

ANDORRA 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year.

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

The U.S. consul general in Barcelona and consulate representatives discussed religious freedom with the government.

Section I. Religious Demography

The government estimates the population to be 78,000. There are no official statistics on religious affiliation, but observers estimate that approximately 90 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. Smaller religious groups include Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Anglicans, Seventh-day Adventists, Bahais, and members of the Unification Church. There are also small numbers of members of other Christian groups, including the New Apostolic Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The population consists largely of immigrants from Spain, Portugal, and France; citizens constitute 37 percent of inhabitants. Immigrants are generally also Catholic.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. There is no specific legislation on the treatment and recognition of religious groups or on religious freedom.

The constitution acknowledges a special relationship with the 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

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own rules.” The Catholic Church receives some special privileges not available to other religious groups; for instance, the government pays the salaries of Catholic priests. One of the two constitutionally designated princes of the country (who serves equally as joint head of state with the president of France) is the Bishop of Urgell, Joan Enric Vives i Sicilia, of the Spanish town of La Seu d’Urgell.

The law does not require religious groups to register. The law of associations does not specifically mention religious groups. However, to build a place of worship or seek government financial support, a religious group must register as a non-profit cultural organization and acquire legal personality. To register or re-register, a group must provide its statutes and foundation agreement, a statement certifying the names of persons appointed to the board or other official positions in the organization, and a patrimony declaration that identifies the inheritance or endowment of the organization. A consolidated register of associations records all types of associations, including religious groups.

Local authorities assign or grant space for places of worship.

Instruction in the Catholic religion is optional in public schools, outside of both regular school hours and the time 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.

On occasion, the government makes public facilities available to religious organizations for religious activities.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Epiphany, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Whit Sunday, Assumption, the Virgin of Meritxell, All Saints Day, Immaculate Conception, and Christmas.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom. However, the government did not respond to a number of requests from members of minority religious groups.

Some immigrant religious workers were unable to obtain religious working permits because there is a lack of legal definition of “religious worker.” Religious workers raised this concern with the government and parliament, but at year’s end had received no response.

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At year's end, the current government had not yet responded to a June application by the Muslim community for permission to build a mosque.

In a report published May 22, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe noted there is still little public knowledge about the different religious groups present in the country, and recommended the authorities promote initiatives to inform the population. The report also pointed out that minority religious groups do not have cemeteries where they can bury their dead in accordance with their religious beliefs and customs. The Jewish community, for example, used cemeteries in Toulouse, France and Barcelona, Spain. ECRI recommended the government find a solution to this increasing problem.

The government provides support to three Catholic nongovernmental organizations and projects: Caritas Andorrana, Mans Unides, and Fundacio San Joan Bosco.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

Societal attitudes among religious groups appeared to be amicable and tolerant. For example, the Catholic Church of la Massana lent its sanctuary twice a month to the Anglican community so that visiting Anglican clergy could conduct services for the English-speaking community.

Ten religious communities make up the Interfaith Dialogue Group. The Andorran National Commission for UNESCO collaborated with the group, which met periodically to discuss issues of common interest regarding religious traditions, beliefs, and convictions.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

Officials from the consulate general in Barcelona discussed religious freedom with members of religious groups and with government officials.