

# **NAURU 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

The constitution and other laws and policies provide for religious freedom.

There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

Although the U.S. government does not maintain an embassy in the country, the U.S. Ambassador to Fiji is accredited to the government. Representatives of the Embassy in Fiji discussed religious freedom with the government.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 9,500 (July 2014 estimate). Christianity is the primary religion. Approximately two-thirds of Christians are Protestant and the remaining one-third are Roman Catholic. Jehovah's Witnesses and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) have small numbers of followers. Ethnic Chinese residents, estimated to constitute 5 percent of the population, are Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, or nonreligious. The Australian government houses approximately 1,100 asylum seekers in Nauru of various religious groups from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq. As of September, authorities resettled 179 people in the country as refugees, some of whom are Muslim.

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

### **Legal Framework**

The constitution provides for the rights to freedom of conscience, expression, assembly, and association. These rights may be restricted by any law "which is reasonably required in the interests of defense, public safety, public order, public morality, or public health."

There is no state religion.

Under the law, religious groups must register with the government to operate in an official capacity, which includes proselytizing, building houses of worship, holding religious services, officiating marriages, and otherwise practicing their religion. The Catholic Church, the Nauru Congregational Church (which includes the

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Kiribati Protestant Church), the Assemblies of God, and the Nauru Independent Church are officially registered.

### **Government Practices**

The legal counsel for the Mormon Church stated that, while the law called for the registration of religious denominations, the government required such recognition only if a denomination's ministers wished to officiate at marriages. The registrar of births, deaths, and marriages confirmed this. Representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses reported that although they have not registered, they did not have any problems with the government granting visas to their missionaries. Neither the Mormons nor Jehovah's Witnesses attempted to register. There were no reports that the government interfered with religious services or discriminated in registration.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

Media and elements of the Protestant and Catholic communities occasionally voiced discomfort with religious groups they viewed as unorthodox, in particular Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Protestant and Catholic clergy communicated a message of tolerance and brotherhood for refugees to their communities. Muslim women were observed wearing head scarves in public.

Missionaries representing several Christian groups were active and operated freely.

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

Although the U.S. government does not maintain an embassy in the country, the U.S. Ambassador to Fiji is accredited to the government. Representatives of the embassy discussed religious freedom with the government.