

# **PORTUGAL 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. government discussed religious issues with the government as part of its overall policy to promote religious freedom.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 10.8 million (July 2013 estimate). According to the 2011 census, over 80 percent of the population above the age of 15 identifies with the Roman Catholic Church. Other religious groups, each constituting less than 5 percent of the population, include Orthodox Christians, various Protestant and other Christian denominations, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Taoists, and Zoroastrians. The Protestant population includes 250,000 members of evangelical churches. Many of the estimated 200,000 immigrants from Eastern Europe, primarily from Ukraine, are Eastern Orthodox. More than 600,000 people do not claim membership in any religious group.

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

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

Churches, religious communities, associations, federations, and foundations must apply for registration as a religion with the registrar of religious corporate bodies through the Ministry of Justice. The sole registration requirement for religious groups is establishment in the country for at least 30 years or international recognition for at least 60 years. Registered religious groups receive benefits including full tax-exempt status; legal recognition of marriages and other rites; the right of chaplains to minister in prisons, hospitals, and military facilities; and recognition of religious holidays.

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The law prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals on the basis of religion and requires reasonable accommodation of employees' religious practices. Employees are allowed to take leave on their Sabbath and religious holidays, even if these are not nationally observed holidays. The law allows each religious group to negotiate its own concordat-style agreement with the government.

The Catholic Church maintains a separate agreement with the government under the terms of a 1940 concordat with the Holy See, as amended in 2004 to comply with subsequent legislation. The concordat recognizes the juridical personality of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference and allows the Catholic Church to receive a percentage of the income tax voluntarily allocated by taxpayers to various institutions in their annual tax returns. A taxpayer may allocate a portion of his or her tax payment to any registered religious group. Chaplaincies for military services, prisons, and hospitals are state-funded positions open to all legally established religious groups.

Public secondary schools offer an optional survey course on world religions taught by lay teachers. Religious groups may offer optional religious training through schools, provided the course is taught by lay teachers and 10 or more students of the faith attend the class. Religious group representatives have the right to approve the course's instructors. All schools, public and private, are required to accommodate the religious practices of students, including rescheduling tests if necessary.

In July the parliament unanimously passed a law naturalizing Jewish descendants of Sephardi Jews expelled from Portugal in the 15th and 16th centuries.

### **Government Practices**

The state-run television channel continued to air segments written by different registered religious groups five days a week, as well as weekly 30-minute programs highlighting activities of various religious groups. Delegates selected by the religious groups participated in a special television commission to determine the scheduling of segments.

To promote religious tolerance and acceptance, the government High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI) and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation published the pamphlet "Interreligious Dialogue

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over Time and 33 Ideas to Meditate and Act On.” In November ACIDI also sponsored an “Interreligious Dialogue Forum: A Contribution to Citizenship in times of Globalization” to celebrate religious diversity and the contribution of religious communities in Portugal.

### **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.

In July the first Jewish cultural and religious center was inaugurated in Trancoso. The center, which was co-sponsored by the Trancoso Municipality and Shavei Israel, a Jerusalem-based organization, housed a new synagogue and planned to promote religious and cultural activities.

The Sefarad Route project, an interactive multimedia website about the history of Portuguese Jews, was also launched in July. The project aims to revive Jewish identity by attracting tourists to historic sites throughout the country.

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

U.S. embassy representatives continued to meet with leaders of religious groups, including the Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim communities. Embassy officials engaged regularly with such religious leaders as the imam of the Lisbon mosque, the head of the Ismaili community, and the chairman of the Aga Khan Foundation Portugal, to promote tolerance and religious freedom. The Charge d’Affaires met with the imam from the Lisbon Mosque, the leader of the Islamic community, a leading Protestant minister, Catholic Church leaders, and Jewish community leaders and rabbis to continue outreach and dialogue.

The embassy, together with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Luso-American Development Foundation, continued to promote Holocaust education, with a focus on human rights and religious tolerance. On several occasions, an embassy representative spoke to school groups on Holocaust awareness, emphasizing religious acceptance.