels to discuss matters related to religious freedom. During the year, they also met with representatives from religious groups and related nongovernmental organizations, none of whom voiced concerns over the state of religious freedom in the country.