

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The government did not demonstrate a trend toward either improvement or deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom.

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

The U.S. embassy actively promoted religious freedom as part of its overall efforts to advance human rights and civil liberties. Embassy officials consulted with government officials and local church leaders regarding religious freedom.

Section I. Religious Demography

Major religious groups include the United Church of Christ (formerly Congregational), with 52 percent of the population; the Assemblies of God, 24 percent; the Roman Catholic Church, 9 percent; and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), 8 percent. Groups that constitute less than seven percent of the population include Bukot Non Jesus (also known as Assembly of God Part Two), Full Gospel, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, the Baha'i Faith, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, and Ahmadiyya Muslims.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

The constitution provides for the free exercise of religion and equal protection under the law, regardless of religious beliefs. There are no legislative restrictions on religious practices. There is no official state religion, but Christianity is the dominant social and cultural influence. Governmental functions typically begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer delivered by an ordained minister or other church official.

There are no criteria for registering religious groups, nor are there consequences for not registering.

There is no religious education in public schools and no opening or closing prayers during the school day. However, most extracurricular school events begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer.

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

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses. The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the year.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. embassy discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights and regularly met with local church leaders and foreign missionaries.