

SAN MARINO 2017 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The law prohibits religious discrimination, prevents restrictions on religious freedom, and includes provisions for prosecuting religious hate crimes. A new code of conduct for media professionals prohibits discrimination based on religion. Catholic religious instruction is offered in all public schools, but the law guarantees the right of nonparticipation without penalty. Taxpayers may designate 0.3 percent of their income tax be allocated to the Catholic Church or other religious groups registered as nonprofit organizations. Catholic symbols remained common in state buildings.

In March domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) organized a conference to promote religious, social, and cultural diversity, with financial and other support from the government. Participants included Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish, and Muslim religious leaders.

During periodic visits, officials from the U.S. Consulate General in Florence continued to stress the importance of religious tolerance with government leaders and civil society representatives.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 33,500 (July 2017 estimate). The local government does not provide statistics on the size of religious groups, and there is no census data on religious group membership, but government officials continue to report the vast majority of the population is Roman Catholic. Other religious groups include Jehovah's Witnesses, Bahais, Muslims, Jews, Orthodox Christians, and members of the Waldensian Church. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of Orthodox Church members, which had increased in recent years due to immigration from Eastern Europe, remains stable.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

Constitutional law guarantees freedom of religion and prohibits religious-based discrimination and restrictions on religious freedom, except for the protection of public order and general welfare. The criminal code provides for possible prison

terms of six months to three years for any discrimination, including that based on religious grounds. Discrimination on the basis of religion can also constitute aggravating circumstances for other types of crime. In these cases, the penalty may be increased. The law includes provisions for prosecuting hate crimes and speech that defiles religious groups. Violation of the law's provisions on hate crimes and hate speech against religious groups may result in imprisonment from three months to one year.

On July 31, the heads of state promulgated a new code of conduct for media professionals, which had been approved by parliament on June 9. The code forbids media professionals from generating and spreading information that may discriminate against someone on the basis of religion and numerous other factors. Anyone may report a case to the Authority for Information, which may take disciplinary action. The authority may issue sanctions for a violation of the code, ranging from a warning to censure, suspension, and/or removal from the professional register. These sanctions are in addition to the ones already provided in the criminal code for crimes of discrimination based on religion.

The law allows taxpayers to allocate 0.3 percent of their income tax payments to the Catholic Church or to other religious or nonreligious groups or charities registered as nonprofit organizations. Religious organizations must be legally recognized by San Marino Court to receive this benefit. In order to obtain legal recognition, religious organizations are required to submit evidence of not-for-profit activities and annual reports. The court may periodically audit and inspect organizations, require them to submit additional documentation, and investigate any complaints from organization members or third parties. If a taxpayer allocates a portion of his or her income tax payment to a previously unregistered group, the tax authorities will contact the group to confirm its legitimacy and review its financial statements.

There are no private religious schools, and the law requires religious education in public schools. Only Catholic religious instruction is offered. The state-approved curriculum includes comparisons between Christianity and other religions and between the Bible and other religious texts. Teachers are selected by the Church and may be religious or lay. Religious instruction is funded by the government. The law also guarantees students the right to choose not to participate in religious instruction without penalty. Students (or the parents, if the student is under 18) must choose to opt out at the beginning of each school year.

The country is not a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

As of 2015, the last year for which data was available, 130 nonprofit organizations, including the Catholic Church, a number of Catholic associations, Jehovah's Witnesses, and an Orthodox Christian association, received contributions from taxpayers in accordance with the law.

Catholic symbols remained common in government buildings. Crucifixes continued to hang on courtroom and government office walls. The government continued to maintain a public meditation and prayer site in the capital for use by worshipers of any religion.

In April the government co-organized a Council of Europe conference on religious freedom in Strasbourg, where Minister of Foreign Affairs Nicola Renzi gave a speech emphasizing the importance of interreligious dialogue and respect for worship to ensure the religious freedom of migrants.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

On March 16, NGOs, most of them Sammarinese, but also some internationally based, organized a conference promoting religious, social, and cultural diversity. Participants included the Archbishop of Bologna, the Head of the Orthodox Church in Italy, the Rabbi of Ferrara, and representatives of Muslim organizations in Italy. The government and the country's heads of state provided financial and other support for the event.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

During periodic visits, the U.S. Consul General in Florence and other representatives from the U.S. Consulate General in Florence reiterated the importance of religious tolerance in meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

U.S. consulate general representatives continued to discuss the importance of religious tolerance with civil society representatives, including labor unions and the locally based U.S.-San Marino Association.