

SEYCHELLES

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice, although it censored the biweekly Sunday prayer broadcasts of Catholics and Anglicans. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

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

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 444 square miles and a population of 87,000. The 2002 government census indicated 82 percent of the population is Roman Catholic and 6 percent Anglican. Other Christian groups include Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal Church, the Pentecostal Assembly, Nazarites, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Hindus, Muslims, and Bahais are present in small numbers.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

Government employees of all religious backgrounds can request paid leave on any of their holy days, and the government usually granted such requests. The Islamic Society of Seychelles generally submits requests to the Department of Public

Administration for Muslim employees in both the public and private sectors to receive leave on Islamic festival days.

Religious groups are not required to register but must apply to the Ministry of Finance if they wish to receive tax exemptions. The Catholic, Anglican, and Seventh-day Adventist churches, along with mosques and the Bahai local spiritual assembly, are incorporated with the Ministry of Finance and received tax privileges. The Registrar of Associations recognized 42 religious associations not incorporated with the Ministry of Finance.

The government provided broadcast time to different religious organizations on the national radio broadcasting service. The government censored the 15-minute prayers broadcast biweekly on Sunday afternoons on state-run radio by the Anglican and Catholic churches. On alternating Sunday mornings, the national radio service broadcast Catholic mass and Anglican services that lasted from one hour and 15 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes; these broadcasts were not censored. The government also allowed Muslim and Hindu groups a 15-minute broadcast every Friday afternoon, and the Bahais and Seventh-day Adventists a 15-minute broadcast every Saturday afternoon; these broadcasts also were not censored. An amendment to the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Act prohibits political parties and religious groups from obtaining radio licenses. The amendment was under legal challenge before the Court of Appeal at the end of the reporting period.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter, Corpus Christi, Assumption of Mary, All Saints' Day, Immaculate Conception Day, and Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice, although it censored the biweekly prayer broadcasts of Catholics and Anglicans.

There were no reports of abuses, including religious prisoners or detainees, in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of Religious Freedom

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

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.