

# **ANDORRA 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

There has been no legislation adversely affecting the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion. In accordance with the constitution, the government continued to offer to the Catholic Church privileges not available to other religious groups. The government stated it was working to resolve complaints by representatives of the Jewish and Muslim communities about the lack of cemeteries for those groups.

On April 18, two individuals assaulted a Jew outside of a discotheque in the city of La Massana. The government investigation into the case was ongoing at year's end. Ten religious communities making up the Interfaith Dialogue Group met periodically to discuss issues of common interest regarding religious traditions, beliefs, and tolerance.

During periodic visits, the Ambassador, the Consul General, and officials from the Consulate General in Barcelona discussed issues such as the lack of official status for faiths other than Catholicism with the government and civil society leaders, and offered them opportunities to participate in programs addressing religious freedom.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 85,500 (July 2014 estimate). The government does not provide statistics on the size of religious groups and there is no census data on religious group membership. The majority of the population is Roman Catholic. Smaller religious groups include Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Anglicans, Seventh-day Adventists, Bahais, the Unification Church, the New Apostolic Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses. The Muslim community has grown over the past years and observers estimate that it has over one thousand members. The Jewish community reports it has approximately 100 members.

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

### **Legal Framework**

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion. It prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion. It states that the "freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs

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shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in the interests of public safety, order, health or morals, or for the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.” The constitution acknowledges a special relationship with the Catholic Church “in accordance with Andorran tradition” and recognizes the “full legal capacity” of the bodies of the Catholic Church, granting them legal status “in accordance with their own rules.” One of the two constitutionally designated princes of the country (who serves equally as joint head of state with the president of France) is the Catholic Bishop of Urgell, Joan Enric Vives i Sicilia, whose diocese in Spain includes the Principality of Andorra.

There is no specific legislation on the treatment and recognition of religious groups or on religious freedom.

The government registers religious communities as cultural organizations under the law of associations, which does not specifically mention religious groups. To build a place of worship or seek government financial support, a religious group must register as a non-profit cultural organization and acquire legal personality. To register, a group must provide its statutes and foundation agreement, a statement certifying the names of persons appointed to the board or other official positions in the organization, and a patrimony declaration that identifies the inheritance or endowment of the organization. A consolidated register of associations records all types of associations, including religious groups.

According to the law, municipalities are responsible for providing public service regarding the construction, preservation, and administration of funerary services.

Instruction in the Catholic religion is optional in public schools, but must take place outside of both regular school hours and the time set aside for elective school activities, such as civics or ethics. The Catholic Church provides teachers for religion classes, and the government pays their salaries.

### **Government Practices**

The government said it was working to resolve complaints by representatives of the Jewish and Muslim communities about the lack of cemeteries where they can bury their dead in accordance with their religious beliefs and customs. The Jewish community, for example, used cemeteries in Toulouse, France, and Barcelona, Spain. The Muslim community tended to repatriate its dead and bury them in their countries of origin.

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The Catholic Church received some special privileges not available to other religious groups; for instance, the government paid the salaries of foreign Catholic priests serving in local churches and granted them citizenship as long as they exercised their functions in the country.

Immigrants performing religious functions for religious groups other than the Catholic Church were unable to obtain religious working permits because the law did not define what constituted a “religious worker” and had to enter the country in a different status.

The government received a petition from a member of the Muslim community arguing individuals wearing head coverings for religious reasons be permitted to submit photographs for official documents, such as residence permits, passports, and driver’s licenses, in which they remained covered. The rules governing the issuance of these documents currently require individuals to appear with their heads uncovered.

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

On April 18, two individuals assaulted a Jew outside of a discotheque in the city of La Massana. The Jewish community voiced concern about the incident. The government investigation into the case was ongoing at year’s end.

Ten religious communities made up the Interfaith Dialogue Group. The Andorran National Commission for UNESCO collaborated with the group, which met periodically to discuss issues of common interest regarding religious traditions, beliefs, and tolerance. The Catholic Church of Santa Maria del Fener in Andorra la Vella lent its sanctuary twice a month to the Anglican community so that visiting Anglican clergy could conduct services for the English-speaking community.

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

During periodic visits, the Ambassador, the Consul General, and officials from the Consulate General in Barcelona discussed concerns about the lack of cemeteries for Jewish and Muslim communities with government representatives at the highest level, winning assurances they were working toward a solution.

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Embassy officials met with religious representatives to discuss issues such as the lack of official status for faiths other than Catholicism and the implications of regulations requiring that individuals remove head coverings for official identity documents such as passports and driver's licenses.