

## **FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA**

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. 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 271 square miles and a population of 108,000. The country is a collection of 607 islands spread over a 2,000-mile-long swath of ocean. Diverse languages and cultures exist within each of the country's four states. Several Protestant denominations, as well as the Roman Catholic Church, are present in every state. The United Church of Christ is the main Protestant denomination. On the island of Kosrae, the population is approximately 6,000, 95 percent of whom are Protestants. On Pohnpei the population of 35,000 is evenly divided between Protestants and Catholics. On Chuuk an estimated 60 percent is Catholic and 40 percent Protestant. In Yap an estimated 80 percent of the population is Catholic and the remainder Protestant. In addition to the United Church of Christ, Protestant denominations include Baptists, Assemblies of God, Salvation Army, and Seventh-day Adventists. Groups that together compose less than 1 percent of the population include Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and the Bahai Faith. There is a small group of Buddhists on Pohnpei, although no Buddhist monks or clergy live on the island. Attendance at religious services is generally high; churches are well supported by their congregations and play a significant role in civil society.

Most immigrants are Filipino Catholics who have joined local Catholic churches. The Filipino Iglesia Ni Cristo has a church in Pohnpei.

In the 1890s on the island of Pohnpei, interdenominational rivalry and the conversion of clan leaders resulted in religious divisions along clan lines that continue today, although intermarriage has blurred the lines considerably. More Protestants live on the western side of the island, while more Catholics live on the eastern side.

## Section II. Status of 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. The constitution protects this right against abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The constitution's Declaration of Rights forbids the establishment of a state religion or governmental restrictions on freedom of religion.

The government provides a few grants to private, church-affiliated schools. Public schools do not provide religious instruction. Although the law requires every child to attend school, homeschooling is not penalized.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday and Christmas.

### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

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. There was no notable tension between the two largest

religious groups, Protestants and Catholics, and an Inter-Denominational Council exists to address social problems and promote official cooperation between the two. However, some newer Protestant denominations in the islands reportedly limited their members' interactions with other faith communities and declined to join the council or the Christian Ministerial Association.

#### 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. The U.S. embassy also worked closely with church-related nongovernmental organizations in its efforts to promote good governance and religious tolerance.