

# **LUXEMBOURG 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. Muslim leaders, however, stated that there was discrimination by the government because it did not sign a legal convention with the Muslim community. As a result, this community does not receive financial benefits from the government that other religious communities with such a convention received.

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

U.S. embassy officials met with government representatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to discuss matters related to religious freedom. In addition, embassy staff discussed religious freedom with local community leaders, and organized an interfaith Passover seder and an iftar.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population is 515,000 (July 2013 estimate). A 2011 study by the Center for Studies of Population, Poverty, and Socio-Economic Policy estimates that more than 70 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. According to that study and local religious groups, approximately 2 percent of the population is Protestant (Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican), 2 percent Muslim, 1 percent Christian Orthodox (Greek, Serbian, Russian, and Romanian), and 0.3 percent Jewish. There are small numbers of Bahais, Jehovah's Witnesses, and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and the Universal Church.

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

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The constitution and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom. While there is no state religion, the constitution provides for state payment of salaries and pensions for clergy of those religious groups that sign a convention with the government. To qualify, a religious group must establish an official and

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stable representative body with which the government can interact. The following religious groups receive support: Catholic; Greek, Russian, Romanian, and Serbian Orthodox; Anglican; the Reformed Protestant Church of Luxembourg; the Protestant Church of Luxembourg; and Jewish congregations.

Religious instruction in public schools is a local matter, coordinated between representatives of the Catholic Church and 106 communes. Parents and pupils may choose between instruction in Catholicism or an ethics course. There are government-salaried Catholic religious instructors at all levels in public schools. Schools grant exemptions from this instruction on an individual basis.

The government subsidizes all private religious schools affiliated with a parent religion that has signed a convention with the state. The government also subsidizes a Catholic seminary.

The government is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, formerly the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research.

### **Government Practices**

The government deferred until after the October election a decision regarding a potential overhaul of church-state relations in response to a 2012 report by a commission of nongovernment experts established to study the current system and the position papers produced by a number of religious communities. The government stated that the negotiation of all new conventions, including with the Muslim community, was suspended pending the outcome of debates over the commission's study. Muslim community leaders stated they fulfilled the legal requirements for such a convention.

### **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**

The U.S. Ambassador met with high ranking representatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and major religious groups throughout the year. Embassy officers also met with representatives of religious communities to discuss matters

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related to religious freedom. Matters discussed included the issue of recognition of representatives of the Muslim community, the situation of the Catholic Church, and the role of the Catholic Church in welfare activities. In April the embassy organized a Passover seder attended by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders, and government officials. In July the embassy organized an iftar attended by high-ranking representatives of the Muslim and Christian communities. The seder and iftar focused on bringing together leading representatives of the various religious communities and government officials.