

ANDORRA

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 societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

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

Section I. Religious Demography

No official government census exists based on religion; traditionally, approximately 90 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. The population consists largely of immigrants from Spain, Portugal, and France; citizens constitute only 37 percent of inhabitants. The country's immigrants are generally also Catholic.

There are nine other religious communities in the principality, which are well integrated into society. These include the following: the Muslim community, with an estimated 1,000 members; the Hindu community, with 500 members; the Anglican Church, with 500 members; and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Baha'i Faith, the Unification Church, and the New Apostolic Church, with approximately 100 members each. There are also a small number of members of other Christian communities, including The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses.

There are 51 Roman Catholic churches in the country. Additionally, there are 13 places of worship of other religious confessions. In most cases the cultural center serves as a place of worship.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. The constitution, however, acknowledges a special relationship with the Catholic Church “in accordance with Andorran tradition” and recognizes the “full legal capacity” of the bodies of the Catholic Church, granting them legal status “in accordance with their own rules.” The Catholic Church receives some special privileges not available to other religious groups; for instance, the government pays the salaries of the Catholic priests. One of the two constitutionally designated princes of the country (who serves equally as joint head of state with the president of France) is the Bishop of Urgell, Joan Enric Vives i Sicilia, of the Spanish town of La Seu d’Urgell.

Legal registration is not required and the law of associations is very general and does not specifically mention religious organizations. A consolidated register of associations records all types of associations, including religious groups. Groups must register to be considered for government financial support. The government provides support to three Catholic NGOs and projects: Caritas Andorrana, Mans Unides, and Fundacio San Joan Bosco. To register or reregister, a group must provide its statutes and foundation agreement, a statement certifying the names of persons appointed to the board or other official positions in the organization, and a patrimony declaration that identifies the inheritance or endowment of the organization.

The government does not assign or grant space for places of worship. Such decisions are handled at the local government level.

Instruction in the Catholic religion is available in public schools on an optional basis, outside of both regular school hours and the time frame set aside for elective school activities, such as civics or ethics. The Catholic Church provides teachers for religion classes, and the government pays their salaries.

On occasion, the government makes public facilities available to religious organizations for religious activities.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Epiphany, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Whit Sunday, Assumption, the Verge de Meritxell, All Saints’ Day, Immaculate Conception, and Christmas.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

Some immigrant religious workers have been unable to obtain the necessary religious working permits because there is a lack of legal definition of “religious worker.” Religious workers have raised this concern with the new government and parliament.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Societal attitudes among religious groups appeared to be amicable and tolerant. For example, the Catholic Church of la Massana lends its sanctuary twice a month to the Anglican community so that visiting Anglican clergy can conduct services for the English-speaking community. Although those who practice religions other than Catholicism tend to be immigrants, there were few if any obstacles to their practicing their own religions.

The 10 religious communities make up the Interfaith Dialogue Group. The Andorran National Commission for UNESCO collaborates with the group, which meets periodically to deal with problems of religious traditions, beliefs, and convictions.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

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