

LIECHTENSTEIN 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The government took no actions affecting the constitutional guarantee of freedom to choose one's faith and the criminal code's prohibition against discrimination or debasement of any religion. The government granted the Muslim community a residency permit for one imam and a short-term residency permit for an additional imam during Ramadan. The government held a public Holocaust commemoration ceremony at the Liechtenstein National Museum.

The independent Liechtenstein Institute noted a decrease in online right-wing extremism including anti-Semitism in 2013, the latest year for which data were available.

The U.S. embassy in Switzerland encouraged the promotion of religious freedom in discussions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, focusing primarily on access to religious education and religious services. Embassy staff discussed religious freedom issues, such as the effects of existing laws on religious rites and rituals and the extent of societal discrimination, with civil society organizations, including Amnesty International and the Liechtenstein Friends of Yad Vashem.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 37,000 (July 2014 estimate). According to the 2010 census, religious group membership is as follows: 76 percent Roman Catholic, 7.6 percent Protestant, 5.4 percent Muslim, 2.8 percent religious but affiliated with no formal religious group, 1.1 percent Christian Orthodox, 1.7 percent other religious groups, and 5.4 percent no religious affiliation.

The great majority of Muslims are Sunni, predominately from Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Jewish community consists of approximately 30 people and has no formal organizational structure. Immigrant workers mainly come from Switzerland and Austria and predominantly belong to the same religious groups as native-born citizens.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution states all people shall have the freedom to choose their faith and the state shall provide protection of the religious “interests” of its people. There is no separation between church and state. The constitution specifies that Roman Catholicism is the state religion “with full protection from the state.” As such, it holds a guaranteed role in education and religious teaching in schools.

There is no law requiring the registration of a religious group.

The law prohibits the slaughter of animals without anesthetization, making illegal the ritual slaughter of animals for kosher and halal meat. Importation of such meat is, however, legal.

The criminal code prohibits any form of discrimination against or disparagement of any religion or its adherents by spoken, written, or visual means.

The law requires religious education be included in the curriculum in public schools, both at the primary and secondary school levels. Catholic or Protestant religious education is compulsory in all primary schools, but exemptions are available for children whose parents request them. The Catholic Church determines the Catholic curriculum, with minimal supervision from municipalities. Seven public primary schools offer Islamic education.

At the secondary school level, parents and students choose between traditional religious education, which their religious community organizes, and a course in religion and culture.

Government Practices

The government and the Catholic Church allowed Muslims to be buried in all of the country’s cemeteries, although not according to Muslim tradition. There was no Muslim cemetery or mosque in the country. The Muslim community owned two prayer rooms.

In February the state court granted the children of a family who are members of the Christian Palmarian Church of the Carmelites of the Holy Face the right to be exempted from their school’s swimming class. The court ruled the need to uphold

the children's religious beliefs and to protect them from psychological distress outweighed the interests of the school.

Funding for religious institutions derived mainly from the municipalities, according to parliamentary or municipal decisions. The government provided Catholic and Protestant churches annual contributions in proportion to membership; smaller religious groups were eligible to apply for grants for associations of foreigners or specific projects. All religious groups were exempt from certain taxes, but not from fees.

The two main representative bodies of the Muslim community, the Islamic Community and the Turkish Association, continued to collaborate with the government to establish an umbrella organization to receive state contributions to be used equitably for all Muslims residing in the country.

The government received no requests for financial support from smaller denominations during the year. Government policy was to provide financial support to smaller denominations that provided religious education classes at their places of worship outside regular school hours.

The government did not issue visas for religious workers, granting them short-term residency permits instead. To receive such a permit, applicants must have completed theological studies, be a member of a nationally known religious group, and be sponsored by an internally registered member of the official religious group's clergy. The Immigration and Passport Office normally processed immigration requests for clergy.

The government granted the Muslim community a residency permit for one imam and a short-term residency permit for an additional imam during Ramadan. The government granted short-term residency permits primarily to the imams of the Turkish Association and other foreign Muslim institutions who agreed not to allow or preach sermons that incited violence or advocated intolerance. Clergy from other religious groups were required to abide by the same rules and regulations.

On January 27, the government held a public Holocaust commemoration ceremony at the Liechtenstein National Museum. Foreign Minister Aurelia Frick gave a speech at the ceremony, with several high-ranking politicians and diplomats in attendance. The commemoration focused on the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel

and included an exhibition financed by the government and the Liechtenstein Friends of Yad Vashem. Children from several schools attended the ceremony.

Schools continued to include Holocaust education as part of their curriculum. The Liechtenstein secondary school invited an Austrian judge and historian to the school on January 29 to discuss and remember the victims of National Socialism in the context of the government's public Holocaust commemoration. Secondary schools continued to hold discussion forums on the Holocaust to mark the Day of Remembrance on January 27.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Representatives of minority religious groups reported no issues of concern. Several churches opened their chapels to other denominations and faiths, including Orthodox and Islamic groups, during the year.

The right-wing organization European Action continued to use extreme language on the internet and in flyers and booklets, making references to “unbridled Rothschild-Capitalism” and advocating freedom of speech to deny the Holocaust. Observers remarked that such ideas had been formulated in a way that rendered them non-punishable in the framework of criminal law.

The Liechtenstein Institute's yearly monitoring report on right-wing extremism noted a less pronounced online presence of right-wing groups during 2013, the last year for which data were available.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

Embassy staff discussed religious freedom issues, such as access to religious education, laws inhibiting the practice of religious rites and rituals, and potential discrimination against minority religious groups, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Embassy staff discussed the effects of existing laws on religious practices and the extent of societal discrimination with civil society organizations, including Amnesty International and the Liechtenstein Friends of Yad Vashem.