

MONACO 2022 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution provides for freedom of religion and its public expression and prohibits compelling participation in religious ceremonies. Roman Catholicism is the state religion, and state ceremonies often include Catholic rituals. Religious groups must apply to the government to build a public place of worship and to receive recognition, which provides certain legal rights and privileges.

In January, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) reached a decision in a 2019 case in which Jehovah's Witnesses sought government recognition as a religious group. In its ruling, the ECHR announced that the Monegasque Minister of State and Jehovah's Witnesses had reached an agreement to settle the dispute, and Jehovah's Witnesses withdrew the claim. The government agreed to register the Jehovah Witnesses Association. The government and Jehovah's Witnesses had both stated the group could not open a place of worship without recognition.

There were no reports during the year of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

In the fall, the U.S. Consul General in Marseille discussed the state of religious freedom in the country with a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A representative from the consulate general discussed issues pertaining to religious freedom with leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Catholic and Protestant Churches. A consulate general representative spoke several times with representatives from Jehovah's Witnesses, who confirmed they were now officially recognized as a religious association by the government. In the fall, consulate general representatives also discussed religious freedom and diversity in the country with Jewish, Protestant, and Roman Catholic representatives.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 31,400 (midyear 2022), of whom 10,100 are citizens. The U.S. government estimates 90 percent of the population are Roman Catholic. Protestant officials said Protestants represent at least 2 percent of the population with 200-220 families, mainly of British and

American descent. The Reformed Protestant Church of Monaco, associated with the United Protestant Church of France, has 25 registered members. There are also small numbers of American Evangelists, Filipino Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox. The Russian Orthodox Church has an estimated 300 members, according to observers and press reports. The European Jewish Congress and the local Association Culturelle Israelite (Jewish Cultural Association) report that within their community, most of the approximately 1,000 residents are noncitizens, primarily from France and the United Kingdom, with a smaller number from North Africa and Turkey.

According to a long-time Muslim resident, there is a small Muslim community of approximately 200 persons, most of whom are noncitizens from North Africa. Jehovah's Witnesses report 20 of its members reside in the country, although 150-200 of its members work in the country. A small number of residents adhere to other religious beliefs.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides individuals freedom of religion and public worship and protects the freedom to express opinions on all issues, provided no crimes are committed in the exercise of those freedoms. No one may be compelled to participate in the rites or ceremonies of any religion or to observe its days of rest. The constitution states that Roman Catholicism is the state religion. The Catholic Archbishop of Monaco occupies the highest government office below the sovereign and the Minister of State.

Religious associations seeking to establish an office or place of worship, own or lease property, or hire employees must first obtain official recognition from the Ministry of the Interior. The ministry must respond to such requests within one month or approval is automatic. The government has granted recognition to the Protestant, Russian Orthodox, and Jewish communities. In addition to obtaining official government recognition, any religious group wishing to construct a place of worship in a public space must receive prior approval from the Ministry of the Interior. The government does not tax religious institutions.

Catholic religious instruction is available in public schools as an option and requires parental authorization. Private schools, including those operated by religious groups, must apply for government authorization. If approved, the schools may provide instruction in religions other than Catholicism.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

In January, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) reached a decision in a case brought by Jehovah's Witnesses in 2019 to obtain recognition as a religious group. Prior to the case, the government had rejected three previous applications by the group, despite a Supreme Court ruling annulling the first two rejections. In its ruling, the ECHR announced the Monegasque Minister of State and Jehovah's Witnesses had reached an agreement to settle the dispute, and the Jehovah's Witnesses withdrew the claim. The government agreed to register the Jehovah Witnesses Association. In the fall, a representative of Jehovah's Witnesses confirmed the association completed the registration process and that the government had officially recognized it.

The government and Jehovah's Witnesses had both stated the group could not open a place of worship without recognition. Jehovah's Witnesses stated government recognition would permit them to establish a headquarters in the country where they could worship and welcome new members. Representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses also noted that dozens of their members visited the country as tourists each year and often asked how to access religious services.

Catholic rituals continued to be a part of many state ceremonies, including annual national day celebrations.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were no reports during the year of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

Places of worship included six Catholic churches, two Protestant churches, and one synagogue. During the year, American Evangelist, Filipino Catholics, Greek

Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox churches held services inside the premises of the Reformed Church of Monaco. The Russian Orthodox parish used the Reformed Protestant Church until it could identify a location to build its own church.

According to religious groups, building new places of worship was difficult due to high real estate prices. There were no mosques in the country.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

In the fall, the U.S. Consul General in Marseille, who is accredited to the Government of Monaco, discussed the state of religious freedom in the country with a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the fall, consulate general staff spoke with representatives of the Catholic Church, Jewish community, members of the United Protestant Church – one of the country's two Protestant churches – and Jehovah's Witnesses. They discussed the groups' views regarding their ability to exercise religious freedom in the country, including their ability to establish places of worship, and government attitudes towards religious schools.