

# **FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year.

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

The U.S. embassy discussed religious freedom with the government and worked with church-related nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in its efforts to promote good governance and religious tolerance.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The 2010 government census estimates the population to be 102,000, including 11,000 in Yap, 49,000 in Chuuk, 36,000 in Pohnpei, and 6,000 in Kosrae. Because of high emigration rates, the current population is likely to be less than the 2010 figure.

Although there is linguistic and cultural diversity within each of the country's four states, its religious character is overwhelmingly Christian. 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. In Kosrae, 95 percent of the population is Protestant. In Pohnpei, the population is evenly divided between Protestants and Catholics. In 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 Baptist, Assemblies of God, Salvation Army, and Seventh-day Adventists. Smaller groups include Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Bahais. There are increasing numbers of Mormons; in Pohnpei, about 5 percent of the population considers itself Mormon. Attendance at religious services is generally high. Churches are well supported by their congregations and play a significant role in civil society.

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The majority of foreign workers are Filipino Catholics who have joined local Catholic churches. The Filipino Iglesia Ni Cristo has a church in Pohnpei. Historic interdenominational rivalry and the conversion of clan leaders in Pohnpei 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 Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

#### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. 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.

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

#### **Government Practices**

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom. The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. Government functions uniformly open and close with a prayer, invocation, or benediction from a Protestant or Catholic pastor or lay deacon, and often from one of each.

### **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.

There was no notable tension between the two largest religious groups, Protestants and Catholics. An Inter-Denominational Council existed to address social problems and promote official cooperation between the two. However, some newer religious groups, notably the Mormons and the Seventh-day Adventists, declined to join the council or the Christian Ministerial Association.

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### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

The U.S. embassy discussed religious freedom with the government and worked with church-related NGOs in its efforts to promote good governance and religious tolerance.