

SLOVENIA

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 isolated reports of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. embassy held extensive discussions with the government and with religious leaders promoting religious freedom, particularly regarding property denationalization and restitution of heirless and communal Jewish properties confiscated or nationalized after World War II.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the 2002 census, 58 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 23 percent is “other or unspecified” religion, 2 percent is Muslim, 2 percent is Orthodox Christian, and 1 percent is “other Christian.” In addition, 3 percent of the population is classified as “unaffiliated,” and 10 percent as claiming no religion.

The Orthodox and Muslim populations generally correspond to the immigrant Serb and Bosniak populations, respectively.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion as well as inciting religious discrimination and inflaming religious hatred and intolerance.

The Religious Freedoms Act codifies the government’s respect for religious freedom, legal status and rights of churches and other religious communities, rights of members, process of registration with the government, rights of registered

churches and religious communities, and responsibilities of the government's Office for Religious Communities. In June 2010 the Constitutional Court annulled provisions of the act relating to the payment of social security contributions for priests in hospitals and prisons, as well as provisions relating to registering with the government. Although the court gave parliament a period of one year to change these provisions, no changes have been proposed.

The constitution and military law provide for conscientious objection to military service based on "religious, philosophical, or humanitarian belief."

There are no formal requirements for recognition of religious groups by the government, and activities of religious communities are unrestricted regardless of whether they register with the government. However, religious communities must register with the Office for Religious Communities if they wish to be legal entities, a status that entitles such groups to rebates on value added taxes. Religious communities must submit a basic application to the Office for Religious Communities providing proof that requirements are met as well as the names of the community's representatives in the country, a description of the foundations of the community's religious beliefs, and the organizational act of the church or community.

The law forbids prayer meetings or lessons for educating children in a particular religion at state-licensed schools. The government partially finances teachers' salaries at religiously affiliated schools. Licensed schools may not display religious symbols, but students may wear religious symbols. At unlicensed private religious schools, religious lessons generally are mandatory.

The government finances small grants for recognized religious organizations.

Individuals can file informal complaints of human rights violations, including violations of religious freedom, by national or local authorities with the human rights ombudsman.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Easter Sunday and Monday, Pentecost, Assumption, Reformation Day, and Christmas. Members of religious communities whose important religious festivities do not coincide with those work-free days have the right to use their regular annual leave on their holy days.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

By the end of the year, the government had adjudicated approximately 99 percent of the 1,191 Catholic denationalization claims for properties--church buildings and support buildings, residences, businesses, and forests--that were nationalized after World War II. Catholic claims were only a small portion of the total number of denationalization claims (39,635), of which by the end of the year the government had settled 99.9 percent. The Ministry of Justice no longer tracks data for numbers of unsettled cases, because they are so few.

At the end of the year, there had been no restitution of Jewish communal and heirless properties confiscated or nationalized during and after World War II.

The government promoted tolerance and anti-bias education through its programs in primary and secondary schools and made the Holocaust a mandatory topic in the primary and secondary contemporary history curriculum. During the year, the country became a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF).

During the year, the Office for Religious Communities registered one new religious community, a 20-member group called Mitra, a pre-Christian Mithraic "mystery religion." There are now 44 registered religious communities in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were isolated reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Interfaith relations were generally amicable.

On June 12, Lama Shenpen Rinpoche, the head of the Dharmaling Buddhist Congregation, was attacked by two unidentified men in Ljubljana. While the Dharmaling Congregation did not claim it was religiously motivated, the Islamic community condemned the assault and called for the police to protect representatives of all religious communities.

On April 27, Archbishop Anton Stres met Chief Rabbi of the Slovenian Jewish community Ariel Haddad as Catholic and Jewish congregations celebrated Easter and Passover. On September 4, the Jewish community, supported by local

government officials, celebrated the European Day of Jewish Culture in the Murska Sobota Regional Museum with an evening dedicated to Jewish culture. On November 18, the Maribor synagogue opened an exhibition highlighting the contribution of 300,000 Jewish soldiers on the Isonzo front during World War I and featured the remarks of Chief of the General Staff, Major General Alojz Steiner.

On November 18, a design for the first mosque in the country was selected from architecture firm Bevk Perovic Arhitekti. The mosque will be built when the Muslim community finalizes funding.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. embassy held extensive discussions with the government on the topic of property denationalization and restitution of heirless and communal Jewish properties confiscated or nationalized after World War II. Embassy representatives met with members of all major religious communities and concerned government officials to discuss religious freedom.