

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA 2013 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.

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 faith based NGOs in its efforts to promote religious tolerance.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 106,000 (July 2013 estimate). 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 is Protestant. In Yap an estimated 80 percent of the population is Catholic and the remainder is Protestant. In addition to the United Church of Christ, Protestant denominations include Baptists, 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. More Protestants live on the western side of Pohnpei, 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 generally protect religious freedom 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.

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There are no registration requirements for religious groups. There is no religious education in the public schools, but it is part of the curriculum in private religious schools.

Government Practices

There were no reports of significant government actions affecting religious freedom. The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. Government activities and events routinely open and close with a prayer, invocation, or benediction from a Protestant or Catholic pastor or lay deacon, and often from one of each.

The government provides a few grants to private, church-affiliated schools.

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 religious groups. Some newer religious groups, notably the Mormons and the Seventh-day Adventists, declined to join the council or the Christian Ministerial Association.

The majority of foreign workers are Filipino Catholics who have joined local Catholic churches. Historic interdenominational rivalry and the conversion of clan leaders in Pohnpei resulted in religious divisions along clan lines, although intermarriage has blurred the lines considerably.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. embassy discussed religious freedom and held regular meetings with the Department of Foreign Affairs and senior cabinet officials. The embassy and the various religious groups worked together to host an international Christmas event.