

# **PALAU 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.

U.S. embassy officials discussed religious freedom with the government and maintained regular contacts with religious groups.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The World Bank estimates the population to be 21,000. Approximately 65 percent is Roman Catholic. Estimates of other religious groups include the Evangelical Church with 2,000 members; Seventh-day Adventists, 1,000; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), 300; and Jehovah's Witnesses, 90. Modeknegi, which embraces both animist and Christian beliefs, and is unique to the country, has approximately 1,800 adherents. Within the foreign community of more than 6,000 people, the majority is Filipino Catholic. There are also small groups of Chinese Uighurs and Bangladeshi Muslims.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. Although the government does not sponsor religious groups or promote religious activities, prayers are generally offered at government-sponsored ceremonies and events.

The government requires religious groups to obtain charters as nonprofit organizations from the Office of the Attorney General. The registration process is not protracted. As nonprofit organizations, churches and mission agencies are exempt from paying taxes. Foreign missionaries are required to obtain missionary permits at the Office of Immigration.

## **PALAU**

The government does not permit religious instruction in public schools. Representatives of any religious group may request government financial support for religious schools.

The government observes Christmas as a national holiday.

### **Government Practices**

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom. The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. However, the government continued to ban work permits for citizens of Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka, stemming from a 1998 decision by the Division of Labor to deny work permits to Bangladeshis. The decision followed complaints from employers that the non-Christian religious practices of Bangladeshi employees interfered with activities in the workplace and in living arrangements of employee families. The government imposed a similar ban in 2001 for citizens of India and Sri Lanka. Workers from these countries present in the country at the time of the decision were not expelled, and there were no impediments to their practice of religion nor to their continued employment.

### **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.

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

U.S. embassy officials discussed religious freedom with the government and maintained regular contacts with the various religious groups.